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Tips for Helping Keep Pets Safe Healthy and Happy This Halloween

CVMA shares reminders for families to keep pet safety in mind while enjoying the holiday

While fun and exciting for families with young children, Halloween can also be stressful and potentially dangerous for pets of all kinds. The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) reminds pet owners to keep their pet's safety and comfort in mind while still enjoying the fun and excitement of the holiday. Here are 5 important recommendations before you start your celebration:

- 1. Think about your pet's comfort ahead of time.** Take your dog for a walk before it gets dark to help them burn off extra energy. When the doorbell starts ringing, consider keeping your pet in a separate room or putting them in their kennel with some things that make them comfy to help minimize the stress from noise and frenetic activity. For cats, specifically, it's important to secure them indoors so they don't run away out of fear. If the weather cooperates, plan to sit outdoors and hand out candy. This will help minimize the continual ringing of the doorbell which can be stressful to pets.
- 2. Keep candy and treats out of the reach of pets.** It's well known that chocolate can be toxic and deadly to dogs. However, there are many other foods that have sweeteners like xylitol that are dangerous to pets, if ingested. Be sure to keep treats out of the reach of pets and watch young children who may want to share their trick-or-treating loot. Also, while real pumpkin can be a healthy food for both dogs and cats, ingesting too much of it can cause digestive distress.
- 3. Keep pet's safety in mind when decorating.** Holiday decorations are fun for humans, but some of them can be hazardous to your pet. Lighted candles can be dangerous if accidentally knocked over, so keep

them up high and out of the reach of pets. Also be aware of toys and props like squishy eyeballs, fake blood, makeup, and plastic packaging, all of which can be harmful if ingested.

4. **To costume, or not to costume.** Not all pets are okay with costumes, but if yours is, be sure to select an outfit that's safe, comfortable, and allows them to move freely.
5. **Protect your pet with the basics.** If your pet gets loose during trick-or-treating time, ease your mind by ensuring they are wearing an ID tag or collar. If your pet is microchipped, double check 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.

Dr. Marina Jaworsky, CVMA Board President, issues this reminder: "Halloween is a fun and festive occasion for families, but it can also be scary and stressful for pets. Owners who plan ahead and do what they can to keep their pets safe and comfortable will help ensure that *everyone* can enjoy the holiday. Also, be sure to have the 24-hour ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center hotline readily available (888-426-4435) as well as your veterinarian's phone number just in case. "

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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.