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Key Halloween Safety Reminders to Keep Pets Safe Healthy and Happy *CVMA shares 5 tips to help families enjoy festivities while pets remain safe and calm*

Halloween can be a fun and busy night for kids and families, but it also can be one that creates stress and potential dangers for pets. The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) advises pet owners how to best keep their animal companions safe and their evening as stress-free as possible with the following helpful recommendations:

- 1. Plan ahead before the doorbell starts ringing.** Take your dog for a walk before it gets dark to help burn extra energy. If you're concerned about your pet escaping when you answer the door, keep them in a separate room or put them in their kennel with a favorite toy or comfy blanket to help ease their stress. For cats, specifically, it's important to secure them indoors for the evening so they don't run away out of fear. If the weather is nice, plan to sit outdoors and hand out candy to minimize the ringing of the doorbell, which can be a source of stress for many pets.
- 2. Keep candy and treats out of the reach of pets.** Many foods like chocolate and gum or sweeteners like xylitol are dangerous if ingested by pets, so keep people treats where pets can't snatch them. Watch young children who innocently may want to share their loot; use Halloween as an opportunity to educate them of the dangers of sharing human treats with pets. Also, although pumpkin may be healthy for both dogs and cats, please be aware that too much can cause digestive issues. Keep the 24-hour ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center hotline readily available (888-426-4435) as well as your veterinarian's phone number in the event of an emergency.

3. **Decorate your home with your pet in mind.** Any festive changes you make to your home to celebrate the holiday may be fun for you, but stressful and possibly hazardous to your pet. Lit, scented candles can be dangerous, so keep them up high and away from pets. Halloween props like squishy eyeballs, fake blood, makeup, and any packaging also can be harmful, so keep these elements far from the reach of furry paws.
4. **Carefully choose pet costumes.** If your pet is open to dressing up for the occasion – as not all pets are – be sure to select a costume that’s safe, allows them to move freely and won’t make them uncomfortable. In fact, the simpler the costume, the better.
5. **Double-check IDs and microchip registration.** If your pet gets loose during the Halloween commotion, ease your mind by ensuring they are wearing an ID tag or collar. If you pet is microchipped, make sure that your information is up to date if you have moved recently. This will help raise the odds of having your pet reunited with you sooner when they are located.

According to Dr. Kirsten Plomin, CVMA Board President, “Halloween night is a festive occasion for families, but it also can be chaotic for pets who don’t understand what’s going on. The best thing pet owners can do is plan ahead to keep their pets as safe and as comfortable as possible so everyone can enjoy the evening in their own way.”

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About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association: Chicago Veterinary Medical Association is a professional network with a longstanding tradition that connects more than 1,000 veterinarians with comprehensive resources that support their continued development as champions of animal health while encouraging the fostering of the human-animal bond.

About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Foundation: The CVMF, established in 2009, is a 501[©]3 charity that works with Chicagoland veterinarians to provide financial assistance to pet families in need by helping with the costs of their pet’s urgent, unexpected medical and surgical bills. The Foundation’s work plays a vital role in strengthening the human-animal bond by helping sick and suffering pets get well again.

