

# Howl-O-Ween

## By Brenda Howard

Time for all things spooky, creepy and crawly! If your house is like my house, you will be decorating for Halloween. It's tempting to get your four-leggers in on the act by dressing them in costume too. A few words of advice - if your dog has never even worn a collar, do not try to make him wear a costume! Dogs that have been handled a lot (ie grooming or showing) are more likely to tolerate a costume if it isn't too confining or hot. Make sure the costume you choose doesn't restrict your dog's movement or sight. Costumes can be purchased or can be created by you. Just as with costumes for people, they can be very creative and elaborate or very simple.

Inspiration for good dog costumes can come from just about anywhere. Television, movies, and popular culture are just a few areas you can turn to for ideas. Consider a theme that the whole family can participate in! For instance if you are dressing up as picnic food, your dog could be the hotdog on a bun while the rest of you can be things like the catsup, mustard, relish and soda! Or maybe you should all be super heroes!

If the candy bowl is full from now through the Halloween, keep it out of the reach of your dog! Instruct your children that the dog is NOT to eat any candy. Chocolate is a particularly lethal food for dogs. The bad component in chocolate for dogs is Theobromine, a stimulant found in the cocoa bean. Theobromine is in all chocolate however the amount varies. Much like us, once a dog has tasted chocolate, he will want more. The danger is that Theobromine will not exit the canine body and the more chocolate a dog eats, the more likely that he will be adversely affected. Signs of "chocolate poisoning" can include vomiting, diarrhea or hyperactivity. As time passes and there's increased absorption of the Theobromine, the dog's heart rate increases, which can cause arrhythmia, restlessness, hyperactivity, muscle twitching, increased urination or excessive panting. In some cases this can lead to hyperthermia, muscle tremors, seizures, coma and even death.

If you suspect your dog is sick from eating chocolate note when the dog ate the chocolate and how much you suspect was eaten. The first treatment for chocolate poisoning is to remove it from the body quickly before the Theobromine has had time to move throughout the body and cause damage to the gastrointestinal tract. Induce vomiting to remove the substance and then administer activated charcoal to absorb the poison.

To induce vomiting, Michelle Bamberger in *Help! The Quick Guide to First Aid for Your Dog*, Howell Bookhouse, New York 1993, recommends using three percent hydrogen peroxide, one-to-two teaspoons by mouth every 15 minutes until vomiting occurs. Alternatively, she suggests using Syrup of Ipecac. Use, she says, two to three teaspoons, only once.

Syrup of Ipecac can be purchased at most pharmacies. You do not need a prescription from your veterinarian. Syrup of Ipecac is inexpensive and will keep for several years if stored at room temperature.

After vomiting, Bamberger says to give the dog by mouth activated charcoal mixed with water to a slurry consistency. The dosage is 1 teaspoon for dogs who are less than 25 pounds and 2 teaspoons for dogs weighing more than 25 pounds.

Toxiban Activated Charcoal is a fine powder form of processed charcoal that binds to many types of poisons and can keep them from being absorbed into the bloodstream. This product isn't easy to find. Toxiban is good to have in your pet emergency kit because it also is effective in absorbing other poisonous substances eaten or drunk by dogs or cats.

If your dog is having seizures or is comatose, don't delay, immediately take your dog to your veterinarian or call the pet poison experts at the National Animal Poison Information Center at The University of Illinois in Urbana. Phone toll-free: (888) 252-7387. The Center provides computer-supported telephone consultation for potential poisonings. There is a nominal charge.

When the trick-or-treaters begin showing up at your door, consider what is best for your dog and the visitors. If your dog is well behaved and has been taught to sit/stay, then he can be part of the welcoming committee. If, on the other hand, your dog is aroused by the door bell and barks, whines and makes lots of noise, you may scare the youngsters at the door! An even bigger concern is the dog that tries to dash out the open door. If your dog presents a danger to himself or small children at the door, then secure him safely in another room or better yet in his crate in the house.

Do not leave your dog unattended in the back yard if you have an option. You don't want your dog to be the target of any nasty tricks this Halloween! The same applies to your cat. Black cats especially can be in for trouble by pranksters at Halloween. Keep them safely indoors!

Remember that from your end of the leash, your job is to do all you can to help make your dog a happy healthy and enjoyable part of your world!

Brenda Howard has been training dogs for over 20 years and is a member of The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, The American Bloodhound Club, The Basset Hound Club of America and The Pet Care Services Association (formerly the ABKA).

The information presented here is not intended to substitute for the advice and care of a veterinarian. Consult your veterinarian regarding all issues relating to your dog's health.

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