

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Our Furry Friends Can Be Environmentally Friendly, Too

We love our furry friends but often forget that they have an impact on our planet. Changing your pets' diet, properly disposing of their waste, and making smart choices with their toys and accessories can make a huge difference.

Food: A 2017 study by UCLA found that meat-eating dogs and cats create the equivalent of about 64 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, which is about roughly the yearly emissions of 13.6 million cars. Several dog food brands use beef as their primary meat, which is an unsustainable source of protein for both pets and humans.¹ Instead of beef, check your pet's food labels and look for ingredients like animal bone meal or organ meat. Although it doesn't sound too pleasing, this pet food ensures that the animal used to create the food was used entirely. These secondary food products have the same nutritional value for your pet. As for treats, there are countless recipes online for healthy and eco-friendly snacks for your pet. If you have a green thumb, consider growing catnip at home.

Waste: Cleaning up after your pet is another great way to be eco-friendly! Unfortunately, rain can carry animal waste into water sources where people swim and could make others very sick if not disposed of properly. Pet waste that gets into water runoff may also lead to potentially toxic algae outbreaks that could harm marine life, as well as humans and animals. So make sure to bring doggy bags when taking Fido out for a walk. Consider switching from traditional clay litter to an eco-friendly, biodegradable alternative. You can even make your own kitty litter at home from wood shavings, recycled newspaper and more! And remember: Cat litter is not flushable. While some products may say they are, none have been thoroughly tested and deemed safe for septic systems. If you are unsure about a product's flushability, you can contact [NHDES' Residuals Management Program](#).

Here are a few extra tips on how to make taking care of your pets a little more sustainable:

- With so many options to avoid plastic, don't forget to do this with your pets, too! Many toys, leashes and pet beds are made from dye-free, organic, recycled and upcycled materials. Avoid toys, treats and products that come in excessive packaging, but when it can't be avoided, make sure to recycle what you can: cardboard and plastic treat containers; dog and cat food cans; separated paper and plastic portions of toy packaging.
- Donate your pet's old stuff. Drop your pet's gently used items like toys, dog bowls, leashes, blankets and beds at your local pet shelter.

- Wash your pets outside in an area of your lawn that needs water. Make sure to use nontoxic shampoos.
- When giving your pet fresh water, don't put the old water down the drain. Give it to your plants and shrubs instead.
- Use washable and reusable containers to store food and treats instead of plastic bags.
- Use nontoxic cleaners when washing food and water bowls. For some ideas on safe DIY cleaners, check out this [Alternative Household Cleaners](#) fact sheet.
- Remember that it is **UNSAFE** to compost dog or cat waste at home due to the potential presence of harmful pathogens.

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¹Gregory S. Okin, "Environmental impacts of food consumption by dogs and cats,"
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181301>