



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Petitions Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

54th Parliament

April 2026

**Petition of Animates NZ Holdings Ltd,
Pawprint Petition: Ban Public Fireworks
Sales to help protect the Animals of NZ**

**Petition of Suzanne Cook, Ban private sales
of fireworks; allow only licensed public
fireworks events**

**Petition of Raewyn Harrison, Ban the public
sale of fireworks**

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Petition of Animates NZ Holdings Ltd

Petition of Suzanne Cook

Petition of Raewyn Harrison

Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the following petitions:

- Petition of Animates NZ Holdings Ltd, Pawprint Petition: Ban Public Fireworks Sales to help protect the Animals of NZ
- Petition of Suzanne Cook, Ban private sales of fireworks; allow only licensed public fireworks events
- Petition of Raewyn Harrison, Ban the public sale of fireworks.

The committee recommends to the Government that the public sale and private use of fireworks be banned.

Requests to ban the public sale of fireworks

The petition of Animates NZ Holdings Ltd was signed by one person on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Greg Fleming on 7 May 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives ban the sale of fireworks to the New Zealand public; and note that 93,248 people have signed a similar online petition.

The petition of Suzanne Cook was signed by 908 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Greg Fleming on 5 June 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives ban the private sale of fireworks to the public, and restrict fireworks to licensed operators running organised public events in town centres only.

The petition of Raewyn Harrison was signed by 2,233 people on a paper petition. It was presented to the House by Carl Bates on 10 December 2024, and requests:

That the House of Representatives ban the public sale of fireworks.

Parliament's Standing Orders allow us to group together petitions on similar topics.¹ These petitions were presented to the House between December 2024 and June 2025. We decided to group them and to consider them together.

¹ [Standing Order 378\(1\)\(d\)](#).

Background

Legislation regarding fireworks

The Hazardous Substances (Fireworks) Regulations 2001 (fireworks regulations) are made under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996. Under the regulations, fireworks can be sold to the public between 2 November and 5 November each year. The Environmental Protection Authority can approve sales of fireworks outside these dates for cultural or religious gatherings.

Fireworks cannot be sold to people under the age of 18. Fireworks for public sale should not:

- contain more than 40 grams of pyrotechnic substances
- produce a noise that is more than 90dB measured 15 metres away horizontally and 1 metre vertically.

Changes to the fireworks regulations

Changes were made to fireworks regulations in 2001 and 2007. In 2001, a 10-day sale period for fireworks was introduced. The sale period was reduced to four days in 2007. Other changes were made in 2007:

- the minimum age to purchase fireworks was raised from 14 to 18
- sparklers could be sold only as part of a larger retail pack, and were limited to a maximum of 50 sparklers per pack
- the explosive content of retail fireworks was reduced.

The Police became responsible for enforcing restrictions on the sale of fireworks in 2017.

Council bylaws

Councils are responsible for complaints about noise or animal welfare around fireworks. Some councils have bylaws prohibiting fireworks in public spaces.

Previous petitions about fireworks

Since 2006, during the past six parliamentary terms, Parliament has considered 11 petitions requesting increased restrictions on the sale of fireworks. These petitions were considered by various select committees, resulting in seven reports to the House.

The petitions included requests that public sales of fireworks be banned, that the use of fireworks be restricted to public displays, and that the minimum age to purchase fireworks be raised. They raised common themes of concern for animal welfare and human wellbeing.

Comments made in the committee reports have included:

- acknowledgement of the negative effects of fireworks, including the harm to animals from the unpredictability of fireworks use
- observations of a decrease in fireworks-related incidents after changes to fireworks regulations in 2007
- acknowledgement that fireworks have been an important part of celebrations for some New Zealanders
- concerns about fireworks storage requirements.

The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament noted that private sales were decreasing and expressed a belief that this would continue. Further detail about these 11 petitions and seven reports is in Appendix B.

Comments from the petitioners

The written and oral submissions from the current petitioners—Animates, Suzanne Cook, and Raewyn Harrison—have common themes about the effects of fireworks on animal welfare, human wellbeing, and the environment.

Animal welfare

The petitioners said that fireworks cause preventable harm to pets, livestock, and wildlife, including distress, injury, and death. Animates said that Guy Fawkes Day has become “a modern-day nightmare for pet owners, vets, and animal shelters”. Moreover, it said that fireworks are not just a “one-day issue” but are used throughout the year, repeatedly harming animals.

Ms Harrison and Ms Cook commented that the Animal Welfare Act 1999 recognises that animals should be protected from significant injury; despite this, current fireworks rules do not protect animals from harm. Ms Harrison noted that the Act acknowledges that animals are sentient beings, which means animals can experience positive and negative emotions. Animates asked Parliament to protect the welfare of all, including those who cannot speak for themselves. It asked that animals be recognised as taonga, pets as cherished family members, and livestock and wildlife as neighbours.

Unpredictability

Animates said that trauma, injury, and deaths of animals from fireworks use are often caused by people acting entirely within the current laws. New Zealand’s fireworks regulations establish dates on which fireworks may be sold, but there are no rules about when fireworks can be used. The petitioners all referred to the unpredictability of fireworks use. This unpredictability means that pet and animal owners often have no time to prepare, protect, or calm their pets.

We heard that there is no “safe window”, meaning that owners cannot reliably plan when they will need to confine pets or relocate outdoor animals away from fireworks. Animates said that private fireworks use can happen without warning at any time. It said that, even when used responsibly and carefully, fireworks are sudden, loud, and bright.

Animates said that animals cannot distinguish fireworks from other dangers. It said that loud, unpredictable explosions lead to:

- physical injuries, including burns, cuts, and broken bones from fleeing or panic
- lost and traumatised pets
- overwhelmed shelters and rescues
- long-term behavioural and anxiety issues.

Pets and companion animals

Ms Harrison said that many people who signed her petition shared stories about the effects fireworks had on their pets. She said signatories wanted to honour pets that had been traumatised, or even killed, by fireworks. Ms Harrison told us that her own dog Tui, “a much loved and valued member of our whānau”, would start trembling and panting as soon as fireworks started. She told us she could see the terror in her dog’s eyes.

Animates referred to media coverage of a German Shepherd, Izzy, who died in Darfield on the first day of fireworks sales in 2025 after bolting in terror from a fully fenced yard.² While collecting signatures for its petition, Animates also heard stories from New Zealand families about the effects of fireworks on their pets. These included:

- dogs breaking windows or fleeing in terror, resulting in serious injuries
- cats disappearing or being hit by cars while running from explosions
- small animals like birds and rabbits dying of fright.

Horses and livestock

Each of the petitioners referred to media reports about the 2024 death of Remi, a horse in Tauranga, whose hoof was ripped off after she bolted through a fence when scared by fireworks.³ We heard other stories of horses and livestock affected by fireworks use.

Ms Cook owns horses, and told us she experienced “three nights of hell” when people set off fireworks in rural paddocks. She said many horse owners do not live on the same property as their horse, so may not be aware immediately if fireworks are set off near their animals. She said that she had not previously experienced fireworks being set off near her horse paddocks, either by people who live rurally or by people who travelled from urban areas to set off fireworks in the country.

Animates shared stories about injuries and deaths of horses and livestock. It noted that these outcomes were not the result of poor pet or animal management but were predictable outcomes. Its submission includes these excerpts from stories it had been told:

One of our poor heifers ran and fell into a concrete water trough, and when her head went through the sheep netting on the other side of it, she strangled herself to death trying to get out.

Every year we have at least one [horse] with injuries post-fireworks, usually from running into a fence, stumbling over or pulling a muscle/ligament when running quickly and suddenly to get away from the noise.

Ms Cook and Animates noted that fireworks and pyrotechnics have been banned at rodeos since 2014. It said the decision by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) to implement a ban was grounded in evidence that sudden loud noises and flashes can trigger acute stress responses in horses and cattle, resulting in “fight or flight”

² Stuff, [‘Absolutely beautiful’ dog dies on first day of firework sales, family call for change](#), 4 November 2025.

³ Radio New Zealand, [Horse put down due to catastrophic injuries caused by fireworks](#), 8 November 2024.

reactions. Animates would like to see this decision used as a precedent for policy about fireworks around horses and cattle in other settings.

Wildlife

Ms Harrison noted studies showing that fireworks also disrupt wild bird and marine mammal populations. She said that native birds at Lake Virginia in Whanganui nest in November. She told us that, when the fireworks start going off, “often the birds will leave the nest, will leave their chicks, will leave their eggs, and not come back”.

Human wellbeing

Ms Harrison and Animates noted that around 300 new ACC claims annually result from fireworks-related injuries. While collecting signatures for the petition, Ms Harrison spoke to a former nurse who had treated children who were hospitalised after fireworks incidents, including injuries to fingers and eyes.

Ms Cook told us that she started campaigning against fireworks after she experienced concussion. “When the fireworks went off a couple of years ago, I was actually driven balmy by the noise”, she said. She told us about a woman with a neurodiverse child who said that the effects of fireworks had gone on for eight weeks, and that she was “at the end of her tether”.

Ms Harrison said that people who have pets know “the love, the time, the investment, the care, the nurturing, the financial investment” their owners put into them. Ms Cook said that when animals suffer because of fireworks, their human owners also experience trauma and grief.

Ms Harrison expressed concern about antisocial behaviour involving fireworks. She told us that a signatory to her petition reported that live fireworks had been thrown at her while she was out shopping on her mobility scooter. Ms Harrison said the woman was terrified “because there was no way she could protect herself, nothing she could do.”

Environmental and property damage

Ms Harrison said that fireworks cause fires, and that this is worsening because of changing environmental conditions due to climate change. Ms Cook noted that these fires are usually described as “scrub fires”, but they are often native bush fires. Animates said there was an increase in fireworks-related fires in 2024. Both Ms Harrison and Animates expressed concern about the burden on first responders, including emergency and health services, the Police, and local councils.

Ms Harrison said fireworks are stockpiled, because they can only be purchased for a few days a year but can be used on any day of the year. She is concerned that unsafe storage of fireworks contributes to risks to property and the environment.

Alternatives to private sales and use of fireworks

The petitioners are all in favour of licensed, professionally managed public fireworks events as an alternative to private sales of fireworks. Animates said that public events are planned, managed, and communicated in advance. It said this gives animal owners, emergency services, and communities the opportunity to prepare.

Animates said it was not asking for an end to community celebrations, and it acknowledged that fireworks bring joy and fun to many New Zealanders. However, it believes it is time “to enjoy them in a new, safer way, where risk is controlled, and harm is minimised, protecting the people and the animals that we love.” Animates said controls would be needed to authorise the hosting of public and community events, “so that not just anyone is able to purchase and light these.”

Ms Harrison told us that she personally would like to see fireworks banned completely, but that she was representing the views of signatories to her petition, some of whom support one-off events that are managed and regulated.

Commercial pyrotechnic displays

Ms Cook emphasised that commercial pyrotechnic displays still need rules and notifications. She said that each year a commercial display of fireworks is held at Waitoki, in rural north Auckland. Ms Cook told us that, in April 2025, although a community notice was distributed for a commercial display, it did not provide location details. Also, the event took place an hour later than advertised. She said this meant that people in a rural setting still did not know exactly when and where their animals needed to be protected.

Comments from fireworks sellers

As there is no formal industry group for fireworks sellers that we could seek comment from, we invited written and oral submissions from a fireworks seller with a petition on the Parliament website. We were later approached by James York of York Corporation, which trades as Bad Boy Fireworks, who asked to submit on behalf of a fireworks importers’ group. We invited and received written and oral submissions from York Corporation.

Liam Kilpatrick of LemonPlastic Fireworks has a petition open for signatures on the Parliament website, requesting a referendum about extending the days on which fireworks could be sold.⁴ We invited Mr Kilpatrick to consider closing his petition early and arranging for it to be presented to the House, so it could be considered alongside these petitions. We also invited Mr Kilpatrick to make written and oral submissions on the petitions of Animates, Suzanne Cook, and Raewyn Harrison.

Mr Kilpatrick provided a short written submission about his own petition, in which he asked for a law change that would allow fireworks to be sold on dates outside 2–5 November without approval from the Environmental Protection Authority. Mr Kilpatrick did not provide any comments on the three petitions that have been presented to the House.

We do not comment substantively on the idea raised in Mr Kilpatrick’s petition in this report. Our role is to consider requests made in petitions that have been presented to the House. It would be premature for us to comment on a petition that has not yet been presented to Parliament.

⁴ [Petition of Liam Kilpatrick: Hold a referendum on allowing fireworks sales at more times of the year.](#)

Comments from York Corporation and other fireworks importers

York Corporation's written submission included supporting material from Steven Khov of Boom Brothers Fireworks and Len Julian of Pyro Company Fireworks, as well as a letter of support from Taupaki School. Mr York was supported by Mr Khov in his oral submission.

Mr York and Mr Khov told us that "banning retail fireworks is not the solution". Mr York said that New Zealand has some of the strictest fireworks regulations in the world, alongside testing procedures that ensure fireworks being sold in New Zealand are of good quality and as safe as possible.

Mr Khov said that New Zealand's maximum limit of 40 grams of pyrotechnic content in an individual firework item is much lower than a maximum of 500 grams in the United States and up to 1 kilogram in the European Union. Mr Julian said that adverse incident rates and costs have declined over the past 10 years. He believes this demonstrates that the current regulatory framework successfully minimises risks.

Kiwi fireworks traditions

Mr York said that Guy Fawkes Day is a long-held Kiwi tradition, and that Diwali and Chinese New Year are also growing in significance as days on which New Zealanders enjoy fireworks. Mr Khov said that people are also now including fireworks in Matariki celebrations and that many couples use fireworks in wedding ceremonies.

Mr York told us that "in this digital world where children and young adults live constantly online, fireworks night is a great way for families to get together outside in their own backyard and spend some time together". Mr Khov said Guy Fawkes Day signals the start of the warmer months in New Zealand and the start of the barbecue season. Mr Julian said that family fireworks evenings are one of the last remaining forms of outdoor social entertainment that are not focused on alcohol.

One estimate, based on a sample of importers' sales figures, is that one-third of New Zealand households purchase fireworks; however, Mr York believes the number is closer to half. He believes that the "silent majority" of New Zealanders support the sale and use of retail fireworks. Mr Khov said that people who support fireworks use show their support by buying fireworks, rather than by signing petitions. He said that if the general public shared the views of the petitioners, there would be no market for fireworks sales.

We heard that, as well as providing fireworks for personal and household use, fireworks importers and retailers support fundraising events for charitable causes and groups. Mr York said those groups tell him that this is money they cannot raise through other forms of fundraising. The letter of support from Taupaki School said that its partnership with Bad Boy Fireworks has raised over \$1 million for the school.

Public fireworks displays

Mr York noted the petitioners' request for public displays to replace sales of fireworks to the public. He cautioned that public displays are reducing in number rather than increasing, because no one will fund them. He said when local authorities put on public displays they receive complaints that they are wasting ratepayers' money. Mr Khov said that public displays come at a significant cost and are mostly funded privately.

We were told that the fireworks display market is propped up by retail fireworks. Mr York said that fireworks have to be imported in commercially realistic quantities. He said that, without the importation of large quantities of retail fireworks, shipping companies would not be interested in transporting display fireworks to New Zealand.

Economic benefits of fireworks

Mr York and Mr Khov told us that five businesses currently import retail fireworks. Mr Khov said that banning retail sales of fireworks would destroy the industry and would result in hundreds of job losses. He believes that requests to ban retail sales of fireworks come from a small group of people relative to the size of New Zealand's population. Mr Julian told us that fireworks are used for only a few hours annually, which he said is far less frequent than other noise or light sources, such as sports events or roadworks.

Animal welfare and misuse of fireworks

Mr Khov said that using the protection of animals as a reason to ban retail fireworks is "simply a cop out". He said that animals are subject to noises from many sources every day, including motorbikes, loud car exhausts, trucks, and thunderstorms.

Mr Julian said that New Zealand should retain the freedom for adults to safely celebrate within a controlled and lawful framework. Mr Khov said that people who use fireworks to deliberately hurt or injure an animal, and the small minority of individuals who misuse fireworks in other ways, should be punished for their actions. He said businesses that supply fireworks legally should not be penalised for other people's misbehaviour.

Comments from the Ministry for the Environment

The Ministry for the Environment administers New Zealand's fireworks regulations. It said that the fireworks regulations aim to strike a balance between public safety and industry interests, allowing New Zealanders to access, use, and sell fireworks safely.

The ministry said the fireworks regulations set rules about the sale period and the minimum age for purchasing fireworks. They do not cover the way fireworks are used, including when and where they are discharged. Storage and handling of fireworks after purchase are also not regulated.

A ban on retail fireworks would significantly reduce the negative effects of fireworks on people, animals, and the environment, the ministry told us. However, it said a ban could have negative effects on the enjoyment people receive from fireworks, and that competing interests need to be balanced. The ministry said that, although public displays could reduce the negative effects from fireworks, they may not be accessible to all New Zealanders, especially people living in rural communities.

Long-term trends show adverse effects have declined

The ministry collects and reports data about the effects of retail fireworks use, which include fires, injuries, and public disturbances. The ministry said it cannot report on the effects of fireworks on animal welfare, including native wildlife, due to a lack of data sources for that information.

Long-term data shows that the number of adverse effects from fireworks has trended downwards over time. The ministry said that negative effects peaked in 2005 and 2006, which were the two years before changes were made to fireworks regulations. It said the number of injuries to people has declined overall since 2003.

The total number of fires from fireworks showed a decline from around 600 in 2006 to under 100 in 2022. However, between 2022 and 2023, the ministry said there was an increase in the negative effects of fireworks, including a 58 percent increase in fires. In 2024, the number of fires increased again.

Changing public attitudes towards retail fireworks

The ministry said it is seeing a behavioural change from both the public and retail industry away from the personal use of fireworks. In 2021, The Warehouse ceased selling fireworks, based on survey data that showed that more than half its customers said they preferred to attend public fireworks displays, and 28 percent did not participate in fireworks activities at all. This followed a similar decision by Woolworths (Countdown) in 2019.

Although there is no active work from the Government to ban or further regulate fireworks, the ministry said that the public and retail industry are speaking through their actions in reducing the retail accessibility of fireworks.

Annual update on the regulation of fireworks in New Zealand 2025

Following our hearing with the Ministry for the Environment, we received the ministry's annual update to the Minister for the Environment on the regulation of fireworks in New Zealand.⁵ The report set out the following statistics about retail fireworks use in the 2024 calendar year:

- A total of 603,239 kilograms of fireworks were imported in 2024 (about 5 percent more than the 575,544 kilograms of fireworks imported in 2023).
- Fireworks reportedly caused 166 fires in 2024 (an increase of around 56 percent on the previous year).
- A total of 1,627 service calls to the New Zealand Police relating to fireworks (about 3.5 percent more than the year prior).
- A total of 286 new claims to ACC for fireworks-related injuries in 2024 (a decrease of 55 fireworks-related injury claims compared to 2023). However, the report notes that ACC reported that while fireworks-related injuries were lower in 2023 than in 2024, the cost of these injuries was higher in 2024.

The Police received 1,627 fireworks-related service calls around the fireworks sales period in 2024. Of these, 386 calls were received between 2 and 5 November 2024. We note that this means that 1,241 fireworks-related service calls—the majority—were made to the Police outside the fireworks sales period.

The report noted that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has previously estimated the benefits to the public from retail fireworks at \$30 million.

⁵ The annual update on the regulation of fireworks in New Zealand 2025 is available on [the Ministry for the Environment's website](#).

Comments from Fire and Emergency New Zealand

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) supports the three petitions. Its position is that the retail sale of fireworks for public use poses a significant and unacceptable risk to public safety, to its personnel, and to the environment. It said that this risk is fundamentally at odds with FENZ's core mission. This is to reduce the incidence of unwanted fires and the associated risk to life and property, and to protect and preserve life, and preventing or limiting injury, as well as damage to property, land, and the environment.

FENZ said that fireworks-related fires are part of a “predictable and recurring pattern” that place lives, property, and the environment at risk. It said a ban on the retail sale of fireworks to the public would be a necessary and proportionate step which would remove risk and protect communities.

Fireworks-related fires

FENZ responds to and records fire incidents that involve fireworks. It said these incidents may include “large scale vegetation fires that burn for days and devastate communities, environments and ecosystems”. They also include “chaotic nights” where FENZ communication centres are inundated with calls, and crews are dispatched to multiple simultaneous incidents across the country.

FENZ provided tables of fireworks-related fires from 2015–2024. The tables, below, show the number of fires each year, and the number of fires each November (the month that includes Guy Fawkes Day). FENZ said that, after an initial drop, incident numbers appear to be rising again. It noted that COVID-19 restrictions may have contributed to lower incident numbers in 2020–2022. It also said that some incidents in 2022 may not have been reported because of industrial action by the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union.

Full year: Fires where cause, heat source, or objects ignited were fireworks

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Structure fire	30	17	18	9	14	8	6	7	10	9
Vegetation fire	268	179	173	122	187	90	82	51	73	133
Other fire	27	25	24	16	30	27	16	9	23	24
Total	325	221	215	147	231	125	104	67	106	166

November: Fires where cause, heat source, or objects ignited were fireworks

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Structure fire	16	12	14	6	8	5	4	2	7	2
Vegetation fire	177	93	103	78	136	33	36	20	38	87
Other fire	20	13	13	8	16	8	6	3	14	13
Total	213	118	130	92	160	46	46	25	59	102

Source: FENZ written submission

Storage of fireworks

FENZ told us that there are risks with the storage of fireworks. It said that businesses selling fireworks include temporary “pop-up” outlets. Retailers in these outlets may take fireworks home or to another location overnight. FENZ said that firefighters could attend an incident without knowing that they are entering a building where fireworks are held.

Previous FENZ submissions on fireworks

FENZ told us that its former Chief Executive and National Commander Mike Hall had called for a ban on the retail sale of fireworks in 2007. FENZ and its predecessor, the New Zealand Fire Service, have made submissions in support of petitions requesting a ban on retail sales of fireworks in 2015, 2019, and 2022.⁶

Comments from animal welfare organisations

We invited written and oral submissions from the New Zealand Veterinary Association | Te Pae Kīrehe (NZVA), the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa (VAWA). The three organisations support the requests in the petitions to ban retail sales of fireworks. We acknowledge that comments made by the animal welfare organisations often repeat comments made by the petitioners.

Positions of animal welfare groups

The SPCA is New Zealand’s largest animal welfare organisation. It told us it has been advocating a ban on the importation, sale, and use of fireworks for decades. It said that New Zealand’s approach to fireworks regulation is more permissive than many other jurisdictions, including parts of Australia, the United States, Ireland, and Canada. It said that harms caused by the private use of fireworks are well evidenced, widespread, and serious, while benefits are small or anecdotal.

The NZVA is the professional body for veterinarians. Its position on fireworks since 2019 is that the sale of fireworks to the public should be banned to protect animals from direct and indirect harm.

The NZVA undertook an online survey of its members to inform its submission, which had 181 responses. Of these, 81 percent supported a full ban on retail sales of fireworks to the public, while 11 percent supported tighter restrictions, but not a full ban. This group placed emphasis on predictability, such as clear time windows for using fireworks, defined locations, and advance notice so animal owners could prepare. A model based on owner responsibility was favoured by the 6 percent of survey respondents who opposed further restrictions.

VAWA is a group of animal welfare advocates led by veterinarians. It supports a total ban on the sale of fireworks to the public because of the regular and serious effects fireworks have on animals, people, and the environment. It considers that New Zealand’s animal welfare

⁶ [New Zealand Fire Service submission to the Government Administration Committee on the petition of Charlotte Purdy, March 2015](#); [Fire and Emergency New Zealand submission to the Governance and Administration Committee on the petition of Melanie Lindstrom, August 2019](#); and [Fire and Emergency New Zealand submission to the Petitions Committee on the petitions of Grayson Sutherland and Catherine Bindon, September 2022](#), available on the Parliament website.

legislation is world-leading because it acknowledges that animals can feel physical pain and distress, as well as psychological experiences. VAWA said that fireworks cause both physical and psychological harm to animals.

Unpredictability

The NZVA said fireworks create risks that are both predictable and unpredictable. The predictable risks are that fireworks create sudden, high-intensity noise and light, as well as debris and ignition sources for fires. The unpredictability arises because private use of fireworks can take place with little or no notice. This is because current rules limit when fireworks can be sold, but they do not limit when fireworks can be used.

The SPCA said animal owners are unable to take precautionary measures to protect animals because they cannot predict when fireworks will be set off. The NZVA said stockpiling and sporadic use extends fireworks risks well beyond the legal sales period of 2–5 November. It told us that unscheduled fireworks undermine animal welfare efforts.

Safety measures to minimise the effects of fireworks on animals can include moving animals to other paddocks or properties, stabling horses, and medicating anxious animals in advance. However, the NZVA said that none of these safety measures can be taken once fireworks have begun. It told us that frightened or panicked animals can endanger themselves, their owners, and others they might encounter. The SPCA said the unpredictability of fireworks use can lead animals to become sensitised to fireworks noise, rather than desensitised. That sensitivity can then become generalised to a fear of other loud noises.

Harm to animals

The NZVA said that every year veterinary teams see animals that are injured, animals that are terrified, and animals that are killed as a result of fireworks use. Examples the NZVA and VAWA provided include:

- horses and livestock that crash through paddocks, and collide with fencing, farm equipment, and trees
- horses and livestock that end up on public roads
- dogs with severe noise phobias that self-injure
- cats that go missing or are injured after bolting from their homes
- dogs and cats that are hit by cars in escape attempts
- wild birds that are displaced or killed.

The SPCA said that New Zealand research shows that up to three-quarters of cat and dog owners report their animals show fear of fireworks, as well as four out of five horse owners. VAWA believes these figures are still likely to underreport the effects on animals, as many people do not recognise fear and anxiety in their pets.

The SPCA said fear can lead to panic and destructive behaviour. The NZVA said that some animals never recover their sense of security and can develop long-term anxiety. It told us that, for some animals, the trauma can be so severe that euthanasia is the only humane option that veterinarians can offer.

The SPCA said that over a quarter of horse owners have had animals injured because of fireworks. We were also told that around 6 percent of cats and dogs are injured because of fireworks. VAWA said that significant physical injuries are costly to treat and, in some instances, economic constraints may lead to euthanasia of injured animals. It said having a companion animal is beneficial, and having to say goodbye to a pet can be damaging for many people.

The SPCA said that New Zealand zoos have long supported a ban on the private sale and use of fireworks. Captive animals have a limited ability to escape the stress of noise and light from fireworks. Documented deaths of animals in captivity in New Zealand linked to fireworks-induced stress include a giraffe, an antelope, and a wallaby joey.

Research and reporting

VAWA noted that animal data is neither collected nor collated nationally. The SPCA and the NZVA told us they do not collate data on animal injuries. However, they told us several New Zealand studies have documented numbers of animals injured as a result of fireworks:

- In a study of horse owners, 35 percent reported having horses run through fences in response to fireworks, with 26 percent reporting injuries from cuts to broken limbs. Some horses required euthanasia.⁷
- In a study of cat and dog owners, 6 percent of animals were reported to have been injured due to fireworks.⁸
- A 2019 study recorded at least 345 animals severely injured by fireworks, with 14 percent dying or being euthanised as a result.⁹

The NZVA would like to see consistent national reporting on fireworks-related animal injuries, wildlife incidents, human injuries, fires, complaints, and enforcement outcomes.

Harm to wildlife

The SPCA told us that international research shows that fireworks can affect birds' feeding behaviour and can lead to birds abandoning nests. Fireworks can cause mass panic flights and collisions, and can affect conservation programmes for birds in zoos. The SPCA said that, in the long term, fireworks could affect population numbers of New Zealand birds, which are already under pressure from predators and habitat changes. VAWA referred to international research showing the effects of fireworks on birdlife.¹⁰

The SPCA is also concerned about potential effects of fireworks on marine life. It said that, while the topic is under-researched, sound can travel long distances through water, and it is

⁷ Gronquest, G, Rogers, C and Gee, E (2016). The management of horses during fireworks in New Zealand. *Animals*, 6(3).

⁸ Dale, A R, Walker, J K, Farnworth, M J, Morrissey, S V, & Waran, N K (2010). A survey of owners' perceptions of fear of fireworks in a sample of dogs and cats in New Zealand. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal*, 58(6), pp 286–291.

⁹ Gates, M C, Zito, S, Walker, J K, & Dale, A R (2019). Owner perceptions and management of the adverse behavioural effects of fireworks on companion animals: an update. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal*, 67(6), pp 323–328.

¹⁰ Shamoun-Baranes, J et al (2011). Birds flee en mass from New Year's Eve fireworks. *Behavioral ecology*, 22, pp 1173–1177.

known that dolphins and whales change their behaviour in response to loud and abrupt noises. VAWA said, internationally, sea lions have been observed leaving their colony for two days after fireworks.

Public fireworks displays

The SPCA said public displays provide a way for communities to get together for fireworks on important cultural days. It would prefer that New Zealand allow only laser and drone shows. It believes these would be better for animals and the environment than fireworks, and that they would also be cheaper. However, the SPCA believes that a ban on the private sale and use of fireworks, in combination with licensed public displays, would offer a balanced approach.

VAWA said that while public displays can also cause harm to animals, such events allow for the possibility of mitigating harm through planning and support for animals. It said fireworks displays should not be allowed near sensitive wildlife areas. The NZVA and the SPCA also supported restricting or prohibiting fireworks displays near ecologically significant areas and during critical wildlife periods. The NZVA said that additional protection measures would be needed near properties with horses or grazing stock.

International comparisons

We asked the Parliamentary Library to provide information about fireworks regulations in other countries.

Fireworks regulations in Australia

Fireworks regulations are devolved to individual states and territories. Members of the public are only allowed to purchase fireworks in Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The settings in each state and territory are:

- **Australian Capital Territory:** Fireworks may only be used in a fireworks display if the products are authorised for use and the person responsible for conducting the display has been issued with a fireworks display permit.
- **New South Wales:** It is illegal to buy, possess, or discharge fireworks without a pyrotechnician's or single-use licence, and all fireworks displays must be notified to SafeWork New South Wales.
- **Northern Territory:** Members of the public aged 18 and over may purchase fireworks on 1 July each year between 9:00am and 9:00pm for Territory Day Celebrations.
- **Queensland:** Fireworks are controlled under the Explosives Act 1999, and only those issued with licences under the Act are allowed to use and handle them.
- **South Australia:** A pyrotechnician's licence, or direct supervision by a licensed pyrotechnician, is required to use fireworks, excluding fireworks such as sparklers, bon bons, and toy pistol caps.
- **Tasmania:** Cracker Night falls on 24 May each year (or the following Saturday). Anyone 18 years or older can apply for a Cracker Night permit, which allows the holder to purchase and use fireworks. Fireworks displays held without a permit are illegal and attract fines. Cracker Night permits are approved for a 45-minute display in one of two timeslots, either from 7:00pm to 7:45pm, or 7:45pm to 8:30pm.

- **Victoria:** Only a licensed pyrotechnician can use fireworks, and notification is required before they are used.
- **Western Australia:** Only licenced pyrotechnicians can use fireworks, and a licence is needed to purchase, use, store, manufacture, supply, and transport fireworks. Unrestricted fireworks include bon bons, party poppers, Christmas crackers, and sparklers; otherwise the use of fireworks by the general public is banned.

Fireworks regulations in the United Kingdom

Fireworks can be used in the United Kingdom on any day from 7:00am to 11.00pm. Exceptions are made for Guy Fawkes Day, when they can be used from 7:00am to midnight, and New Year's Eve, Diwali, and Chinese New Year, when they can be used from 7:00am to 1:00am the following day.

The United Kingdom has different categories of fireworks with various age restrictions. The regulations include restrictions on where fireworks can be used. Fireworks can only be used on the street or in a public place as part of an organised event by licensed professionals. It is an offence to throw or set off any firework into any street or public place.

Our response to the petition

We thank the petitioners and all the submitters on these petitions. We heard passionate testimony and advocacy, both from those who want to see change to New Zealand's fireworks rules and practices, and from those who see value in the current arrangements.

We acknowledge that, for many New Zealanders, fireworks use is an important part of family and community celebrations. Cultural traditions from different parts of the world have contributed to the use of fireworks in New Zealand. These include Guy Fawkes Day, Diwali, Chinese New Year, New Year's Eve and, increasingly, Matariki.

On the other hand, we also acknowledge that fireworks cause significant harm.

Adverse effects of fireworks

We heard that fireworks frighten many animals and, as a result, many are injured and some killed, often while trying to get away from the noise and light. We were told that the trauma may continue well beyond a specific fireworks event and can result in long-lasting behavioural changes. We also heard that many animal owners feel stressed trying to protect animals from harm, and are distressed when they witness or experience their animals suffering.

Pet and animal owners, veterinarians, and animal welfare organisations told us that the unpredictability of fireworks use contributes to animals' harm and distress, as fireworks use extends beyond the legal four-day sales period. We heard that this makes it very difficult for animal owners to plan and take measures to protect their animals. We were told by one fireworks seller that fireworks are used for only a few hours annually in New Zealand, but from the evidence we received and our own observations, we do not accept that this is the case.

FENZ told us that the use of private fireworks creates significant and unacceptable levels of risk to public safety and the environment. Emergency workers have to respond to fireworks-

related fires and deal with their aftermath. We see that, after an apparent drop in fireworks-related incidents up to and including 2022, the number of fires has increased for the past two years.

Guy Fawkes Day takes place annually on 5 November. It originated in the United Kingdom, where it is celebrated during late autumn, a time of year that is wet and dark. By contrast, in New Zealand, Guy Fawkes Day falls during late spring, which may be dry and windy. It also takes place during the nesting and breeding season for New Zealand's native birds, and we heard that birds may leave or abandon their nests as a result of fireworks use. We think many New Zealanders would share our concerns that fireworks use could increase the risk of fires and undermine efforts to protect and conserve wildlife.

We heard that fireworks use also affects human wellbeing. This includes human injuries, and the effects of unpredictable noise on vulnerable people such as neurodiverse children. We observe that, while the number of ACC claims for fireworks-related injuries has decreased, the cost of those claims is increasing.

Changing public attitudes to fireworks

Including these three petitions, seven Parliaments have now considered 14 petitions asking for changes to fireworks rules. The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament was the most recent to report on this issue. It saw a downwards trend in fireworks use and fireworks-related adverse incidents, and expressed its belief that this would continue. However, we have received evidence that incidents such as fireworks-related fires are again increasing. We think that, sooner or later, those harms must be addressed. We do not intend to leave this for another Parliament to consider.

Our assessment is that public sentiment is shifting. We consider that present generations have more information about, and therefore take more seriously, the effects of fireworks on animal welfare than previous generations may have done. We heard that this changing sentiment is reflected in surveys, including those by the two major retailers that stopped selling fireworks to the public as a result of the changing attitudes of customers.

As New Zealand's climate and weather patterns change, we think that practices that have originated in different climates and seasons may need to change and adapt. Australia shares with New Zealand many aspects of culture and heritage brought or inherited from the United Kingdom, but we note that Australia's fireworks rules do not allow public use of fireworks in November, the start of the Australian bush fire season.

New Zealand's fireworks regulations were last formally reviewed 20 years ago in 2006, with changes introduced in 2007, the following year. We note that limiting fireworks purchases to four days a year does not appear to have limited the use of those fireworks to that period. Our observation is that fireworks use has expanded well beyond the four-day window. We agree with Animates' view that the trauma, injury, and deaths of animals from fireworks use are caused by people acting entirely within the current laws. We think it is time to reconsider the use of fireworks in New Zealand.

Our recommendation

Given the evidence we received, we find it difficult to do anything other than recommend a ban on the public sale and private use of fireworks. We heard from Fire and Emergency New

Zealand, the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, and Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa, who all strongly supported a ban. The evidence related to animal welfare, including native wildlife, and, in the case of FENZ, danger to life and property ensuing from the use of fireworks by the public. We also considered statistics from the Ministry for the Environment which included numbers of police call-outs related to fireworks. We therefore recommend to the Government that the public sale and private use of fireworks be banned. However, we believe public, notified displays of fireworks by licensed operators should be permitted.

We recognise that New Zealanders will hold a range of opinions about this, and believe that Parliament should take the lead in generating discussion about it. We think this would be a good topic for a special debate.

Public licensed fireworks displays

We acknowledge that a ban on private sales and use of fireworks would affect those fireworks importers and sellers that primarily sell to the public. We observe that this is an entrepreneurial group of people who have previously successfully adapted their business practices in response to changes made in 2001 and 2007.

We encourage fireworks importers and sellers to continue to develop their business models to meet what we perceive to be an increasing appetite for licensed public fireworks displays. We acknowledge their concern that, under the present rules, public displays have been decreasing rather than increasing. We do not think that would necessarily continue to be the case if public fireworks displays were to become the primary way that New Zealanders enjoy fireworks. We think New Zealand families and communities could be willing to pay for these experiences, as they do for other types of events.

We think that, with appropriate rules and guidelines in place to protect animals and the environment, public fireworks displays could ensure that fireworks continue to be a welcome part of New Zealand's cultural and community celebrations.

Appendix A: Committee procedure

The petition of Animates NZ Holdings Ltd was signed by one person on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Greg Fleming on 7 May 2025 and referred to us. We met between 24 July 2025 and 30 April 2026 to consider it.

The petition of Suzanne Cook was signed by 908 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Greg Fleming on 5 June 2025 and referred to us. We met between 24 July 2025 and 30 April 2026 to consider it.

The petition of Raewyn Harrison was signed by 2,233 people on a paper petition. It was presented to the House by Carl Bates on 10 December 2024. We met between 10 April 2025 and 30 April 2026 to consider it.

We received written submissions from the petitioners, York Corporation (Bad Boy Fireworks), LemonPlastic Fireworks, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Ministry for the Environment, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, the SPCA, and Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa. We heard oral submissions from the petitioners, York Corporation (Bad Boy Fireworks), Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Ministry for the Environment, the New Zealand Veterinary Association, the SPCA, and Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa. We received advice from the Parliamentary Library.

Committee members

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)
Kahurangi Carter (until 11 February 2026)
Greg Fleming
Paulo Garcia
Celia Wade-Brown (from 11 February 2026)

Jenny Marcroft also participated in our consideration of these petitions.

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to these petitions are available on [the Parliament website](#).

A recording of our hearing can be accessed online on [the Parliament website](#).

Signatures on petitions

Some submitters questioned the validity of signatures on the Animates petition. Animates collected pawprints from pets as well as human signatures on its petition on its website. Those signatures have not been transferred to Animates' parliamentary petition, which was presented to the House with one signature. Suzanne Cook collected signatures on the Parliament website, and Raewyn Harrison collected signatures on a paper petition.

To avoid any doubt, we would like to clarify that we did not recognise any animal pawprints as signatures.

Appendix B: Previous parliamentary petitions on fireworks

48th Parliament

The Local Government and Environment Committee of the 48th Parliament considered four petitions requesting changes to the sale of fireworks:

- Petition of June Mary Cross requesting that the House ban the sale of fireworks over the counter to members of the public, and restrict fireworks to licensed public displays only.¹¹
- Petition of Patricia Hall requesting that the sale and discharge of fireworks be limited to those licensed for the purpose, that the sale of fireworks to the general public be banned and the discharge of fireworks be limited to public displays.¹²
- Petition of Regan Orr on behalf of Room 7, Russell Street School, Palmerston North requesting that the age of buying fireworks be raised from 14 to 20.¹³
- Petition of Judy Taylor requesting that Parliament legislate to ban the sale of fireworks to the general public.¹⁴

The committee reported on the petitions of June Cross and Patricia Hall together.¹⁵ It noted that the Ministry for the Environment was aware of the issues raised by the petitioners and was working to address public concerns about fireworks.

The committee reported on the petition of Regan Orr, saying that it would continue to monitor the effectiveness of education and awareness measures to educate the public about safe fireworks use.

The committee reported on the petition of Judy Taylor, saying that the Minister for the Environment was looking into issues surrounding the sale of fireworks.

49th Parliament

The Government Administration Committee considered one petition requesting changes to the sale of fireworks:

- Petition of Tony Ciani requesting that the Government ban the sale of fireworks for private use and allow them for public displays only.¹⁶

The committee reported on the petition, noting that fireworks regulations were tightened in 2006 for Guy Fawkes Day 2007, in response to public concerns. These changes included shortening the fireworks sale period and raising the legal purchase age.

¹¹ [Petition of June Mary Cross and 213 others: Petition 2005/0034 of June Mary Cross and 213 others.](#)

¹² [Petition of Patricia Hall and 504 others: Petition 2005/0036 of Patricia Hall and 504 others.](#)

¹³ [Petition of Regan Orr on behalf of Room 7, Russell Street School, Palmerston North and 1,142 others: Petition 2005/0085 of Regan Orr on behalf of Room 7, Russell Street School, Palmerston North and 1,142 others](#)

¹⁴ [Petition of Judy Taylor and 2 648 others: Petition 2005/0024 of Judy Taylor and 2 648 others.](#)

¹⁵ Reports from the 48th and 49th Parliaments are not available on the Parliament website.

¹⁶ [Petition of Tony Ciani: Petition 2008/0035 of Tony Ciani.](#)

50th and 51st Parliaments

The Government Administration Committees of the 50th and 51st Parliaments considered one petition requesting changes to the sale of fireworks.

- Petition of Charlotte Purdy requesting that the House note that 25,000 people had signed an online petition requesting that the private sale of fireworks be banned.¹⁷

The petition was presented to the House in August 2014 and was referred to the Government Administration Committee of the 50th Parliament. It was reinstated in the 51st Parliament. The Government Administration Committee of the 51st Parliament reported to the House in August 2015.¹⁸

The report acknowledged the negative effects fireworks could have, especially when used inappropriately, and recognised the frustration many people felt about the unpredictability of fireworks use. It said that most people who used fireworks did so responsibly. It noted that changes to fireworks regulations in 2007 had led to a decrease in fireworks-related incidents, and said consideration had been given at that time to limiting fireworks use to a specified period, but that was not adopted because of concerns about enforcement.

The committee expressed concern about the proliferation of fireworks retailers and the growth of pop-up stores. It asked the Government to consider the lack of penalties for breaching fireworks storage requirements.

52nd Parliament

The Governance and Administration Committee of the 52nd Parliament considered three petitions requesting changes to the sale of fireworks:

- Petition of Catherine Bindon: Ban the sale of fireworks to the public¹⁹
- Petition of Chris Eichbaum: Cease retail sales of fireworks²⁰
- Petition of Melanie Lindstrom: Ban the private sale of fireworks and promote Matariki for public displays.²¹

The Governance and Administration Committee of the 52nd Parliament reported to the House on the three petitions in August 2020.²²

The report noted that a report on a similar petition in the 51st Parliament made no recommendations, and the committee agreed with that position. However, it acknowledged the harm that fireworks can cause, and the disruption to animal owners from fireworks being set off throughout the year. It commented that there was room to explore further public

¹⁷ [Petition of Charlotte Purdy: Petition 2011/0127 of Charlotte Purdy.](#)

¹⁸ The report of the Government Administration Committee of the 51st Parliament on the petition of Charlotte Purdy is available on [the Parliament website](#).

¹⁹ [Petition of Catherine Bindon: Ban the sale of fireworks to the public.](#)

²⁰ [Petition of Chris Eichbaum: Cease retail sales of fireworks.](#)

²¹ [Petition of Melanie Lindstrom: Ban the private sale of fireworks and promote Matariki for public displays.](#)

²² The report of the Governance and Administration Committee of the 52nd Parliament on the petitions of Catherine Bindon, Chris Eichbaum, and Melanie Lindstrom is available on [the Parliament website](#).

displays of fireworks, and that any future reform of fireworks regulations should accommodate the desire of groups to celebrate particular events with fireworks.

53rd Parliament

The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament considered two petitions requesting that public sales of fireworks be banned:

- Petition of Grayland Sutherland: Ban the public sale of fireworks²³
- Petition of Catherine Bindon: Ban the sale of fireworks to the New Zealand public.²⁴

The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament reported to the House in February 2023.²⁵

The report noted a downwards trend in injuries and damage from fireworks over recent years. The committee said private sales of fireworks were decreasing and expressed a belief that the decrease would continue. It acknowledged the petitioners' concerns about harm from fireworks, including the emotional, social, and economic effects of fireworks-related incidents and the harm caused to animals. The committee also acknowledged that fireworks are an important part of celebrations for some New Zealanders. It noted that this topic has been the focus of many parliamentary petitions.

²³ [Petition of Grayson Sutherland: Ban the public sale of fireworks.](#)

²⁴ [Petition of Catherine Bindon: Ban the sale of fireworks to the New Zealand public.](#)

²⁵ The report of the Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament on the petition of Catherine Bindon and the petition of Grayson Sutherland is available on [the Parliament website](#).