



Q&A: What To Know About Fireworks, Horses, and Your Legal Rights

By Leone Equestrian Law | www.EquestrianCounsel.com

Question: My neighbors set off fireworks in their backyard (directly over my barn and pastures!) for two nights in a row. The first night, my horses were in their stalls, and I found them sweating and worked up. The second night, I had them turned out overnight – not knowing that there would again be fireworks – and one of them ended up getting minorly injured after trying to go over the fence! Can I take legal recourse?

Answer: You might not like this answer, but chances are probably not. Because the fireworks were set off on your neighbors' own property, likely in the manner that they were intended to be used, and without the direct intent to harm your horses, your neighbors are not likely to be held liable. You wouldn't want your neighbors trying to dictate what you do on your property, would you? Unfortunately, that's largely the scenario at play here.

However, it may be worth looking into and familiarizing yourself with the local firework laws. If fireworks, or fireworks of a certain size or type, are illegal in your town, your neighbor could then obviously be found at fault. If setting off fireworks violated any laws or ordinances – and the purpose of the law was to preserve peace and quiet in the neighborhood – you might be able to bring a legal action for damages. With that being said, this could lead to a great deal of tension between you and your neighbors!

While this does not sound like the situation at hand here, if the neighbor's fireworks landed on your property, or if they set off the fireworks with the intent to purposely agitate your horse(s), you may be able to bring a claim for, amongst other things, the injury to your horse. An example would be if you caught the neighbor kids shooting bottle rockets aimed at your horse because they liked watching the horse run.



As long as you are given advance notice or know it is a holiday when fireworks may be prevalent, there are also several other things that you can do to best prepare your horses:

- Ensure that your horses are inside for the night and close all windows and doors to help cancel out noise and block any views. While this doesn't sound like it applies in your case, for others who keep horses outside 24/7, it may be worth talking to other equestrians in the area to see if they have open stalls available just for the night.

- Play music in the barn. If you have a stereo system in the barn put it use to again help cancel out the noise of the fireworks. (Make sure that the night of the fireworks is not the first time that your horses have heard the stereo system though – otherwise it could potentially have an equally dramatic effect!)

- If there will be any fireworks visible from in the barn even with the doors and windows closed, leave the lights on to help lessen the effect of the bright flashes.

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Leone Equestrian Law LLC

Led by Armand Leone, Jr., MD, JD, MBA, Leone Equestrian Law LLC provides legal services and consultation for equestrian professionals ranging from riders and trainers to owners and show managers in the FEI disciplines on a wide variety of issues.

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