

Pets



Owning a pet can create a lot of waste from packaging in addition to all the waste pets create themselves. However, there are steps you can take to reduce the amount of waste associated with having an animal companion.

Food

A low-waste option is to make your own food for cats and dogs, although this can be quite time-consuming. You can use meat and bones from local producers and grow vegetables in your yard or buy locally grown produce. Making your own food greatly reduces packaging waste, and will almost always be of higher quality than what you can find in a commercial food. This means it will be more digestible and your pet will produce less waste.

Although cats and dogs can eat vegetables and grains, cats need meat as their main nutrient source. There are a lot of articles to help you decide if this is the right choice for you and your pet. Many website have recipes and information on the pros and cons. Check out:

- feline-nutrition.org/nutrition/making-raw-cat-food-for-do-it-yourselfers
- thebark.com/content/should-you-put-your-dog-raw-food-diet

If you don't want to make your own food, try a grain-free food that you buy at a pet food store. In most cases this will be highly digestible for your cat or dog, which means less waste in the litter box or in your yard. Buy larger bags or containers to cut down on packaging waste.

Treats

You can make your own treats to cut down on packaging waste. There are many options online. Search for homemade treats for both cats and dogs; one place to start is [simplypets.com](https://www.simplypets.com). You can also grow your own catnip for your feline and air dry it for storage (bonnieplants.com/growing/growing-catnip/)

Pet waste

Look for litter made from pine, cedar, wheat, newspaper or corn rather than clay, which must be mined. Plain sawdust is also a cheap and effective option that utilizes an otherwise wasted resource.

Bedding such as pine and newspaper from herbivores including alpacas, chinchillas, hamsters, horses, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice, and rabbits can be composted in your backyard bin.

Dog waste (but not the bag you picked it up in) may be flushed down the toilet. Don't buy new plastic bags to pick up or collect your pet waste – reuse old bread bags, food-soiled zipper bags, or other soft plastic bags like newspaper bags or skip the bags altogether and use a scooper to pick up your dog's waste.

If none of these options work for you, the proper disposal of pet waste is in the trash.

Gear

You can look for food and water bowls, leashes, kennels, toys and beds that are gently used on online sale and sharing sites like Craigslist or NextDoor or at your local animal shelter if they sell used pet products that have been donated. You can also make your own pet bed and toys out of surplus or repurposed materials. Making your own allows you to customize them and save money. Here's a website with a few examples: tipnut.com/pet-beds

If you'd like to build an outdoor enclosure for your cat so they can safely get sunshine and fresh air, think about building your own or having a handyperson build it with used building materials such as wood and screens or repurposed items such as ramps and enclosures. Find some design ideas at paws.org/library/cats/home-life/outdoor-enclosures/

Sources of used building materials include:

- Habitat for Humanity ReStore
- Better Futures Minnesota ReUse Warehouse



Grooming

Avoid the special pet shampoo by using a castile soap such as Dr. Bronner's diluted with water or natural baby shampoo to wash your dog. Frequent baths will dry out your dog's skin, so try not to wash them any more than necessary.

As an alternative to chemical flea repellents and treatments, you can try natural remedies that will also avoid the plastic packaging. Learn more at mnn.com/family/pets/stories/7-natural-flea-remedies-cats-and-dogs.

"My cat is perfectly happy with toys like crumpled newspaper balls, cardboard boxes, old feathers, and even a stretched-out wire from a notebook binding. It's great to just recycle or compost these things when she's done with them. She is also a big fan of two homemade toys: a crocheted ball with something crinkly inside and a little fleece pillow with catnip. You don't need to buy the whole pet store aisle of plastic toys that are ultimately trash." – Pet owner from Mound