

PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Green Up Your Pets!
By the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
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With Earth Day (April 22) and Vermont Green up Day (May 3) approaching, it is time to consider some Earth friendly practices to help the environment when it comes to our furry companions. Plastic is everywhere, and only 27% of plastic is recycled. Landfills can only hold so much and even then it takes 450 years for plastic to start to degrade. If we can use products for our pets made from recycled plastic or even better from renewable resources, it is better our pets and the environment in the long run.

Consider making homemade treats to avoid buying those pre-packaged in plastic. While there are a million recipes online for homemade dog biscuits, double check the ingredient list with your veterinarian before making them to ensure they are safe for your pet. An even simpler way (if your pet eats canned food) is to take some of your pet's canned food, cut it into small strips, and bake in the oven until it is brick consistency. Homemade diets are a great idea, but they can be tricky because you must ensure that the diet has the proper balance of ingredients, vitamins, and minerals. Animals can become very sick on some homemade diets if they are not balanced: check with your veterinarian first. Just because "Dr. Google" says it's so, doesn't mean that recipe is complete and balanced.

There are at least five types of kitty litter that are not only biodegradable, they can be used as mulch or compost (once you scoop out the waste)! These use renewable products such as corn, wheat, paper, or kiln-dried wood. Nearly every local pet or feed store has at least one such kitty litter. Stop using those plastic grocery store bags for your dog's waste and use ones that break down quickly and naturally and don't harm the environment. It is estimated that a million animals (mainly in the ocean) die each year from ingesting plastic, mistaking it for food. There are several companies that make biodegradable "doggie doo" bags and can be found locally.

You know you can't resist buying toys for your pets. Did you know there are many companies that make dog and cat toys and beds from recycled plastics, hemp, wool, or cotton? Check with your local pet supply stores or as a last resort check online. You can even make your own pet toys at home. Reuse scraps of fabric to make your own braided dog pull toy. Cat owners all know that most of the time the cats have more fun playing in bags or boxes than they do with toys from the store. You can even crumple up your old bills and have the satisfaction of seeing

your cats bat them around the house. Cats find cords and stringy toys irresistible to play with, but they also like to try to eat them. This can cause serious illness, so put them away when you're done playing.

Avoid plastic food and water dishes and use ones made from metal or glass- or better yet, look for ones made from sustainable materials. There is at least one company that makes food and water dishes from bamboo, for example.

So green up your pets! These are small things that you can do to help make the environment a safer and better place for wildlife and all of those future puppies and kittens.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 340 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.