



Pet-Friendly Home Design

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Living with my furry white, part Bichon, part Pomeranian or Bichon-A-Ranian canine companion, Gracie, I have learned to appreciate good pet-friendly design when it comes to building a home that you will share with your pets.

Pets continue to take an increasingly significant role in American family life. The American Pet Products Manufacturers Association estimates six out of every 10 homes have a pet and owners spend more than \$40 billion a year on their furry family members.

You don't have to sacrifice style to accommodate the pets in your new home, however. Here are ways you can incorporate design features in your home that are easy on your pets, but also on the eyes!

- When selecting paint finishes for your home, go for satin or semi-gloss finishes over flat-finish. They are easier to clean and scratches, streaks and dirt aren't as noticeable.
- If you are putting in hardwood flooring, choose a wood that has a light or medium finish over darker woods which emphasize scratch marks more. If you have older dogs or young puppies, install carpeting on the stairs to keep them from slipping.
- Unless you have successfully trained your pets to stay off the furniture, incorporate fabrics and styles which lend themselves to your pet's favorite sleeping spot. To help disguise pet fur on your sofa and chairs, match the fabric to your pet's fur color or choose patterns over solids. Select fabrics that are durable and easy to clean; good choices are leather, Ultrasuede® or Crypton® -- a synthetic fabric resistant to stains, odor and moisture.

- To keep the legs of your furniture from being used as a chew toy or scratching post, choose furniture that has metal frames rather than wood.
- Keep your kitchen tidy by installing a feeding drawer in your cabinetry that pulls out during meal time then closes to hide the bowls and food when guests visit. Also, consider adding an alcove with a comfortable and stylish dog bed to keep Fido out from under your feet when you cook.
- Replace your standard showerhead with a detachable hand-held showerhead in your bathroom to make it easier to bathe your pet. If there's space, install a small dog shower in your mudroom or storage area so you won't have a dirty bathroom after you've cleaned up your dog from a muddy day out in the yard.

For more helpful tips on how to make your home pet-friendly, you might check out www.amazon.com for an excellent book with 190 color photographs titled *Animal House Style – Designing a Home to Share with Your Pets*, by Julia Szabo and with Mary Tyler Moore contributing. No, this isn't a how-to design a home with the flair of John Belushi, it's self described as “a stylish, informative interior-design guide that combines functional and aesthetic solutions for people who want to create an exceptional home to share with their pets.” or you may visit the National Association of Home Builders online at www.nahb.org/forconsumers.