

Animal Friends Presents Pets and Halloween Safety

Halloween can be a frightening experience for pets. Think about it: strange people dressed in weird clothing keep ringing the doorbell, yelling words and then running away!

Pets are often suspicious of new things—which is an important instinct that helped their ancestors survive. Everyday people in funny uniforms can stress them out. Imagine how they can react to huge capes, pointy princess hats, big swords, bells, flashing lights, oversized shoes and all sorts of extra appendages...coming right to the door!

If your pet does become frightened of trick-or-treaters or even yard decorations, the best thing you can do is remain calm and cool. Do not force your pet to confront what frightens her. The best thing you can do to soothe your pet on Halloween is keep her confined and away from the noise and visual stimulation—somewhere she won't have to see all of those scary people. Ideally, someone the pet knows and trusts should stay with her. You don't have to focus on her; just remain calm and be there for her.

Please understand (and convince your friends) that it is NOT funny to scare a pet who's frightened by a Halloween costume. After all, aggression from a dog or cat is not very funny, and even "nice" pets may bite or scratch when terrified or threatened.

Does your dog already go ballistic whenever the doorbell rings? Does your cat run and hide? Just think about what it

will be like when trick-or-treaters ring it every few minutes. Under normal circumstances, this would be the ideal time to do some training, teaching your dog to sit calmly and quietly while you open the door. But Halloween is not a normal circumstance. Your pet might be frightened by the goblins at the door or excited by the smells of candy. Again, your best move is to keep the pet away from the door, in a crate or secure room, and be sure to praise and reward her for good behavior.

Making sure your pet can't escape out the front door when you open it will make for a much happier Halloween for all.

And, be sure to keep the candy out of your pet's reach. Some cats like to tear open crinkly packages and may ingest paper or foil in the process. Chocolate can be fatal for dogs, and in the best case will cause stomach distress and vomiting. If your dog eats chocolate, contact your vet immediately.

And finally, if you decide that it's really time to give your dog—and yourself—a break from Halloween this year, bring her to Animal Friends for a no-frills party for the dogs. Call 412.847.7035 or visit www.ThinkingOutsideTheCage.org to learn more.

