

Happy Furry Home

Tips for Keeping a Pet-Friendly Home Clean

by Sandra Murphy



Households with multiple pets abound as families often opt for a mix of companion animals. Currently, more than 70 million dogs, 75 million cats and 6 million birds are kept as pets in the U.S., according to a recent American Pet Products Association survey. While we cherish their affection, downsides include pet hair dust bunnies, scattered litter, spilled seeds and potty accidents. Cleaning up can be easier with training and planning.

“Living on the beach, it’s easy for the dog to bring sand indoors, so I taught him to shake it off,” says dog expert and trainer Amy Robinson, in Vero Beach, Florida. “I put water in a bottle and misted it lightly on his head, then gave the cue, ‘Shake,’ and shook my shoulders. He mimicked me and got rid of most of the sand. Brushing him with a towel got the rest.” Once the dog understands the cue, retire the water bottle.

“I have a Newfoundland/poodle, a great Pyrenees/poodle and a Labradoodle, so I keep old towels outside the

door to wipe dirty feet,” says Kathleen Thometz, owner of Doodle Art & Design, in Western Springs, Illinois. “The Newfoundland can open the door, so I have to catch him before he tracks in muddy paw prints.” Thometz keeps their hairbrush with the towels. “I have them groomed regularly, but a quick brush after a walk means I don’t have to vacuum between weekly house cleanings,” she says.

“Short hair can be even harder to pick up,” reminds Ryan Riley, co-founder of *BizBagz.com*, in Los Angeles. “We brush our 50- and 70-pound pit bull mixes outside after play time and they love it.”

“Carpets and pets are a challenging combination, especially when pets get older and accidents happen,” observes Amy Bell, an interior decorator at Red Chair Home Interiors, in Cary, North Carolina. “I recommend hard surface flooring, washable slipcovers for furniture and keeping lint brushes by the door.” All-natural, sustainably sourced area rugs or hall runners

make it easier for dogs to get around on slick surfaces; be sure the backing can withstand wet accidents.

“I use a hair-attracting dry mop to pick up fur on hard floors. It takes me 10 minutes a day to do 2,400 square feet; otherwise, I’d have tumbleweeds of hair blowing around. I use a Quick Vac every two days on area rugs,” says Joan Fradella, a Florida Supreme Court-certified family mediator in Lantana, Florida. A basset mix, vizla/Rhodesian ridgeback and boxer/Labrador all shed hair in her house. Fradella also uses a water-soaked microfiber cleaning cloth to remove what she calls sniggle art (dog nose prints) on sliding glass doors.

If a hairy cat balks at brushing, try a cat hair removal glove. Some are designed to massage and remove loose hair; others clean up furniture and fabrics.

Stick with washable cat or dog bedding and use a removable cover for more frequent laundering. Warming temperatures due to climate change are fostering a rise in flea populations worldwide. Food-grade (not pool-grade) diatomaceous earth sprinkled on a pet’s bedding or the pet itself is safe; the silky powder adversely affects only creatures with hard outer skeletons.

Some dogs grab a mouthful of food and join the family, trailing crumbs along the way. Instead, feed them in their crates where they feel at home, allowing 15 minutes to finish. For a dog that eats too fast and then sometimes vomits, use a puzzle-designed feeder so it has to work to get to the food. Fradella uses food and water bowls with wide bottoms because they’re harder to overturn. Stainless steel, washed daily, is best. A waterproof mat with a raised lip helps contain mealtime spills. A static mat removes litter from a cat’s feet upon exiting the litter box.

“Dogs can be trained to put away their toys,” advises Robinson. Cats, not so much. Birds are messy, producing floating bits of feathers and scattered seed. A mesh seed catcher will capture most of it; a dry mop gathers up the rest.

Bell suggests randomly sprinkling about 15 drops of lavender essential oil on a new air filter before installing it for a fresh scent throughout the house, and regularly changing filters. Multiple pets may necessitate more frequent filter replacements, which also reduces danger and related allergy symptoms.

Simple routines and the right tools lead to a safe, healthy home. They also free us up from unnecessary chores to enjoy more time with our beloved pets.

*Connect with freelance writer
Sandra Murphy at StLouisFreelanceWriter@mindspring.com.*