

SELLING WHEN YOU HAVE PETS

I am a pet owner. Are there tips for helping someone like me sell my house quickly?

Many Americans enjoy sharing their lives and their homes with pets – of all kinds. If you are selling your home, there is a good chance that some potential buyers will also have pets. That doesn't mean, however, that you should not make an effort to minimize the impact your pets have on the appearance and attractiveness of the home you are selling.

The evidence of pets living in a home include odors, stains, pet toys, litter boxes, chewed or scratched furniture, pet doors, kennels, water bowls and the pets, themselves.

Odors and stains are the most significant issues to address. Even if your potential buyer owns a pet, he's not likely to be interested in inheriting the odors left behind by your dog, cat or rabbit.

The American Humane Society suggests that you use a black light to find evidence of accidents on floors, walls, furniture and carpets. No matter how old, they will likely show up under the black light. You can use a wet vacuum (not steam) and standard carpet cleaners to try and remove the stains and their associated odors from carpets and fabrics. In some instances (cats, for example) you may need an enzyme-based product.

Carpet pads that have been stained with pet urine may need to be replaced (entirely or just in the stained sections) and stained paint or varnish will need to be removed and replaced. Sanding and resealing hardwood floors can both remove and conceal certain odors, and would improve the overall attractiveness of the home at the same time.

There is general agreement among REALTORS® that pets should not be in a house (or yard) when the property is being shown. Some people are not comfortable around pets and some pets react strongly when strangers come into their spaces.

Some experts advise that, if possible, pets should temporarily live elsewhere while you are trying to sell your house. That way, much of the visible evidence (toys, litter boxes, pet food) can be removed from the house. For many people this won't be practical or acceptable, so making the extra effort to minimize the pet's presence is the next best option.

If your pets are part of either the insect or the reptile families, removing them from the home is pretty much mandatory. More than half of all Americans fear snakes and quite a few feel similarly about large spiders and tarantulas.

When pets are part of the environment, cleaning also means vacuuming the carpets, floors and furniture regularly. People with allergies will often sense right away if there is pet hair in the home.

Keeping your home as clean as possible is important to attracting buyers. Anyone who has sold a home has probably had those moments of annoyance in picking up after their children, making the beds, wiping the counters and doing all the other things to make your home attractive – pretty much every day it is on the market.

As people tour your home, they will be visualizing themselves living there. Just as neutral paint colors, a nicely manicured lawn and good lighting makes for an inviting vision, so will the absence of pets and any evidence they have lived there help to seal the deal.

For more information and advice contact your local REALTOR®