



Tony La Russa's  
**Animal  
Rescue  
Foundation**

## Halloween Pet Safety

Give your pets the safest "Howl-o-ween" with ARF's safety tips

### Beware of chocolate

Rich, delicious chocolate is a favorite treat of humans, but toxic for dogs and cats - especially dark and baking chocolate. The presence of the alkaloid *theobromine* can cause tremors, increased heart rate, seizures, and even death. Be sure to keep the candy bowl out of reach of pets, and quickly clean up any pieces that make their way to the floor.



### The perils of pumpkins

Beautifully carved, glowing pumpkins are a classic Halloween symbol, but can turn into a nightmare if your pets come into contact with them. Vigorous tail wags can knock a candlelit pumpkin over, causing a fire or injury. Inquisitive cats and kittens are also susceptible to getting burned while investigating the festive decoration. Stick to battery-operated lights inside your jack-o-lantern this year.

### Terrifying trick-or-treaters

Does your pet get overstimulated when people come to the door? How about an entire night of ringing doorbells, new people, and visitors in spooky costumes? Though it might sound fun to greet trick-or-treaters with your pet, it might not be such a treat from his perspective. The front door constantly opening and closing provides plenty of chances to escape, and the sight of little ones in costumes could prove downright terrifying. If you fear your pet's reactivity, leave him in a safe room where they won't be affected by the comings and goings of little ghouls and boys. Or, if you really wish to greet your guests with your pet by your side, place a baby gate in front of the door to prevent escapes. Either way, be sure your pet has up-to-date ID tags and/or microchip registration just in case.

### Wicked wrappers

Here's another reason to keep an eye on the candy bowl: discarded candy wrappers can cause internal blockages for animals who ingest them, possibly requiring emergency surgery. Lollipops and other candies on sticks can also choke pets who eat them. Make sure all wrappers and packaging are placed in the trash where your pet can't get to them.

### Mischief makers

Neighborhood pranksters can make Halloween the worst holiday of all for your pet. Keep all pets indoors or closely supervised on Halloween night.

### Attack of the costume

Some pets love dressing up and looking "boo-tiful"; many don't. If you want to get your pet into the Halloween spirit by getting him a costume, be sure it is not uncomfortable or restrictive. Skip the mask if it comes with one - even pets who are keen on dressing up usually aren't too fond of something covering their face. Look it over carefully for any loose pieces that could cause a choking hazard if chewed off, and make

sure it fits in a way that it could not become twisted and entangle them. And, most importantly, if your pet looks scared or uncomfortable, take it off.

### Dastardly decorations

As with any decor, be sure it is pet-safe. Keep wires bundled and out of reach so pets do not chew them and get electrocuted. Decorations containing polyurethane glue can be deadly if ingested - the glue expands and hardens in the stomach, leading to a rock-like mass that needs immediate veterinary intervention. Consider the safety of your other decorations - might the dog unravel the mummy and eat the bandages? Will the cat be spooked by the display with flashing lights? Be smart and don't let your haunted house give your pet a true scare.

### Party boo-boos

Many of the same rules apply for Halloween parties as for trick-or-treaters, like watching for escape attempts, being sensitive that your pet might be frightened by people in costumes, and monitoring treats and wrappers. Also be vigilant your pet does not consume any alcohol, as it could cause illness or even death. If you're worried your monster mash is too much for your pet, crate him or put him in a safe room for the evening.

### Shine bright at night

If you take your dog trick-or-treating with your family, be sure to outfit him in reflective gear so he is easily spotted in the dark by motorists.

### Other treats that are really a trick

There are hidden dangers lurking in other Halloween goodies besides chocolate. Raisins, a favorite of health-conscious revelers, are toxic for dogs and can cause renal failure. Another surprising toxin for dogs is *xylitol*, which is found in sugar-free candies and chewing gums. Only three grams of the substance is enough to kill a 65-pound dog; small dogs require even less. Again, candy stashes should be kept far out of reach from curious noses.