

Guide to Pet Proofing Your Home



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A pet makes a great household companion for children and adults alike. While there are many benefits to having a pet in the home, there are also potential problems that pets and their owners face.

Playful and curious animals, for example, can cause damage to fragile, expensive, and prized possessions. In addition, they also face a wide range of hazards that can threaten their health or lives. While there are common pet-related hazards that are present in every room in the house, each room also has its unique risks. It is important for pet owners to understand and recognize all of the potential dangers and take steps to mitigate them, both for the safety of their possessions and their pets' good health.

All Rooms

Certain threats can be found in every room of the house. For example, because dogs like to chew, electrical wires present a potential electrocution hazard. Keep stray wires out of the reach of animals whenever possible, and unplug and cover them when the appliance is not in use.

In addition, cats may use chairs and other furniture around the house as scratching pads. Rather than resort to declawing, use humane and effective means to redirect a cat's scratching urges away from furniture. Get a cat scratching post and a designated rug with a rough texture that cats can use for scratching instead. The scratching post or rug should be in an area where the family tends to spend time, such as the living room, or near wherever the cat tends to sleep.

Toys left on the floors around the home not only risk being damaged by one's pet, but they also present a choking hazard and should be kept in a toy box when not being played with.

It will also be necessary to secure lamps in every room to prevent pets from knocking them over, and candles must never be left lit and unattended anywhere in a home with pets. One of the most important ways to pet-proof a home is to eliminate all clutter. This will greatly reduce the potential damage to precious or expensive belongings or the threat of harm to one's pet. Also, never leave precious belongings like rings, earrings, or other jewelry out and unattended, as pets risk internal injury by chewing or swallowing them.

Kitchen

When it comes to kitchens, the presence of food provides an added incentive for pets to get into trouble. The goal for pet-proofing a kitchen is to not only keep animals away from food but also to keep them safe from hazardous chemicals, sharp utensils, or objects that are easy to swallow or break.

To keep pets out of the kitchen, people can use a door or gate to hinder their access to the room. Items that can be knocked over and shattered should be kept in cabinets, and knives should be stored in drawers when they are not in use. In homes with animals that can jump, keep counters cleared of food items that are potentially harmful, and never leave hot items or burners unattended.

Store kitchen cleaning supplies in cabinets and use childproof latches to prevent pets from prying them open. Garbage cans are also a serious concern in kitchens, as they typically contain or smell of food. If pets knock over and get into them, they will have access to foods that can choke or poison them. Keep garbage bins closed and either secure them with childproof latches or use bins that are pedal operated.

Bedrooms

Pets such as dogs and cats love to sit on beds, but this means dirt or fur may be left on pillows, sheets, and bedspreads. Keeping the doors to bedrooms closed to deny access to pets is often not practical or effective. Instead, pet owners can place a pet-proof cover over the bed and pillows. When pets are allowed in the bedroom, always check closets and even drawers before closing them, as pets may have found their way inside and could become trapped.

Keep shoes in boxes in the closet and keep the closet closed when not in use, as pets may chew on them or choke on the shoelaces.

Bedrooms are also often filled with odds and ends that may be sharp, poisonous, or easily swallowed. Items such as paper clips, hair ties, bobby pins, needles, and coins should never be left lying about.

Living Room

Caution is the key to keeping pets safe in the living room. Batteries are typically used to power television remote controls and other items, but they are extremely dangerous if swallowed and should never be left sitting around.

Lit fireplaces are another concern, as animals often enjoy the warmth that they project. Unfortunately, sparks or simple curiosity can cause a fire or burn injuries. Placing a screen in front of the fireplace can help prevent pets from getting close enough to be hurt.

Bathrooms

A variety of dangers await pets that stray into bathrooms. These dangers range from drowning risks to accidental consumption of medicines. Never leave water sitting in bathtubs or bathroom sinks, as pets may jump or fall in. Toilets are another threat to pets, particularly dogs that often drink from them. Keep their lids closed when not in use to prevent drowning or poisoning from chemicals commonly used in toilet bowls.

Keep medicine cabinets closed and secured to prevent pets from pulling down and getting into medicine bottles. Cabinets should be kept securely closed to prevent pets from getting inside as well. If possible, keep the bathroom door shut at all times, and always check to make sure no pets will be trapped inside before closing the door.

Laundry Room

Laundry rooms are a dangerous place for pets, as a wide range of chemicals are often stored there. Keep laundry detergent, bleach, fabric softeners, and other chemicals on shelves that are too high for dogs to reach. In homes with cats, store these items in secured cabinets. Pets may also accidentally fall into unattended washing machines or take a nap in an open dryer. Before starting an appliance, one should always look inside. Whenever possible, pets should be kept out of the laundry room altogether.