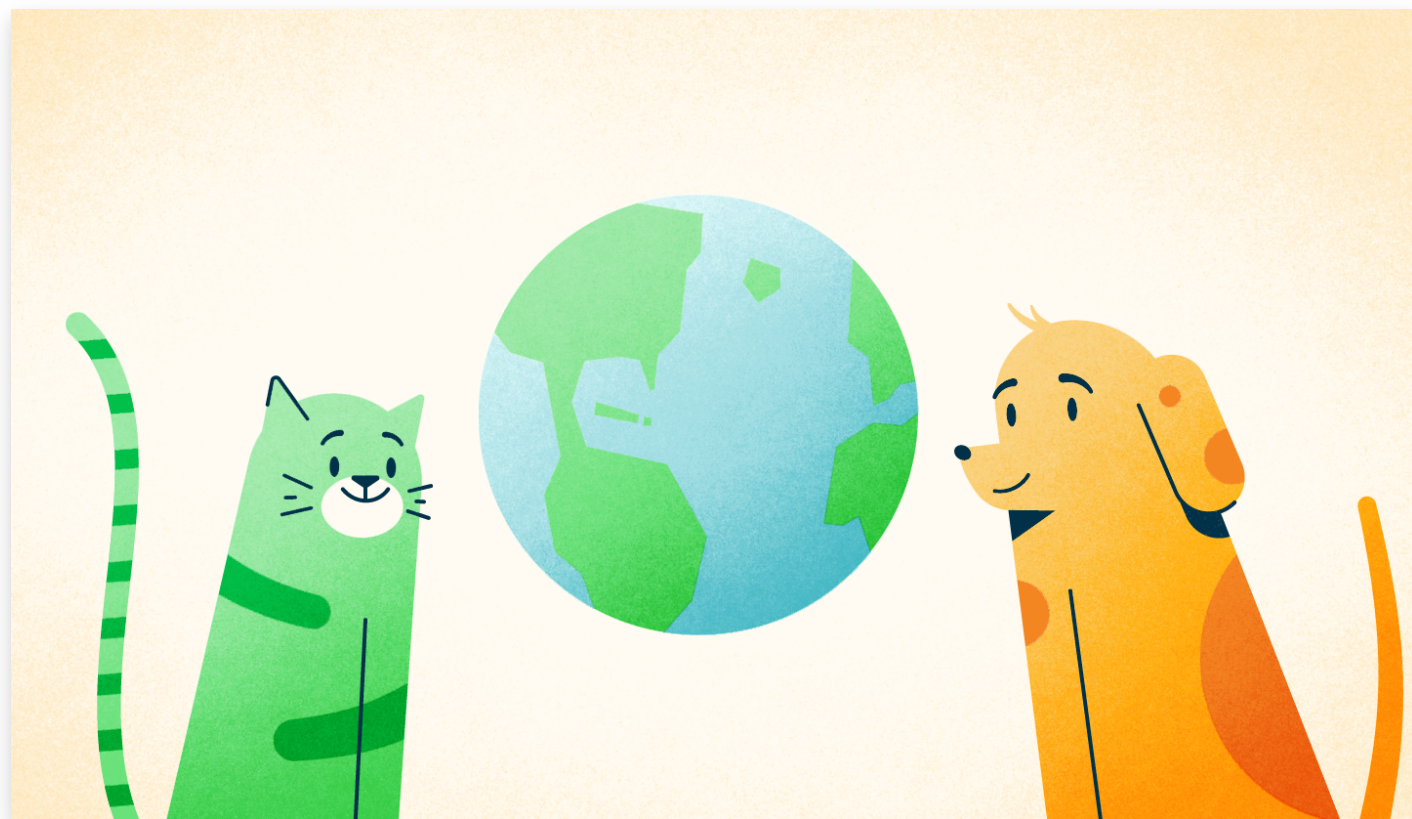


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## The Guide to Green Shopping for Your Pet (What to Buy + Printable Checklist!)

December 30, 2019



Having pets is a rewarding process filled with laughter and joy, most of the time. But with growing concerns about the environment and what chemicals we expose ourselves to, it's worth considering the same for our beloved pets.

Unfortunately, pet products don't have to adhere to the same FDA standards that human consumables do, and pet product manufacturers often practice deceptive marketing techniques to make their products seem natural or healthy.

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Let's start by talking about what "going green" means.

## Why You Should Go Green For Your Pet



### Environmental Impact

With over 60% of U.S households being pet owners, it may not surprise you that our pets account for 20–30% of all meat consumption in the United States. Meat production is a taxing agricultural process that requires a lot of water and emits carbon and methane. Naturally then, our pets leave a large environmental footprint with their diets.

Cheap, quick and dirty is typically the name of the game when you breakdown the materials that compose your pet's accessories, like toys, bedding and bowls.

### Health Impact

Just like they are dangerous for us, carcinogens are also dangerous for our pets. From cheap, toxic plastics to unsafe ingredients, what we give our pets should be considered.

A good way to improve your pet's health is by providing a diet that promotes health and green living for them along with removing potentially toxic toys and pet accessories.

Over the years there has been an emphasis on a grain-free diet and avoiding corn, for good reason. Corn is grown on 1/3 of all U.S cropland and is one of the largest drains on agricultural

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## Financial Impact

When making the switch to a green lifestyle for your pet, a common concern is that it is going to cost a fortune. In reality, choosing healthy and sustainable options for your pet may pay off in the long run. In fact, most lower-cost pet foods are more expensive per serving as they have tons of fillers!

Another way to balance out the additional costs is to buy in bulk. Plus, high-quality pet supplies often last longer than cheap toys and bowls. We can all agree that a plastic bowl is not going to last as long as a stainless steel bowl, so it helps to consider these purchases as investments!

## Chow Down the Healthy Way



Your pet's food is one of the first areas to focus on when you're looking to become a more environmentally conscious pet-owner. The environmental impact of food consumption by pets is significant; a recent UCLA study found that dogs and cats are responsible for 25 to 30 percent of the environmental impact of meat consumption in the United States. Additionally, feeding dogs and cats create approximately 64 million tons of carbon dioxide a year and account for 30% of all meat consumption in the world.

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is made from what's known as "4D meats," which is meat that comes from animals that are dead, dying, diseased or disabled.

If these byproducts aren't safe for human consumption, why would we feed them to our pets? Read on to learn more about how to identify food that's safe for your pet and good for the environment.

## Meat

The pet food industry is notorious for using animal byproducts and other rendered products that aren't deemed safe for human consumption — such as restaurant grease or expired meat — in their products. When shopping for pet food that contains meat, it's important to know how to interpret labels to ensure you're getting a quality product for your furry friend.

### What to look for

- **Pet foods labeled as “natural”:** Pet foods that are labeled “natural” fall under the jurisdiction of the [Association of American Feed Control Officials](#), and are defined as food that only comes from plant, animal or mined sources.
- **Pet foods labeled as “organic”:** If a pet food brand is labeled as “100% organic,” it means that the food was produced without the use of pesticides or artificial fertilizers, and is free from human and industrial waste contamination. It also means that any animals involved in the production of the food were raised without antibiotics or growth hormones.

### What to avoid

- **Foods labeled with just meat and bone meal:** Most of these words are just blanket terms for animal by-products, things like dead animals, expired meats or scraps not

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## Preservatives

In the spirit of keeping it natural, the same should be said about the preservatives in your pets food. There are good and bad preservatives. With the evolution of food science years, our preservatives have gotten more complex, but unfortunately their biological effects are not yet understood.

One of which are carcinogens, and most are completely banned for human consumption, unfortunately, that's not the case without beloved pets. BHA and BHT can still be found in pet food even though it's been linked to organ damage in rats and animals.

### What to look for

- **Naturally sourced preservatives like vitamin E and rosemary:** Using natural antioxidants, your dog food can stay fresh for up to six months without the use of any nasty chemicals. These antioxidants may also provide anti-inflammatory benefits for your pets.

### What to avoid

- **BHA & BHT:** This is a known carcinogen that's infused with fats and oils to preserve your pet's food. It can cause kidney and liver problems.
- **TBHQ:** Known to cause pre-cancerous stomach tumors in animals, tertiary butylhydroquinone is a fat stabilizer that you can also find in varnishes and explosives. Try not to expose your pets to this because of its cancer-causing characteristics.
- **Sodium Metabisulphite:** Banned from use in humans foods since 1963, this preservative is used in our pet foods as a stabilizer and flavor enhancer. It can cause



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Beware of the simple grains, often described as thickening agents or emulsifiers. Suspects include corn, corn syrup, wheat and soy. While many pets like dogs have evolved over time their digestive systems have not, making complex grains hard to digest.

Gluten has been in the headlines for years with many of us swearing off of it, or unable to consume it, the same principle is quickly getting accepted in the pet community.

## What to look for

- **Whole grain or grain-free:** Look for ingredients like whole oats or whole wheat as they are nutrient-dense, unprocessed and much easier on your pets digestive system.
- **Healthy fats:** Foods with Omega-6 and Omega-3's are excellent ingredients for your pet's food that provide anti-inflammatory and joint health.

## What to avoid

- **Foods with corn and corn syrup:** Corn and corn syrup have a high glycemic index, aren't very digestible and are known to be an allergen for some pets. Overall they're unnecessary fillers that provide little nutritional value.
- **Simple grains and gluten:** Allergens for pets, causing itchiness, hot spots and baldness have been identified with the use of grain. Another argument against grain is that it's an unnatural source of food for pets as they historically haven't eaten grain.
- **Soy, vegetable oil and pea protein:** These are all considered vegetable-based protein sources, but typically aren't very nutritious for pets as they have a reduced bioavailability, making them less digestible.

## Make Play Time Green

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With the impact of plastics on ourselves and the environment being more present than ever, what our pets play with and are exposed to on a daily basis must also be considered.

### What to look for

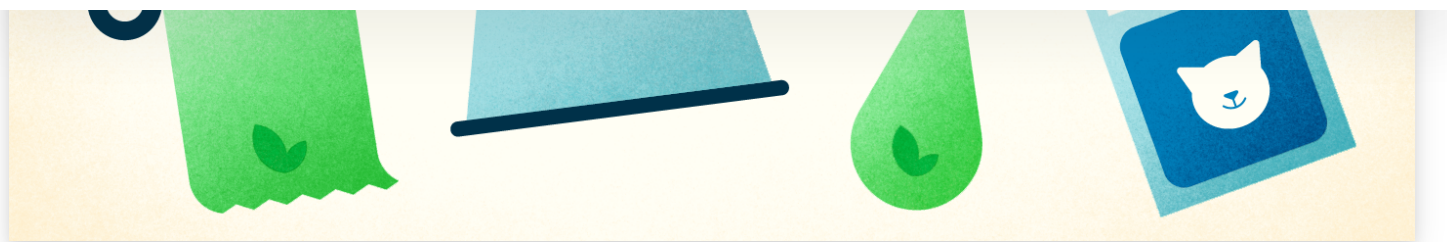
- **Products made from recycled materials:** Are an excellent way to stay green while also keeping your pet healthy. Look for recycled plastics rubbers and textiles next time you are toy shopping.
- **Toys labeled organic or biodegradable:** These toys are typically made from sustainable, safe materials for your pet.

### What to avoid

- **PVC and BPA:** Are cheap materials used to make your pet's toys. Unfortunately, their entire product lifecycle is harmful to humans, pets and the environment.

### Feeding and Grooming The Sustainable Way

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When it comes to mealtime our pets rely on us to provide a safe and pleasant experience, so how they eat is just as important as what we feed them! While common of years past, plastic feeding bowls are being phased out due to their toxicity and bacterial concerns.

The plastic that makes up most pet bowls contains BPAs and is quite porous, which allows bacteria to breed and grow. Paired with our pets daily use, bacteria thrive in these containers often leading to bad breath and even health problems. Where our pets go to the restroom and how their waste is handled is also important.

It's smart to avoid pet litters with heavy clay and silica as these are toxic and can lead to respiratory and digestive issues. If your pet needs waste bags, try to find a biodegradable option, as plastic bags just pile-up in the landfill.

## What to look for

- **Bamboo or natural materials:** Natural woods like bamboo are a sustainable resource, provide excellent durability and are often cost-effective. Bamboo is a great option for its durability and lightweight.
- **Stainless steel:** Is a great material to use because of its lack of porousness, which prevents bacterial breeding. Stainless steel is also durable and recyclable, making it an excellent green option.
- **Biodegradable pet waste bags:** This an easy way to cut down on plastic waste along with allowing your pets business to decompose properly rather than fermenting in a bag



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## What to Avoid

- **Pet litter with clay or silica:** Due to the amount of dust produced by these litters, pets can often develop asthma after long term exposure.
- **Plastic:** Avoid using any plastic, be it waste bags or bowls. Not only are they harmful to the environment, but they can often breed bacteria that are dangerous for your pet.

## Sleep Tight and Safe



When it's time for our pets to rest, what they sleep with shouldn't be overlooked. Many of the common bedding options for pets are hazardous, from the fill in the bed to the anti-odor chemicals on it.

Look for organic options like cotton instead of synthetic because if your pet ends up ripping up the blanket or bed, it's consuming hazardous materials. Essentially you're protecting your pet and the environment by choosing sustainable resources.

Cedar chips are also to be avoided as a bedding option for your pets, as cedar chips emit phenols. This chemical is used to kill insects but for our pets is known to cause respiratory distress and even liver failure. A great alternative is to use aspen chips as they are phenol-free.

## What to look for

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- **Litter made from hardwood chips or shavings:** Untreated hardwoods are a safe choice for pet mulch as they aren't treated with any toxic chemicals.
- **Products made from recycled materials:** This is a good route as you know your carbon footprint is fairly neutral along with providing a safe place for your pet to rest.

## What to avoid

- **Bedding and blankets with synthetic insulation:** Synthetic bedding is harmful to your pet if consumed, is bad for the environment and releases harmful gas.
- **Items treated with odor eliminating chemicals:** Often are irritating to your pet's lungs and with long term exposure can cause health issues.
- **Cedar shavings (gives off toxic phenol fumes):** Cedar shavings emit a toxic gas that causes respiratory distress and even death in pets.

## Other Ways to Go Green

There are a few other ways to supplement your green efforts. Buying pet food and also your groceries in bulk is a great way to cut back on gas use while taking advantage of the discounts that come with high volume pricing.

Another excellent way to cut back on costs and go green is to start making your own pet treats in the oven, typically with natural and easy to find ingredients. While the prices can vary, ultimately it's all about the ingredients and your ability to discern the good from the bad. If done correctly you can provide a healthier, greener way of life for your pet without hurting the pocketbook.

Whether your pet is furred or feathered, their health and impact on the environment can be managed in a way that helps the planet and improves their health. Be sure to feed them a

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When it's play and feeding time make sure the toys and bowls they have aren't toxic. Look for plastic-free or recycled materials for their toys and stainless steel or bamboo for their feeding needs. When it's time to call it a day, offer them organic or recycled bedding to prevent exposure to toxic materials and give the environment a break!

At the end of the day it may seem daunting to "go green" for your pet but with a little education and time to discern what your pet needs; you will quickly find it to be an easy and cost-effective process. If you are just starting the green path take a look at some of the coupons Capital One Shopping has to offer from [Petco](#).

Looking to do some environmentally friendly shopping for your furry friend? [Download our complete checklist on how to green shop for your pet.](#)

**Sources:** [PLOS ONE](#) | [Dog Breed Info](#) | [NCBI](#) | [Consumer Affairs](#) | [NCHFP](#) | [National Geographic](#) | [Time](#) | [AAFCO](#) | [Springer](#) | [AAFCO](#) | [PetMD](#) | [Psychology Today](#) | [EWG](#) | [David Suzuki Foundation](#) |

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