

HALLOWEEN, TRICK OR TREAT FOR YOUR DOG?



We love our dogs, so we want them to be a part of everything, especially when we're having fun. But, involving Fido in Halloween could be fraught with tricks, not treats.

As with other facets of the human world, dogs have no idea of what Halloween is. Fido does not know what a costume is, let alone that he looks cute in it. Fido also doesn't know about our costumes and could be frightened by a family member in a costume.

If you don't know how your dog may react to Halloween, the best place for him may be in a room or in his crate away from the action. The same is true for dogs that have not taken well to Halloween in the past. When in doubt, think about your dog first and keeping it safe.

THE SIGNS

Growling, barking and attempts to flee are sure signs that Fido and Halloween are not a good mix. Your dog may even show one or more of these signs upon seeing your child in a costume. If your dog is showing signs of aggression and/or fear, pleasantly gate it or close it into a room away from the Halloween activities.

Do not force the issue; i.e., attempt to make your dog be friendly with your child. Do not let your child move toward your dog. Growling and barking are warning signals to back off. If you haven't removed your dog from the scene, have your child calmly back away and remove the offending mask or clothing.

A key with dogs is to always remain calm. Doing so sends your dog the message that there's nothing for him or her to be excited about. Doing otherwise will feed your dog's upset.

When your dog is stressed or scared, do not talk to it, make eye contact or pet it. While we think we are soothing our dog's nerves, the dog's view is that we are scared too. This also serves to feed its behavior. So, take your dog away from the cause of its stress. If needed, hold your dog calmly against your side until you feel it relax. You may have to repeat this several times. Holding your dog calmly sends it the message that there is nothing to worry about.

QUICK TIPS

TREATS – keep treats and wrappers away from Fido. Wrappers can lodge in your dog's digestive system. Candies and other treats can cause serious illness. Chocolate is toxic to your dog. The artificial sweetener xylitol is very toxic, so check the ingredients in candies, peanut butter and chewing gum. The safest approach is to avoid products with xylitol.

Costumes – don't force your dog to wear a costume. If she will wear one without being stressed, make sure it's the right size, doesn't bind anywhere, and makes it easy for your pooch

to go potty. Also, make sure there's nothing Fido can chew off and swallow. Keep Fido away from candles and any other fire hazards.

Halloween Decorations – dogs are curious. Be sure decorations are not in areas where your dog could chew them, swallow them or be injured by them. Be careful with the placement of jack-o-lanterns – it's not pretty when a dog eats a whole pumpkin.



Trick-Or-Treaters – If your dog has aggressive tendencies, fear of loud noises, or a habit of excessive barking, place him in a quiet room well away from your front door or in his crate (assuming it is well away from your front door). Do this at least a half-hour before trick-or-treaters are expected to arrive. **If you can, disconnect your doorbell to avoid alarming Fido.**

If your dog enjoys visitors, is not frightened by Halloween costumes, and you want him nearby, keep him on a leash or put a doggie gate in your front entrance. Keeping your dog from bolting and chasing trick-or-treaters is paramount to avoid unwanted interactions beyond your front door and accidents in the street.

Outdoor Dangers – Better safe than sorry! Even if your dog normally lives outside, it's best to have him indoors on Halloween unless he's always supervised. You don't want your dog to be the victim of a twisted person's idea of Halloween fun.

If Fido is a party animal, he can participate in your Halloween fun if you play it safe. This includes following common safety rules like having your dog wear an ID tag, keeping your dog on a lead when outdoors, and keeping her/him safe from potentially dangerous situations.

Have fun and a happy Halloween!

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