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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

Halloween can be a fun time for families, but it can also potentially pose some risks for pets. The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) reminds pet owners of some helpful tips to keep their furry friends safe, healthy, and happy during the festivities. 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. Create a quiet, comfortable area for your pet away from the excitement of trick-or-treaters. This can help reduce anxiety for pets who may be startled by loud noises or unfamiliar faces. 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. Costume considerations.** Choose wisely: If dressing up your pet, ensure the costume fits well, allows free movement, and doesn't cover their eyes, ears, or nose. Avoid small parts that could be swallowed.
- 4. Keep decorations pet friendly.** Avoid decorations that can be hazardous, like candles or sharp objects, and make sure that electrical cords are out of reach. Also be aware of toys and props like squishy eyeballs, fake blood, makeup, and plastic packaging, all of which can be harmful if ingested.

- 5. Protect your pet with the basics.** If your pet gets loose during trick-or-treating time, ease your mind by confirming 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 occasion for families, but it can possibly be stressful for pets. By planning ahead and taking precautions, you can help provide an enjoyable and safe holiday for your furry family members. 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.