



# SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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## TRICK OR TREAT

Halloween means costumes, candy and a busy doorbell. It might be fun for us, but it can be a scary experience for your animal companion. Here's how to keep them safe and stress-free.

Halloween is just around the corner and your home will soon be bombarded with hungry trick-or-treaters. Depending on your dog or cat, it may be no big deal – or it might be a frightening and stressful experience. Consider the following tips for keeping him safe and at ease.

## COSTUME CAUTIONS

- If you're going to dress up your animal, make sure the outfit is loose and doesn't restrict his movement in any way. He'll have to walk, run and take potty breaks, so the costume must have room in the legs, fit loosely around the body, and not get in the way when he has to go outside.
- The outfit should be easy on and easy off, preferably something with Velcro or pull away fasteners.
- Keep in mind that your companion is probably not used to a costume, so don't leave him dressed up for too long. He could get uncomfortable and irritated and shred the costume or leash out with a bite or scratch.
- Doggy sweaters, coats and jackets are great for the outdoors, but don't make your animal wear outdoor apparel in the house for very long. It can cause overheating.
- When you're picking out a costume for your animal, remember this: if you wouldn't wear it, don't think your animal will feel any different. Many dogs don't like costumes and feel they're being punished by being made to wear one. Laughing at them can hurt their feelings. When you put a costume on your animal, do it in a calm and light-hearted way to help him understand it's an enjoyable adventure. The bottom line is to make it fun for your animal so he'll remember it with good feelings, not fear. If he panics or struggles to get out of it, don't force him to wear it.

- Look into your animal's eyes and ask him if he's okay with the costume. You'll be able to tell from his expression, actions and demeanor if he's enjoying the experience or feeling degraded, humiliated, scared or angry.



## "DING-DONG!"

Another big deal is the doorbell. The constant ringing on Halloween night can drive your animal to distraction if you don't take precautions. If he doesn't like the doorbell, put him in a quiet room with the door shut until all the trick-or-treating is over. It will help keep him safe and somewhat calmer. Give him his favorite toys and some treats to help him feel better and be sure to provide water. You can also look into a natural remedy with calming herbs or a flower essence such as Rescue Remedy.

Even if your animal likes to greet everyone who rings the bell, keeping him away from the door is still a good idea. Be aware that those who show up on Halloween night can look very strange to your companion. Your dog isn't used to seeing people in masks and costumes and he can go into survival mode very quickly. He might bite someone or run out the door to get away from the visitors. Please remember that what we see as fun, our animals might see in a totally different way.

In the same vein, don't let your animal out alone on Halloween night. Dogs should be escorted into the backyard to do their business. Sadly there are people who try to hurt animals on Halloween.

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