



## Halloween Warnings!

Keep your pets **INSIDE** on the day before and the day of Halloween. Many pets are **stolen, tortured** and **killed** on these days. Be especially careful if you own a black cat.

### ASPCA Halloween Tips

Don't leave your pet out in the yard on Halloween: there are plenty of stories of vicious pranksters who have teased, injured, stolen, even killed pets on this night.

Trick-or-treat candies are not for pets: chocolate is poisonous to a lot of animals and tin foil and cellophane candy wrappers can be hazardous if swallowed.

Be careful of pets around a lit pumpkin: pets may knock it over and cause a fire. Curious kittens especially run the risk of getting burned.

Don't dress the dog in costume unless you know he loves it. Otherwise, it puts a lot of stress on the animal.

If you do dress up your dog, make sure the costume isn't constricting, annoying or unsafe. Be careful not to obstruct your dog's vision—even the sweetest dogs can get snappy when they can't see what's going on around them.

All but the most social dogs should be kept in a separate room during trick-or-treat visiting hours; too many strangers in strange garb can be scary for a dog.

Be careful your cat or dog doesn't dart out through the open door.

While this can be a fun time for people and pets alike, remember that your pets are depending on you to keep them safe from the more dangerous goblins and ghouls that this holiday brings. □



## Keep Your Pet Away From The Halloween Candy Bag!

"During the week of Halloween, our total call volume increases by about 12 percent, and the majority of those calls involve dogs that ate chocolate," says Dr. Justine Lee, associate director of veterinary services for Pet Poison Helpline.

The darker and more bitter the chocolate, the more poisonous it is, the helpline says. The chemicals in chocolate that are dangerous (methylxanthines) are similar to caffeine and more heavily concentrated in the darker varieties.

Milk chocolate, on the other hand, is less dangerous. It can take up to a pound of milk chocolate to cause poisoning in a 50-pound dog.

White chocolate rarely causes true chocolate poisoning because it contains very low amounts of methylxanthines; however the high fat content may result in pancreatitis, the helpline says.

If you think your dog may have ingested chocolate, call someone right away for medical assistance, the helpline advises. Untreated, chocolate poisoning in dogs can result in vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, agitation, increased thirst, an elevated heart rate, or seizures.

Other Halloween food-related hazards for pets are candy wrappers, raisins and general candy overindulgence, the helpline says.

- **Candy wrappers**—When pets eat candy, sometimes they eat the wrappers, too. Ingestion of foil and cellophane wrappers can cause a life-threatening bowel obstruction, which can require surgery. Watch for vomiting, decreased appetite, not defecating, straining to defecate, or lethargy. X-rays may be necessary to diagnose this problem.

- **Raisins**—Instead of candy, some people hand out mini-boxes of raisins. That's fine for humans, but very small amounts of raisins are poisonous to dogs (as well as grapes or currants) and can cause kidney failure, the helpline says.

- **Candy overindulgence**—Large ingestions of sugary, high-fat candy can lead to pancreatitis, which is potentially fatal. Signs include decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, abdominal pain, and potentially, kidney failure or organ damage.

- **Halloween glow sticks**—Every year, Pet Poison Helpline says it receives numerous calls concerning cats that have punctured and chewed on glow sticks and glow jewelry. While not usually life-threatening, they can cause mouth pain and irritation, as well as profuse drooling and foaming at the mouth.

- **Costumes**—If you dress your dog or cat in a costume, be sure it doesn't impair his vision, movement or air intake, the helpline advises. If the costume has metallic beads, snaps or other small pieces, be aware that some metals (especially zinc and lead) can result in serious poisoning if ingested.

The 24/7 Animal Poison Control Center's phone number is 800-213-6680, general information is 866-823-1588, e-mail is info@petpoisonhelpline.com. If you're calling from the Caribbean or US Virgin Islands for poisoning assistance 24/7, you can call us toll-free at 877-416-7319. Other Caribbean islands can reach us at (011)-1-952-853-1716. □





## 8 Halloween Dangers

### For Small Animal Pets

Although most small animal pets are safely tucked away in a cage, playpen or critter-proofed room during Halloween and the days leading up to it, beware of the following real dangers:

**1. Fire danger**—The use of candles increases dramatically around Halloween. Whether inside pumpkins or adding pumpkin, cinnamon or other holiday scents to the air, candles pop up all over. A curious pet on the loose might get burned by the flame or knock over a lit candle and cause a fire. Be safe. If you use candles, light them only when your pet is safely contained and has no access to the flame. And, don't think that having a candle on a counter or table means it's safe from a pet. Some pets climb or glide (flying pets), which makes it possible for them to reach unexpected places.

**2. Crush danger**—By definition, small pets are small, which can make them more difficult to see. Whenever a small pet is allowed time outside of its enclosure for play or exploration, it must be supervised and everyone in the household be made aware that the pet is on the loose. Otherwise, a pet might get stepped on, caught in a closing door or suffer other trauma. Holidays, especially like Halloween, make this rule especially important. People carrying decorations, wearing a costume or doing something else that reduces their field of vision are more apt to miss seeing a pet underfoot.

**3. Treat danger**—Most pet owners know that their pet should only eat treats made for it. Candy and other human junk food are "No-Nos" for pets. But that doesn't mean a pet won't try to get into a Halloween candy stash or munch on candy apples or fudge. Save your pet from itself by keeping all human treat sealed in containers or locked away in cupboards.

"Even small amounts of chocolate—particularly dark chocolate—can be toxic to our littlest family members," said Sandra Mitchell, DVM, DABVP (Feline Specialty and Exotic Companion Mammal Specialty) of Animal Medical Associates in Saco, Maine.

"And it won't take very much to make them sick."

Jerry Murray, DVM, of the Animal Clinic of Farmers Branch near Dallas added to the warnings about candy. "High carbohydrate candy can cause major problems for rabbits, prairie dogs and ferrets with insulinomas."

**4. Decoration danger**—Many people decorate to get into the spirit of the Halloween holiday. Decorations range from pumpkins to door mats to streamers and more. Always be aware that your pet might decide to chomp on these new additions to the décor—and that could result in an emergency trip to the veterinarian for GI upset or blockage.

Thinking of using a fog machine for effect? Keep your pet well away or check with your veterinarian to determine whether it's safe for your pet to breathe the fog. If you opt to create fog using dry ice, be absolutely sure your pet can't touch it.

Teresa Bartolotta posted a warning on the Ferrets magazine Facebook page that applies to many small animal pets. "Watch out for anything with feathers or rubber, even styrofoam. A lot of decorations can be deadly. Also the rubber sticky decorations that go on the window can be hazardous."

**5. Door danger**—Doors are made to open and close, and both functions can cause trouble for a pet. Opening is dangerous because a pet could escape to the outdoors, and closing is dangerous if a pet gets caught in the door and crushed. Trick-Or-Treaters and party-goers create numerous opportunities for danger if a small animal pet is on the loose. On Halloween or during a party, small animal pets do best safely tucked away in their habitat or a safe room away from the activity.

Meghan Simon reinforced this warning with her posting on the Ferrets magazine Facebook page, "Don't let your fuzz butts out with the door being opened constantly for trick-or-treaters."

**6. Noise danger**—Spooky sounds and loud music might rule the night on Hallow-

een. While these aren't obviously dangerous to small animal pets, they might cause stress to rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas or other critters. If the stress is severe, it might cause illness.

**7. Other pet danger**—You never know what costume people might show up in at a Halloween party. If someone arrives to your party with a dog, cat or other pet in tow, be aware that your pet should be behind a closed door in a safe room so that the visiting pet can't interact with your hedgehog, gerbil, rat or other small animal pet. The safe room has the added bonus of preventing party-goers from interacting with your pet, which might be overwhelming.

**8. Costume danger**—If you choose to dress up your small animal pet for Halloween, keep its safety in mind. A pet should never be in costume when not supervised, a costume must never be binding and a costume should only be worn for a limited amount of time.

We asked visitors to the SmallAnimal Channel Facebook page and the Ferrets magazine Facebook page to give us their tips for Halloween safety. Dogs and cats seem more at risk than small animal pets, so several visitors warned that candy should be kept away from dogs or pups, as well as small animal pets. As Lori Schumacker warned, "Hide your candy; [my pets] would take one and run."

Lisa Blunt warned people to keep their black cats indoors. This echoes a caution from Dr. Mitchell, **"Keep your four-legged family members safely in the house in the week leading up to Halloween. I have seen several cases of animals who have been tortured and injured as Halloween pranks. This is not at all funny—and sometimes fatal."**

Gerald Stewart had a safety precaution for those who take their small animal pets on walks outside at night. "If the kids are out at night on a leash and harness, weave a 12- or 14-inch glow stick around the harness." □

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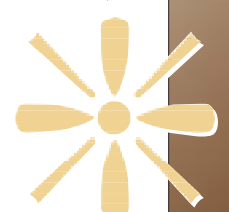
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