

## Halloween for Pets, A Devilish Trick!

By Dr. Byron Maas

The ghouls and the goblins are getting ready for what can be a most fun festivity for the family but care must be taken to keep Halloween from becoming a nightmare for the pets in your family. There are many hidden dangers in this raucous holiday which you can take care to prevent. Don't let the demons of Hallows Eve spoil it for you. Start thinking of preparations now, before October 31<sup>st</sup>.

Here are a few reminders of some of the hidden hazards.

Halloween candy is a particular favorite for all. Big kids, little kids and especially furry kids love to indulge in the sweet pleasures of the night's bounty. Obviously the candies are intended for people so take care to not let pets get into candy bowls or the spoils spread on the floor after the fabled night. Chocolate can be severely toxic, some artificial sweeteners (Xylitol) are poisonous and even things like grapes, raisins and apple seeds can be deadly in some animals. Often the candy gets eaten with the wrappers and all causing a new host of problems. Too much sugar is just as bad for your pets as it is for your children. If you suspect an accidental poisoning contact your veterinarian or animal poison control center at [www.ASPCA.org](http://www.ASPCA.org) or (888) 426-4435.

Costumes are a wonderful thing for the little ones in your pack but not so good for the cat or dog. Animals prefer the "Birthday Suit" as their costume and costumes should not be encouraged. Pets often get tangled in loose fitting get ups and can chew, ingest or worse get trapped causing a dangerous situation. If your pet must wear a costume take very special care that it fits correctly and make sure that they wear it only with supervision. Also do not take pets out trick or treating if possible. There are many new "faces" present in the streets and even the most docile pets can become intimidated, aggressive and unpredictable. It is too easy to have an unsuspecting dog chase that swashbuckling pirate off, possibly biting or causing serious injury. Arrgh!

If you are planning on welcoming trick or treaters then pets should be well secured in the house. All of the masks and scary faces frighten pets. They can be very sly and escape unnoticed at in a nanosecond getting lost or hit by a motorist. Use a kennel or crate in a quite a back room, safely away from all the excitement. Make sure your pets are clearly identified. A microchip can save a life, along with bright reflective tags or a dog safe strobe light on the collar if an escape happens. Beware of terrible pranksters. Too often occult practices and sick jokes can make Halloween a tragedy for pets.

Take extra precaution with the decorations. Artificial spider webs, streamers and creepy crawly things are great until your pet eats them. Place them high and out of reach. Candles in Jack-o-lanterns are a special danger where pets can get burned either directly by the open flame or hot wax or worse, cause a house fire when the scared pet knocks over the exposed flame. Use battery operated special effects lights if possible complete with flickering light.

If you follow a few of these tricks of precaution, Halloween can be a treat for your whole family including your pets.