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## Eco pet practices

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Eco Catholic

Hundreds of four-footed pals have come through my doors in the last seven years. You see, I take care of dogs in my home while their owners are out of town. So I am fairly familiar with how most people care for their pets. And adopting earth-friendly pet practices hardly seems to register on their radar screen. So if you are one of these persons who has never even thought about that possibility, I'm here to raise your awareness of how you can love your pet and love the Earth at the same time.

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Start with giving your pet healthy food. If you can afford a local, natural, homemade product without



additives, that would be ideal. I've given my cat

Nala a high-quality

food and at 15, she's perky and playful, a masterful hunter who's never seen the inside of a vet's office. Don't feed to excess, because all that unnecessary food took energy and resources to produce. And definitely watch the packaging the food comes in. I cringe when someone brings individual packets of wet food that must be tossed in the trash when emptied. If you must use canned food, then be sure to recycle the cans.

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Ah, the natural cycle of nature -- food in, poop out. With cats, do not use the typical clay-based litter, an unsustainable product. Instead seek out a natural litter that says, "Environmentally-friendly and biodegradable." I use one made out of corn cob granules and it works great. When picking up dog waste on walks, find an alternative to the black plastic bags. When picking up poop in the back yard, I use the plastic bag my newspaper comes in. And if you have to clean up "accidents" in the house occasionally, don't just grab the paper towels, but use newspapers or old towels that can be washed.

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One good rule is not to bring any toxic pet products into your home, or give your pets drugs unless absolutely crucial. One way or another, all toxins end up in the water, soil, air and return to haunt us. Keep it simple and maybe all you need is dog shampoo purchased from a health food store. If you need flea remedies, get natural ones online or make your own if you possibly can.

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Finally, don't purchase cheap or plastic pet supplies, which end up all too quickly in the landfills. Find durable toys that last, use metal bowls, and buy beds made from recycled materials. In general, seek out alternative, green products for your pets, which fortunately, are now readily available. And you can still spoil your best friend without despoiling the Earth.

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