

Expert Cleaning Tips for Dog Homes

Keep your home fresh and clean with these simple tips.

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Chasing tumbleweeds of pet hair through your house gets tiresome, as does wiping endless paw prints, deodorizing pet beds, and otherwise cleaning up after the king, er, canine. Surely, there must be an easier way.

We sought cleaning secrets from three home experts: Don Aslett, founder of Varsity Contractors, one of the nation's biggest cleaning companies; Sarah Smock, a spokesperson for Merry Maids, which cleans more than 300,000 homes a month; and interior designer Kari Whitman, who has her own cable show, *The Kari Whitman Show*.

Some secrets for common problems:

Banish doggie smell. Odors can permeate your house even after washing dog beds and fabrics favored by pets. Open the windows and doors to let fresh air flow through the house, even if just for one hour, Aslett and Smock suggest. Fresh air does wonders — unlike spraying masking fragrances, Aslett says, although Smock also recommends fabric fresheners for carpet and upholstery. “Air will take 90 percent of the doggie smell out of the house,” Aslett says.

Stinky dog beds. Use a washable cover, Smock suggests, and use a fabric freshening spray on the bed itself. Some sprays now target pet odors. Aslett suggests odor neutralizing products that contain enzyme digesters which consume bacteria, then disappear.

Entice pets to lounge appropriately. Don't let them take over the couch's hard-to-clean sweet spots. Instead, drape comfortable throws over the ends of the couch if pets are permitted there, Whitman advises. “Any faux fur or faux sheepskin-type throw will be irresistible to your pup. My dogs both love their Woolrich throws,” says Whitman, of her Mixed Breeds Lucy and Lucille.

Dog hair on fabrics. Pet hair practically weaves itself into couch fabrics and looped carpets — despite vacuuming. Swipe the surface with a pet rake, a 12-inch brush with crimped nylon bristles, advises Aslett, who has demonstrated it on HGTV. Smock agrees, plus offers alternatives: Wrap tape around your hand — sticky side out — and swipe away; use a special dry pet sponge sold in pet supply stores; or use the rubber bottom of a clean tennis shoe.

Dog hair on hard floors. “Electrostatic dusters do a good job,” says Smock. Available in both cloth and feather-duster form, they attract dust as you swipe, and won't send dust floating around the room.

Better vacuuming. Use a vacuum with a good beater brush or brush roll, says Aslett, author of such books as “Is There Life After Housework?” (Adams Media, 2005) and “Pet Cleanup Made Easy” (Adams Media, 2005). The brush bounces and vibrates the carpet to free hair, dander, dirt, and fleas, then sweeps them into the air flow and into the vacuum bag.

Minimize paw prints. Place a 3-by-4-foot nylon mat inside your dog's entryway, and keep an old towel or some baby wipes nearby for quick paw cleanups. Nylon mats with a vinyl or rubber backing are sturdier than throw rugs and don't absorb odors, Aslett says.

Smock adds: “Be sure to clean your dog's paws if there is even a hint of moisture on the ground, as dogs seem to be able to find mud at any opportunity.”