

September 7, 2020

To Mayor Letham;

I came home from visiting family last night and went down to my barn to clean, feed, and lock my animals up for the night. What I found was my animals in such a state of stress that they were running wildly around the barnyard and part of my split rail fence had been disassembled because my livestock guardian dog had clawed at it so much, she dislodged the rails. Thank goodness I arrived home when I did to calm everyone down and ensure no one was hurt.

The cause of this stress. Fireworks. Someone close by was shooting off fireworks.

We have lived here for years and never had a problem as they were infrequent and far enough away that they didn't bother my animals. This year has been insane. Everyone and his brother seem to be setting off fireworks, anytime, anywhere. How can you prepare for something when you never know when or where it's going to happen.

I know there is huge debate at the moment with very passionate people on both sides of this issue, but something needs to be done. There are many issues that should be considered. On the one side, you have people who want entertainment. On the other side, you have people concerned with the environment, veterans with PTSD, stress to both domestic and wild animals. Animals have lost their lives because they have bolted, run away, run into a fence, into farm machinery etc., in a mad dash of fear. My LGD was in such a state of stress last night because she could not identify where the danger was coming from and in an attempt to protect her herd, she almost clawed through our fence.

Please explain to me, why the rights of the people wanting entertainment, outweigh the rights of those who have all these other concerns? I know that people are worried about losing their "rights", but there are consequences to having a free-for-all with fireworks. They don't see the result of their actions, and many will obviously not care.

I know that cruelty for the sake of entertainment is a decidedly human trait, but WE CAN DO BETTER. Compassion, empathy, and a thought for the environment and other humans would be the logical and mature approach. It is a problem on many levels and if someone has a "me, me" attitude and is not reasonable enough to compromise, they should lose all rights to have a say in any decision making.

I am not asking for a complete restriction. I do know that isn't fair. But, there has to be boundaries. There are steps that can be taken. I would love to see silent fireworks as the norm, but also realize that would likely be a slow process over time. In the meantime, restrictions as to when people can use fireworks. If I had known someone close by was firing them off last night, I would have been home sooner to be with my animals. It would have been fine. But when they go off all year, anytime, anywhere...no one can prepare for that. Limit when they can be used. If that doesn't work, there is another option that would be so very simple and would solve some of the problems.

Set up an online registry where people have to list the time and general area that they will be doing fireworks, and ENFORCE it with a hefty fine if they don't register. The general public can check this registry to see when there will be fireworks around them, and prepare accordingly. No one has to register their name or address, just a time and closest crossroad. That would be awesome. People who have animals who react, or react adversely themselves, could actually prepare. Sedate their dog, make sure animals are secure. In my case, I'd be in the barnyard. Such a simple solution that would address the immediate problems.

Of course, in the meantime, work towards a more environmentally-friendly and quieter firework.

Consider the animals, the environment, and people who react adversely. There are rights, issues, and welfare concerns to consider and people firing off fireworks with free rein is irresponsible, unfair, and cruel.

Please, I never want to see my animals the way I've seen them this year with so many fireworks going off. I love my animals and it is heartbreaking to see them so scared. If anything ever happened to them because of someone thoughtlessly shooting off fireworks...I don't know what I'd do.

Something needs to be done. I would love to know what it would take. I'll do what needs to be done.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Cathy Walker