

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. According to one researcher, meat-eating by dogs and cats creates greenhouse gas emissions that have about the same climate impact as a year's worth of driving from 13.6 million cars. Dogs and cats create 14 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 2.4 billion birds per year, contributing to the decline in some bird species.

Simple, positive change

- 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.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org.