

A PET FOR ALL SEASONS

GHOSTS, GOBLINS AND THE FAMILY PET

BY CHARLOTTE REED

A PET APPROACH TO HALLOWEEN

You've labored over getting the sequins on your youngest child's butterfly wings and mixed the perfect ghoulish hue of face paint for your eldest. The walk is raked for trick-or-treaters, and candy is stockpiled at the door. Everything is in place, save one furry issue that can add to the fun or dampen a good time faster than you can bob for apples: the family pet.

PARTY ... LIKE AN ANIMAL

A costumed pet is a sure hit at a Halloween party, but play it safe. Rather than modifying a child's costume, purchase a costume designed for pets at a PETsMart store, or buy online from www.drsfostersmith.com, to ensure your pet is in style, yet secure.

Specially designed costumes for animals can be, admittedly, a little pricey. A great alternative to get in the Halloween spirit without breaking the bank is to purchase a holiday motif collar and leash like the ones available at www.jbpet.com. Or, if you have leftover material from another Halloween project, make your pet a kerchief.

House decorations should be out of the reach of a curious pet. Dogs are often happy to taste-test whatever's in their reach, and cats can jump on surfaces where candles can burn them.

TRICKS AND TREATS

As much fun as the idea of turning your dog into your little Dorothy's Toto may be, animals are not appropriate accessories for trick-or-treating. Besides running the risk of an escaped pet, Halloween is a notoriously bad time to be a pet on the prowl, especially black cats. Keep your

pets indoors and out of harm's way before and after the holiday.

If trick-or-treaters are coming to you, it can be difficult to keep an excited dog from barking and running to the door to greet visitors. Some trick-or-treaters may be genuinely afraid of pets, especially larger dogs, so it's best to keep animals confined during an evening when people will be coming and going. It also saves the worry of a pet darting out the door in the hubbub.

If you won't be home on Halloween, but your pet will, turn off any outside lights, leave a note to ward off doorbell ringing, and put your pet in a quiet place, preferably where it can't hear street noise. Turn on music or the television to keep your animal company and drown out the sounds of nearby revelers.

THE PARTY'S OVER

Your house is bound to be a virtual cornucopia of sweets when all is said and done. Although you may be tempted to indulge, don't allow your pet to follow suit. Chocolate can be toxic to dogs, and eating many sweets can result in rapid breathing or hyperactivity. Snacks high in sodium, such as peanuts, potato chips and pretzels, can lead to stomach upset and diarrhea, so party leftovers aren't an option.

Don't forget to include Fido and Fifi in the family photos. Holiday photographs make extra-special pages in a scrapbook, with recycled paper Halloween decorations as colorful backgrounds.

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