

5 Ways to Go Green With Your Dog

How you and your dog can live eco-friendly.

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It's likely that dogs could care less about going green. If the dog food tastes good, they'll gobble it down. If the toy is fun to play with, they'll romp and rustle for hours. They don't concern themselves with whether their diet is organic or their playthings are made from sustainable hemp or bamboo.

That's where you come in.

You can reduce your pet's carbon pawprint on the environment in lots of different ways. Try these easy tips to go green with your dog:

1. Do your part to reduce pet overpopulation: Consider adopting a rescue dog. Approximately six to eight million dogs need homes. These unwanted pets impact the environment by creating excess waste, which affects ground water and contributes to landfills, and requiring food and shelter, which requires energy-gulping manufacturing and electricity.

You can also consider adopting a purebred from a reputable responsible breeder rather than purchasing a pet from an unethical backyard breeder or puppy mill.

If you don't plan to breed your dog, have him spayed or neutered.

2. Choose an environmentally friendly cleaning product. Sure, vinegar and lemon juice are great natural cleaners, but did you know that enzyme-based cleaners are all-natural, too? Rather than removing stains and odors with harsh chemicals, the enzymes work by breaking down the – err – accident. You simply vacuum the mess up.

3. Support "green" businesses: When shopping for your dog, patronize stores and purchase products from companies that do their part to reduce their carbon footprints. Ask your retailer if she recycles, conserves energy and stocks her shelves with environmentally friendly goods. Find out if product makers use alternative power in their manufacturing processes or recycled cardboard in their packaging. If enough consumers demand it, the companies will deliver it -- and that can help our planet in the long run.

4. Reach for shampoos and conditioners made with natural ingredients. Make those monthly baths even more pleasant by using grooming products made with vegetable oils, herbal cleaners and aroma-therapeutic fragrances.

5. Pass the word along. When you're at the dog park, visiting with dog-owning friends or walking your dog through the neighborhood, share advice with other pup parents about how to reduce their pets' carbon pawprints. Swap stories and spread the word. Humans and canines share the world, and we can all take part in preserving it for the future.

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