

## Dogs & Cats: Considering Their Impact on the Environment

### Why we care

Pets provide companionship, prompt us to walk and play, and are often loved members of our families. They also have an impact on the environment. A medium sized dog eats food containing some 360 pounds of meat and 200 pounds of grain each year, which one researcher equates to driving an SUV about 14,000 miles. Dogs and cats create 10 million tons of waste each year, containing bacteria and viruses, which can contaminate waterways and compromise the health of humans and other animals. The American Bird Conservancy estimates that cats kill 500 million birds per year, contributing to the decline in some bird species.

### Simple, positive steps

- Think about the environmental impact before getting a dog or cat. What will it eat? Will it require a larger car? More frequent cleaning? Replacement of carpets and furniture?
- Lower your dog's carbon footprint by reducing its intake of meat.
- Pick up all dog waste and flush it down the toilet, or compost it in a [Doggie Dooley](#).
- Keep your cat inside, especially at night when it has the urge to prowl for smaller animals.
- If your cat roams outdoors, attach a bell around its neck, or order a "[CatBib](#)," which hangs from the neck, gently interfering with the cat's bird catching skills.
- Clay-based cat litters are produced with strip-mining. Buy biodegradable kitty litter instead and after flushing fecal material, spread the litter onto (or bury it under) the soil around shrubs.

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