

Green Your Pet!

A how-to guide to eco-friendly pet care

Walking the line between animal-lover and tree-hugger can be tricky sometimes; pets demand a lot of resources and create a lot of waste. If you're concerned about the impact your pet has on the environment, you're not alone! Here are some tips we've come up with to help you make your pet just a little more green.

Recycle A Pet

Pet overpopulation is a huge problem across the country and the world. For **every person** born in the US, **15 dogs** and **45 cats** are born, and **5-7 million** of them enter shelters in this country every year. Every one of those pets requires lots of resources – from factory-farmed meat and grain to water to plastic toys and supplies – and creates lots of waste, most of which gets wrapped up in plastic and warehoused in landfills. Don't **buy** a pet and encourage people to continue to add to the overpopulation problem; **recycle one** instead by adopting a pet from a shelter or rescue!

Spay and Neuter

Did we mention that **5-7 million** dogs and cats enter shelters every year? Don't let your pet add to the overpopulation problem, even by accident: have them **spayed** or **neutered** ASAP. Not only is it good for the environment and good for every pet waiting to be adopted, it's also great for your pet; spay and neuter surgeries **reduce cancer risk by >60%** (and eliminates the risk of ovarian and testicular cancer) and **reduces risky behavior** like aggression and the urge to escape and roam. If you want to know more about the benefits of spay and neuter, or about low-cost programs in your area, get in touch with us – we're here to help.

Save Wildlife: Keep Pets Inside

Cats kill an estimated 39 million birds a year...in Wisconsin alone. There's no way to know exactly what their toll is nationwide, but it's nothing to scoff at. Luckily, there's a simple way to keep your cat from eating birds: Keep it **inside**. Trust us, your cat will thank you in the end; the average lifespan of an outdoor cat is **<5 years**, while the average for an indoor cat is **16-18 years**. Between terminal diseases like FIV and feline leukemia, predation, and traffic, it's a dangerous world out there for a cat. If your cat absolutely must go outside, build an outdoor enclosure where he can bird watch from a safe distance, or train him to walk on a leash!

Cats shouldn't take all the blame; dogs will kill wildlife, too, given the chance. Keep your dog on **leash** when you're out and about, and don't treat the world like your personal dog park, especially if you're out for a hike where wild animals are sure to cross his path. Yard time is a must for dogs, so make sure your yard is **securely fenced** so he doesn't have a chance to escape and cause trouble – again, it's better for your wildlife population and also much safer for your pet.

Skip the Junk Food

Low-quality pet food – and there's more of it out there than you might think – is bad for your pet and bad for the planet. Non-descript words like **“by-product”** disguise unspeakable ingredients from roadkill to tumors; for all the details (if your stomach can handle it), check out our pet nutrition article titled **“You Are What You Eat (and Your Pets Are, Too).”**

When they're fed low-quality food, pets eat **more**, creating more demand – and the production of meat and grains (even of poor quality) leaves behind a huge carbon footprint and dumps chemicals into the ecosystem. When pets **eat more**, they create more **waste** – more plastic bags sitting in a landfill. So dump the junk food and switch to something better!

USDA Certified Organic pet foods are an option, too – and organic means no pesticides, no hormones, no antibiotics, no artificial anything, and no GMOs. Natural Balance, Newman's Own, Castor & Pollux, and Blue Buffalo all offer organic pet foods, and they are not alone!

A note on vegetarian pet foods:

Generally speaking, we **do not** suggest feeding a vegetarian or vegan diet to your pet. Although vegetarianism in general is a more Earth-friendly practice, and may align well with our own personal philosophies, the fact remains that dogs and cats are **obligate carnivores** and feeding them a meatless diet goes against their physiology and can be **very, very dangerous**. If you are interested in pursuing a meatless diet for your dog, do your homework and seek professional help. Cats should never be fed a vegetarian diet.

The Scoop on Poop

Cat lovers, **ditch the clay litter** and ditch it now. Clay is harvested by **strip mining** – an ecologically devastating process – and the silica dust that billows up out of the box is a known **carcinogen**. It's bad for the planet, it's bad for you, and it's bad for your cat. Clumping clay litter poses an additional risk, because it swells and hardens into a concrete-like **rock** when wet, and when licked up by a cat during grooming can form an indigestible rock inside your cat's digestive tract – and a large enough **blockage** means either **surgery** or **death**. Luckily there are plenty of **all-natural** litters on the market, and they're increasingly easy to find at retail locations. At Woodford Humane, we use Feline Pine pellet litter...and as an added bonus, it's sewer and septic safe, and compostable!

Dog lovers, **pick up** after your pup. Poop that's left out in the yard can be a serious hazard – it's full of fecal coliform bacteria, giardia, *E. coli*, and many other **nasty** little critters, and if it's left around, it's easy for those critters to end up in the **water supply**. There are a couple of options:

- Use **biodegradable** bags! No reason to put something that would break down in a matter of days inside a plastic bag that lasts forever and then dump it in a landfill.
- **Compost** your poo! If you've got big dogs (or lots of dogs), this is a great option – check out the attached instructions on making your own compost bin, it's super easy to do! Better yet, most all-natural cat litters are also compostable, so you can give up throwing away poo for good.

Green Your Clean!

All-natural cleaners and shampoos are gentler on your pet and your carpet, and yes, they do work just as well as their traditional, chemical-laden counterparts! If you're looking for an amazing, all-natural pet stain remover, we recommend Unique Pet Odor & Stain Eliminator; it's affordable, it's easy, and it works. earthbath is a reliable source for all your pet's all-natural spa care needs, too!

One Man's Trash is Another Man's Cat Toy

You don't always have to **buy** fancy stuff to keep your pet happy; there's a great chance that some awesome **DIY pet toys and supplies** are already in your house, just waiting to happen. **Cardboard boxes** are great hidey-holes for cats, and can double as a scratching spot to spare your furniture. Toss a blanket or a pillow into an old **suitcase**, milk crate, or even a gutted computer monitor and you've got a great bed for a cat or dog. Cut old **t-shirts** into strips and braid them to make a tug toy for your dog. Stuff old **socks** with batting and add a little catnip and tie them closed, and you've got a catnip toy. The possibilities are endless!

Got Questions?

Get in touch!



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