



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Halloween safety for your pets

Halloween can be loads of fun for parents and kids. And as spooky little ghouls, ghosts and monsters begin their traditional trick-or-treating, it can also be the scariest night of the year, especially for your pet.

And if safety precautions aren't taken, it can also be a hazardous time for your four-legged companion.

Most veterinary practices, especially emergency clinics, will be on a high alert on Halloween as they deal with emergency pet issues occurring on this festive day.

According to Pet Poison Helpline, calls increase by 12 percent during the week of Halloween, making it the call center's busiest time of

year. That's just the national hotline.

Halloween is also a big night for reporting missing pets. Imagine how frightened your furry friend could be by constant doorbell ringing and strangers in costumes, shouting "trick or treat" as the door opens. It's enough to make dogs and cats go running — sometimes right out the door. Halloween is a prime time for Rover and Kitty to get out of their homes.

Always make sure your dog or cat has proper identification. If your pet escapes and becomes lost, a collar and tags can be a life saver, increasing the chances that he will be returned to you.

Because dogs are territorial and protective of their home, they can also get anxious and growl when they see kids in costumes. Dogs and cats may do unpredictable things when they're scared; keep them tucked away in a quiet and safe room on Halloween.

Even if your furry friends are used to being outdoors, keep them indoors on Halloween night — especially black cats. Black cats have long served as objects of superstition. They were considered bringers of bad luck and curses to any human they came near, and were associated with witchcraft.

For years there have been concerns — though it's based on little more than hearsay — that black cats are sought out on Halloween and can be at risk from pranksters.

If you do decide to dress Rover or Kitty in a costume this year, make sure it isn't annoying or unsafe. While pets might look cute in costumes, ones that do not fit well can obstruct your furry friend's ability to move, hear or even breathe. And pets that do not like wearing a costume can become quite stressed in the effort to remove it. Be aware of elastic and other costume fasteners that can become caught on your pet.

Brightly lit jack o' lanterns are wonderful to look at and very tempting for your pet to notice, also. It's the same with candles in the window — very dangerous to a kitten or puppy who is drawn to the flame. A knocked-over carved pumpkin with a lit candle inside could be a fire hazard!

Halloween is associated with spooky haunted houses, costume parties, and most of all Halloween candy. Certain types of candy can be highly toxic and very dangerous to pets. Candies that are made with pure sugar can cause severe gas and diarrhea.

Chocolate is toxic to pets and can cause severe



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Otis doesn't mind his Halloween collar and hat, but not all pets enjoy being costumed. Make sure you don't stress your furry friend.

vomiting, diarrhea and seizures. Raisins can cause kidney failure. And if you mix these two together, you're looking at the ultimate toxic nightmare for pets.

When dogs get into the candy bowl, they don't usually bother to unwrap the treats first. And plastic and foil wrappers pose a health risk since they can cause an obstruction in the intestines

and irritate the lining of the GI tract.

Keep your furry friends safe on Halloween and away from all treats.

Do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian or the 24-hour Pet Poison Helpline immediately at 1-800-213-6680 if you suspect that your furry friend has ingested something or might be injured.

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