



## Hairy, not scary: How to have a pet-friendly Halloween

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While Halloween means fun for most people, it may cause a fright for our animal friends. **Dr. Katherine Houpt**, professor emeritus of behavior medicine at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, and **Dr. Leni Kaplan**, clinician with the Cornell Hospital for Animals, offer advice on how to help your pets have a healthy and stress-free Halloween.

### **Pet costumes: keep it comfy**

#### **Kaplan says:**



“Make sure costumes are the appropriate size and fit for the pet. A costume that is too tight will be constricting and uncomfortable and a costume that is too loose may rub and cause skin irritation; in either case, the pet may have difficulty moving around and will not enjoy their experience.

“Costumes with accessories that are easy to grab or pull off are not recommended; a pet might eat the accessory predisposing them to a gastrointestinal foreign body obstruction, which will require veterinary medical attention and possible surgery.”

#### **Houpt says:**

“Make the costume a signal that good things are about to happen, like a walk. Another method is to pair a tiny, but delicious snack with the placement of the costume.”

### **Halloween candy a trick, not treat for your pets:**

#### **Kaplan says:**

“Candy and human snacks can lead to vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, and in some circumstances pancreatitis, a serious illness which may require hospitalization. Restrict access to chocolate, coffee, caffeine, macadamia nuts, grapes, raisins and any food containing xylitol or psychoactive cannabinoids such as marijuana.”



### **Trick-or-Treating: chaos unleashed?**

#### **Kaplan says:**

“It is not advised to take your dog trick or treating – due to crowds, children, unfamiliar people dressed in unfamiliar outerwear (costumes, masks, and carrying props). Dogs who are normally fine in crowds may be scared or spooked

and may act aggressively or out of character. If you do take your pet trick or treating, make sure to dress your pet in brightly colored and reflective clothing so they are easy to see at night, and keep them on leash at all times.”

**Haupt says:**

“Only take your dog out if it has never had a problem with strangers and is restrained on an eight-foot leash, not a flexileash. Dogs are most likely to react to ghost costumes because the outline of the human is missing.”

**Halloween decorations: boo’s and don’ts**

**Kaplan says:**

“Pumpkin is safe for pets to eat as long as it is not moldy. If your pet eats moldy pumpkin, contact a veterinarian immediately.

“Avoid using real candles as pets are often drawn to the flickering light and warmth. They could burn themselves or start a fire if the candle or Jack-o’-Lantern is tipped over. Instead of candles, use battery-powered LED candles or glow sticks. Make sure your pet cannot access and eat the LED candles or glow sticks.”

**Parties “ruff” on nervous pups:**

**Haupt says:**

“During parties or trick-or-treater visits, dogs can be confined in a room with a long-lasting treat or a food-dispensing toy. Play loud music or white noise so the dog is unaware of the people.”