

Petitions Committee  
New Zealand Parliament Buildings  
Wellington, 6160

29 September 2025

By Email

**Submission on behalf of the New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe regarding fireworks sale and use**

The New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe (NZVA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the three petitions calling for the banning of fireworks. As the professional body for veterinarians, the NZVA is committed to advancing animal welfare through science-based policy and practical leadership.

Our position on fireworks has been consistent since 2019:

To protect animals from direct and indirect harm, the sale of fireworks to the public should be banned, with use restricted to licensed, professionally managed public displays approved by the relevant territorial authority.

To inform this submission, the NZVA sought feedback from its members through an online survey. The 181 responses received offer a clear and representative picture of the profession's current views.

**Context**

New Zealand's Animal Welfare Act 1999 recognises animals as sentient. In practice, this means that the NZVA advocates for and supports policy settings that minimise reasonably preventable harm, such as physical injury, anxiety, and longer-term behavioural impacts, across companion animals, horses, farm livestock, zoo animals, and wildlife. We develop evidence-based positions and policies to guide this work.

Fireworks create risks that are both predictable in kind (sudden, high-intensity noise and light; debris; ignition sources) and unpredictable in timing, because private use can occur with little or no notice. That unpredictability undermines the effectiveness of desensitisation programmes, confinement and relocation plans, as well as the timely administration of anxiolytic medications. It also elevates risks for grazing stock and horses, where escape behaviours lead to injuries and road incidents, and for wildlife, where mass disturbance events have been documented internationally.

The current rules attempt to mitigate harm by limiting when fireworks may be sold, but they do not effectively limit when they can be used. Stockpiling and sporadic use extend the risk window far beyond the sales period. Enforcement challenges, bylaw variability between councils, and reliance on owners to anticipate unannounced activity all limit the protective value of the status quo.

**Survey findings**

Respondents conveyed a clear message: most support an outright ban on public sales, coupled with licensed, professionally managed public displays.

In the latest responses (n=181), approximately:

- 83% support a full ban
- 11% favour tighter restrictions short of a ban

- 6% oppose further restrictions.

Concern about animal welfare is pronounced: over 90% of respondents report being very or moderately concerned about the impact of fireworks on animals.

Views on human safety, mental health, and antisocial behaviour generally lean towards concern, and environmental impacts (e.g. fires, air quality, waste) are widely regarded as important.

Most respondents wanted the NZVA to advocate strongly for animal welfare protection on this issue, and most indicated they support or strongly support the NZVA's current position statement.

Members also support practical alternatives if public sales are banned: professionally run public displays have strong backing, and there is meaningful interest in quieter technologies (e.g. drone or laser shows) and community events designed with animal-welfare considerations in mind.

A smaller cohort prefers tighter regulation rather than a ban, highlighting predictability (e.g. clear windows, defined locations, advance notice) as critical so owners can prepare.

A minority opposes further restrictions, emphasising personal freedom and tradition, and favouring an owner-responsibility model. Although members hold a range of views, the majority position is clear: most support a ban.

## **NZVA Position Statement**

The NZVA reaffirms its position that the retail sale of fireworks to the public should cease. Fireworks should only be used in licensed public displays run by certified operators, with conditions tailored to the site and season and approved by the relevant territorial authority.

Any framework must safeguard sensitive wildlife areas through clear location limits and require meaningful community notification so animal owners and facilities have sufficient lead-in time to prepare. Education remains a crucial component of harm reduction, and the NZVA will continue to support it.

## **Recommendations**

- Parliament should legislate a ban on the retail sale of fireworks. This aligns with the NZVA's position and reflects strong support within the veterinary profession.
- Fireworks use should be limited to licensed displays run by certified operators under a single national framework. Each display should be subject to a site-specific risk assessment.
- Territorial authorities should be required to provide clear, advance notice through accessible channels with defined start and finish times. This enables animal owners and facilities to implement effective animal-care plans.
- Displays should be prohibited near ecologically significant areas and during critical wildlife periods. Additional mitigations should be applied near properties with horses or grazing stock to reduce flight, injury, and road safety risks.
- Government should establish consistent national reporting on fireworks-related animal injuries, wildlife incidents, human injuries, fires, complaints, and enforcement outcomes. Transparent data will support continuous improvement and evidence-based policy.

- Councils and event organisers should be encouraged to provide professionally managed public displays or lower-impact alternatives (such as drone or laser shows), allowing communities to celebrate while minimising avoidable harm to animals and the environment.

Nāku iti noa, nā,



Kevin Bryant  
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New Zealand Veterinary Association Te Pae Kīrehe



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