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Halloween is Scary for Pets

by

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Halloween may be great fun for those of us who like to dress up and party, but most pets do not share that enthusiasm. The doorbell is ringing often, there are loud children, an abundance of off limits (to the pet) tasty candy, and scary looking costumes - all of which can present problems for our pets. It's important to keep your pet's wellness and safety in mind while planning for the holiday.

While you may think it is fun to dress up your pet, the vast majority of pets that are subjected to costumes do not agree. Cats, particularly, will not hesitate to let you know- often using their claws as emphasis- that they do not appreciate a costume. There are a few important things to keep in mind if you choose to dress up your pet. Make sure that any costume is loose and avoid tight elastic, which can cause swelling and pain. Tight elastic can also grab too much hair and be painful. Do not use paint on an animal and remember some dogs will try to eat parts of their costumes, so watch them closely.

If you are taking your dog out trick-or-treating, use a reflective vest or collar and a secure leash or harness. Other dogs and kids will likely be wound up with excitement, and that coupled with potentially scary costumes can cause your pet to be territorial or fearful, resulting in a bite. If you suspect that your dog doesn't have the temperament for this, leave your dog at home.

Pets left at home can be frightened by the bustle of the night and can bolt out the door, getting lost or being hit by a car. It's best to keep dogs and cats in a closed room for their own safety. If your dog is one that goes berserk every time the doorbell rings, or if it is prone to stress induced gastrointestinal upset, talk to your veterinarian about a sedative well before the holiday. Sadly, there is a significant spike in cruelty to black

cats on Halloween: so much so that many shelters will not adopt them out in the weeks preceding. So even if your black or other cat is used to being outside, keep them inside. Poisoning is a real concern on Halloween. While chocolate is the main culprit, be aware that xylitol (a sugar substitute) present in many candies and gums is as well. It does not take much of these two to make your dog extremely sick and in some cases, death can result. Raisins, believe it or not, can be extremely toxic to dogs. The toxin within them hasn't been identified, but ingestion of even very small amounts can be serious. Do not become complacent and assume that because your dog has never before gotten into Halloween candy that it never will. There is a first time for everything, and these particular toxins can be life threatening.

Dogs particularly can eat enough candy in a short time to send them to the ER so remind your kids not to share their other sweets with the pets, either, as it can cause gastrointestinal problems or even pancreatitis in pets. The cellophane, foil, sticks, and other candy wrappers can cause intestinal blockage. The ASPCE Poison Control also reports an extremely high incidence of pets ingesting batteries around Halloween, which can be toxic.

Decorations pose a threat, too. Cats often like to chew on glow sticks and jewelry. While usually not life-threatening, the chemicals in the glow sticks can cause mouth pain, irritation, drooling, and foaming. Long necklaces and decorations such as fake cobwebs can cause intestinal upset or blockage if ingested. Jack-o-lanterns can tip over and burn your excited pets resulting in burns or even the pet's fur catching fire.

The vast majority of these Halloween precautions are preventable and if you suspect your pet has ingested something it shouldn't have, call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, which is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year toll free (888) 426-4435. While a consultation fee may apply, it is well worth it to potentially save your pet's life and for your peace of mind. Have a Happy and SAFE Halloween!

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