

## Halloween Dog Safety Tips

**Minimize health risks for your dog this Halloween by taking a few precautions.**

Posted: October 29, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Forget ghosts, ghouls and witches. For dog owners, the most frightening aspect of Halloween is the increase in pet accidents and injuries. Each year, the haunting holiday is followed by a rise in claims for pet poisonings and foreign body ingestions – incidents which can be prevented.

"A little extra care can make a significant difference in preventing tragic and potentially costly pet accidents this Halloween," says Dr. Carol McConnell, vice president and chief veterinary medical officer for Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI). "Pet owners and pets should have a safe and sane Halloween this year."

Dog owners are encouraged to follow these simple tips to avoid accidents and ensure pet safety this Halloween:

Keep all candy sealed and out of dogs' reach. If it is tasty and accessible, your pet will eat it. This applies to candy and used wrappers. Take the trash out regularly so dogs cannot dig out used candy wrappers. The number of claims for substance toxicity more than doubles following Halloween, according to VPI. A majority of these claims come as a result of pets ingesting candy and candy wrappers. Chocolate can be toxic, if not deadly for dogs.

Place festive decorations out of the reach of pets. If it is shiny and small, your pet will eat it. Chew toys are designed for dogs to chew on, but Halloween decorations are not. Pets have a difficult time distinguishing any small object from another. If you like to decorate for Halloween, stay away from small or low-hanging items, or even large items with parts that could appeal to a pet.

Designate a secure spot for your dog inside your home. Traffic to and from your house may increase dramatically on Halloween night. Guard your dog from excessive stress or barking by keeping her inside and away from the front door. Also, remember that Halloween night is a prime time for pranks, some harmless and some vicious. Keep your pets inside or closely monitored the entire night to keep them from harm.

Exercise caution when walking your dog outside. If you decide to bring your dog trick-or-treating, grab the leash and prepare to hold it tightly. Many of the sights and sounds of Halloween can startle or frighten a dog. Frequently scan the ground for dropped candy that your pet may want to consume.

If you dress your dog for Halloween, make sure the outfit is roomy, reflective and fire retardant. Lit pumpkins or candles may line house walkways, creating a fire hazard. Also, make certain that your dog's costume doesn't include easily accessible parts that could be chewed off and swallowed. Be careful with masks and capes that tie on to your pet; a piece of costuming tied too tight could cut off circulation or choke your pet. To prevent your dog from stumbling while dressed up, avoid costumes that hang low, drag on the ground, or block your pet's vision.