



Green Pet Tips

Ah, the pitter patter of four-legged feet as they whip through your living room at overclocked speeds or uproot your prize gladiolas. But they are practically family, right? So why should they settle for anything less than top drawer when their health and wellbeing are at stake? Throw the planet a bone while you're at it.

We all love our pets, and we all need a healthy environment. Here are some great ideas to do both!

BEST PRACTICE AREA: ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED PURCHASING

DID YOU KNOW?

One female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 cats in 7 years. One female dog and her offspring can produce 67,000 puppies in 6 years.

BY THE NUMBERS...

5,500: the numbers of puppies and kittens that are born every hour in the United States, compared with 41.5 human babies.

75 Million: the number of dogs owned in America, compared to **80 million** cats.

3-4 Million: the number of homeless cats and dogs that are euthanized annually.

50%: the number of dogs, and **70%** of cats, that are euthanized simply because there is no one to adopt them.

HAIR TODAY..GOWN TOMORROW?

In South Carolina, a professional pet groomer was troubled by the large amounts of fur she would dispose of after grooming client's Persians and Angoras. Her solution? Spin the fur into yarn. Then you can knit the yarn into warm, cozy creations (cute little sweaters, mittens, hats, you name it). Can't you just imagine grandma knitting your little one a sweater made from Mr. Buttons?

Adopt from a shelter

Some pet breeders have only one goal--to raise large quantities of animals for profit. Why buy when you can adopt one of the 70,000 puppies and kittens born every day in the United States? Check out Petfinder.com to find your perfect match.

Spay or neuter your pet

We don't need any more homeless animals than we already have. As a bonus, spaying and neutering helps dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by eliminating the possibility of uterine, ovarian, and testicular cancer, and decreasing the incidence of prostate disease.

Swap out the junk food

Most conventional pet-food brands you find at the supermarket consist of reconstituted animal by-products, otherwise known as low-grade wastes from the beef and poultry industries. In fact, the animals used to make many pet foods are classified as "4-D," which is really a polite way of saying "Dead, Dying, Diseased, or Down (Disabled)" when they line up at the slaughterhouse. Natural and organic pet foods use meats that are raised in sustainable, humane ways without added drugs or hormones, minimally processed, and preserved with natural substances, such as vitamins C and E. Certified-organic pet foods must meet strict USDA standards that spell out how ingredients are produced and processed, which means no pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, artificial preservatives, artificial ingredients or genetically engineered ingredients.

Dump the dump

Cat owners should avoid clumping clay litter at all costs. Not only is clay strip-mined (bad for the planet), but the clay sediment is also permeated with carcinogenic silica dust that can coat little kitty lungs (bad for the cat). Buy recycled newspaper or corn or wheat-based eco-friendly cat litters and avoid problems.

Give them sustainable goods

Your furry friends can get in on some saving-the-planet goodness, too--and have plenty of fun--with toys made from recycled materials or sustainable fibers such as hemp. Buy locally made food, treats, and toys. When something is made locally it reduces shipping; this is better for the environment. You can often find locally made pet treats and toys at farmers markets.

Tag your pet

Losing your buddy is not environmentally friendly. There's the paper waste from printing out posters, the fuel cost of driving around your neighborhood ... and well, you get the idea.

Compost their poop

American dogs and cats create 10 million tons of waste a year, and no one knows where it's going. Most of our pets' poop either winds up in a landfill where it's embalmed practically forever in plastic bags, or sits on the ground until the next rainstorm washes it into the sewer where it can drift on down to rivers. Scoop up your doggie doo in biodegradable poop bags or you can compost the poop --just don't use it with your vegetable garden, because the compost doesn't heat up enough to kill pathogens such as E. coli. If you have room in your backyard, you can bury an old garbage bin (far away from your vegetable garden) to use as a pet-waste composter.

Don't pamper your pet

Waste, pollution, chemicals, energy dependence, hunger and poverty are all products of keeping domestic pets. The list goes on. Did I mention the \$5 billion of Christmas presents for pets in the U.S.? Your cat or dog doesn't care how much you spent on its chew toy. Like kids, they are as likely (or more!) to enjoy the wrapping. Paper bags, boxes, old socks, corks, cockroaches and old tennis balls all make perfect pet toys. Give your wallet and Mother Nature a break.

