Cracker night survives

By ELLIE TURNER

A DAY of total fire ban has been issued across the Top End for Territory Day — but it will be called off at 6pm so Territorians can set off firecrackers.

It is the first time a fire ban has been called on the day when thousands of Territorians head to the streets to set off crackers for five hours between 6pm and 11pm.

Firefighters expect up to 70 emergency calls tonight as they deal with the expected cracker mayhem.

But they have supported the move to call the fire ban off in time for Territory Day celebration, saying the weather is unlikely to be too dangerous to keep the ban in place.

Fire watch commander Stuart Perry said fire restrictions could be lifted when hot and gusty conditions eased.

“It’s normal for wind to die down to a northerly breeze and gusty conditions eased. More than a dozen people were treated for burns at Royal Darwin Hospital and many dogs fled in fright. St John operations manager Craig Garraway urged people to be careful.

Chief Minister Paul Henderson said: “People are reminded to use fireworks responsibly and, most importantly, to have fun.”

Public fireworks shows will be held at Mindil Beach and Berry Springs Reserve.

Cracker being let off before Territory Day fireworks will be held at Mindil Beach from 7.30pm, Sunday, July 1.

By ALYSSA BETTS

CRACKERS being let off before Territory Day have already killed one family pet — a five-year-old red heeler cross by the name of Louie.

Anushka Dias, a Darwin accountant, had to watch her “little girl” being put down after crackers were let off near their Leanyer yard the Saturday night before last.

Louie had managed to escape our fenced yard,” she said. “We spent most of Sunday driving around to see if we could find her.”

The next day Ms Dias got a call from the University Avenue Veterinary Hospital. The police had found her and brought her in. Louie had been run over and had severe spinal injury.

“After consultations with the vet and a specialist, we had to make the tough decision to put her down,” Ms Dias said: “It’s still hard to come to terms that she is gone — she was such an amazing, loving and intelligent member of our family.

“We are just grateful she was found and looked after, she wasn’t alone, and we had the opportunity to say goodbye.”

Naomi Oliver is the creator of the Top End Lost And Found (TELAF) website, where people can report finding pets, or report losing them. She said 98 animals, mainly from Greater Darwin, were registered as lost or found over an 11-day period near cracker night last year.

Dogs comprised most of that figure: 89 missing.

More than a third (33) were not reunited with their owners, 34 were, and two died.

“Last year there were two greyhounds killed within two days, both belonging to the same person,” Ms Oliver said. “They had been raced as pets from very young puppies and the owners were heartbroken.

“One was run over; the other hung himself on a fence (with) his collar and was found by the owner, dead.”

Ms Oliver advised owners to secure their dogs inside on cracker night — in the most soundproof room of the house — and give them somewhere to hide, such as under a bed.

"It is by far our busiest day of the year,” he said.

“Who can stop thousands of people setting off crackers? The only people that can are us.”

Brendan Dowd

Chief Executive Officer

City of Darwin

Look after your pets on Territory Day

Territory Day fireworks can be exciting, however for pets it can mean a terrifying night. Animals have an acute sense of hearing, which intensifies with the sound of fireworks being let off.

Here are some handy hints to help your pets cope on Territory Day:

• Create a safe and secure area for your pets during the event. If you have dogs that normally live outside, consider keeping them inside in a particular room of the house.

• Keep windows and curtains closed. Flashes of light associated with fireworks are just as distressing for pets as the noise. Leave the lights on and the television or radio on as background noise to help mask the sound of fireworks.

• Take your dogs for a long walk before the festivities begin so they get rid of excess energy.

• Seek veterinary advice if you feel your pet may need to be sedated for the night to help reduce severe anxiety.

The City of Darwin encourages all pet owners to ensure their pets are prepared for the lead up to Territory Day. Ensure your dog or cat is wearing its registration tag and is microchipped to enable a speedy return if found.

The Territory Day fireworks will be held at Mindil Beach from 7.30pm, Sunday 1 July.

Brendan Dowd

Chief Executive Officer

Palmerston pool hoping to stay afloat

PALMERSTON pool managers YMCA will be keeping a close eye on numbers after the opening of the new free water park nearby.

Attendance at Darwin council-operated Casuarina pool has already taken a plunge.

Palmerston council chief executive Ricki Bruhn said the water park was welcomed when it opened last week. But attendance at the eight-lane, Olympic-sized Palmerston Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre on Tilston Ave will be monitored by managers YMCA.

“At this stage it is too early to determine the impact the water park will have,” Mr Bruhn said.

He said the centre had other health and fitness features unavailable at the water park, which is about 2.5km away.

Darwin council has been receiving quotes for a pool blanket to retain heat — and customers — in the $3.50 per swim, 50-metre Casuarina pool.

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