




MILASUPINSKAYA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A black and white cat is on the left, looking down at a small white puppy on the right. They are on a grassy area with a blurred background of green foliage. The puppy is looking up at the cat.

Ways to Reduce Your Pet's Carbon Pawprint

By selecting products made from sustainable resources, you and your pet can make every day Earth Day.

by Elizabeth Anderson Lopez

These days, it's easier than ever to care for your pets while caring for the planet. Check out these areas where we can make our pets of every color a little greener.

1. Smart Bedding

No, not a blanket with a built-in app. We're talking about beds made from recycled items. Plastic and synthetic fabrics might be the cheapest materials, but they come at a cost to the planet. Look for bedding made with natural fibers, including hemp — not just for Woody Harrelson's dogs! — as well as second-life products, such as old soda bottles. And how's this for recycling? You can buy a bed "shell" that you fill with your own items, such as old towels and T-shirts.

2. The Scoop on Poop

OK, so poop is kind of gross, but all dogs do it, and you have the fun job of getting rid of it. When left outside, fecal fragments can make their way into sewers and other places. Some eco-friendly tools help you take care of your dog's business. Biodegradable bags are less harmful than plastic because they break down in landfills. You can even buy bags that are safe to flush!

Speaking of flushing, some kitty litters are flushable, too. Eco-friendly materials used in many kitty litters

THE UPSIDE TO UPCYCLING

Put the “fur” in furniture with a DIY project that takes something old and turns it into a new pet bed. For example, an old end table turned upside-down becomes a four-poster bed — all you need is a cushion. Similarly, take the legs off an old chair to create a bed with a headboard. If you have multiple pets, you can make a bunk bed by stacking wooden drawers or even two halves of a suitcase. Aimee and Miles Harrison have made a career out of this with their online business, Atomic Attic. “We’re vintage hounds,” Aimee said. “We like to turn something used and tattered into something fresh and modern for our customers.”

Check out how other pet owners have taken furniture pieces and turned them into dual-purpose pet beds; diynetwork.com. Visit Atomic Attic on Facebook or Etsy.

read like a menu — corn, wheat, and nuts. Many of them are made from renewable crops and are biodegradable.

3. The Joys of Recycled Toys

When purchasing toys, keep the environment in mind, too. Several companies offer biodegradable dog toys, as well as toys made from recycled items or scraps of leftover material used to make new toys.

Look for eco-conscious options for cat toys, too. Some are enveloped in dye-free hemp or organic cotton or are tinted with soy-based inks and contain materials made from recycled bottles. Kitty can bat a ball that’s made from natural cork. You can also make toys yourself by stuffing old baby socks. Catnip can keep your cat occupied for hours. Grow your own for a constant supply.

4. Sustaina-Bowl Feeding Solutions

Plastic bowls are cheap, but they are the most likely to linger in landfills. More eco-friendly options include stainless steel or ceramic bowls, or those made from recycled materials, including glass and even old fire hoses. Bamboo shoots to the top of the pet bowl category because of its durability and sustainability, for both bowls and feeder stands.

5. Don’t Trash It, Pass It

If your lucky pet has a plethora of collars and leashes, you might have a perfectly good surplus you’re no longer using. Those can find a greatly needed second life at shelters and rescue groups. And it’s not just obvious pet items that are needed — your older towels, bathroom rugs, linens, and blankets are very welcome, too.

6. Getting Around With Your Pet

Skip the car, and bike with your dog instead. Small dogs can ride proud in baskets worthy of Toto; many are built with chin rests for pooch, pockets for you, and even a water bottle holder. For cats or older dogs who can’t walk as far anymore, a towed trailer works great. For bigger, more active dogs, you can get a metal bar jogging attachment that attaches to your bike and prevents your dog from crossing in front of your bike. Finally, instead of relying on your gas-guzzler for transportation, use your own “kibble guzzler” for urban mushing. Energetic dogs will love pulling you on a dog-powered scooter (dogpowered scooter.com).

Elizabeth Anderson Lopez lives in Lake Forest, California, with her husband and ever-expanding menagerie of pets, which include several chickens, two Bull Terriers, a parrot, and a tortoise.

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