

Halloween with your pets

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There are many Halloween pet safety hazards related to this October holiday -- some are well-known (the dangers of chocolate toxicity), and some aren't (xylitol toxicity). Learn what to be aware of to protect your pet and stay safe this year!

Things to Watch For on Halloween

Halloween is a fun time for kids and many adults, but can be a frightening and stressful time for your pets. As a pet owner, you know your pet best, but here are some points to consider for your pet's safety.

Continual doorbell ringing and people at the door (in costume, no less!) can be stressful for a pet. Some pets may experience stress-related diarrhea or potentially injure themselves if crated or otherwise contained. Keep your pet in a quiet and safe place on Halloween.

Strangers in costume - some animals may become unexpectedly aggressive or fearful, even normally friendly pets.

Candles and Jack-O'-Lanterns within a pet's range are a fire hazard. Wagging tails and frightened cats zooming through the house can easily tip over a candle or carved pumpkin, causing burns or a fire.

Keep your pets indoors on Halloween night, especially black cats. Animals are at risk for cruel treatment by some Halloween pranksters. Many adoption agencies and humane societies will not allow adoption of black cats around Halloween for this reason.

Candy - For many people, Halloween = candy. Many pets have a sweet tooth. Please warn children not to share their goodies with the family pet.

Candy Concerns- Candies, gums, mints, baked goods and chocolate containing the "sugar free" sweetener xylitol are especially poisonous, causing rapid hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and liver failure in dogs and possibly other species (ferrets).

Chocolate is toxic to pets. Small amounts can cause vomiting and diarrhea, larger amounts can cause death. Signs of chocolate toxicity include tremors, nervousness, vomiting, diarrhea, increased heart rate, and in severe cases, seizures and death. If you suspect that your pet has eaten chocolate, consult your veterinarian.

Other candies, such as lollipops and those with plastic components, pose a danger if ingested. Lollipop sticks and plastic parts can cause intestinal obstruction and potentially rupture the intestines, which is a life-threatening emergency.

- Halloween costumes for pets have been around for many years. While the costumes can be entertaining for the human counterparts, caution is advised before dressing your pet up.
- While viewed as fun and adorable for some pet owners, caution is advised when putting a costume on a pet. A pet in costume should NEVER be left alone and unsupervised.
- Tight elastics on the costumes can get lost in the pet's hair, potentially causing owners to overlook them, leading to swelling and pain in the area of the elastic.
- Some pets, if left alone in costume, may chew it up and ingest it. This *could* cause intestinal obstruction.
- If the costumed pet escapes or is frightened away, the costume could entangle the pet on trees, fences, etc.
- Consider reflective collars and gear for pets (and people) - a great safety item for Halloween and all year-round

Play it safe and enjoy Halloween

With a little caution and some common sense, Halloween can be a fun time for kids and pets alike. If any acts of animal cruelty are seen or suspected, please call your local shelter or animal authorities.

