



CATIO SPACES®
Designing Spaces for Safe, Healthy & Happy Cats

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(credit: Catio Spaces)

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Animal Protection Month in October – Pet Safety Begins at Home

SEATTLE, Washington (August 30, 2021) -- Animal safety is a concern shared by pet parents everywhere – and it begins at home.

October is National Animal Safety and Protection Month. It is an ideal time to review tips for keeping animals healthy at home. By observing a few safety measures and modifications to the home environment, pet owners can avoid unnecessary (and possibly costly) trips to the veterinarian and keep their beloved four-legged family members safe and happy year-round.

With pet ownership on the rise, animal considerations are influencing home remodeling and buying decisions so pets and their needs and safety are accommodated. According to a survey by the National Association of Realtors™, 9 out of 10 owners consider their pets as valued family members, and 81% of U.S. households said animal-related concerns will affect their next living situation. More than half the survey respondents (52%) undertook home renovations to accommodate their animal.

Whitney Mason, a Realtor with Coldwell Banker Bain in Seattle, understands the importance of having safe and stimulating pet spaces. The animal lover now has two dogs and two cats but has adopted or fostered dozens of pets, including several when she served as executive director at animal shelters in Virginia and Colorado.

“When working with pet owner clients, I am able to help them consider requirements for the special four-legged members of their families,” Mason remarked. She noted features like fences, places where pets will eat and sleep, a stairless floor plan for a client with an elderly dog, separate “territories” for pets that may not be best friends, and access to safe outdoor areas are among factors that arise.

Protecting pets is a responsibility every household member should take seriously, says Cynthia Chomos, a feng shui consultant, general contractor, and founder-designer at [Catio Spaces](#), who designs enclosures to keep cats safe outdoors.



“We’ve all seen neighborhood posters and online forums for lost, missing, or deceased cats, and it’s both heart-wrenching and preventable. We don’t allow dogs to roam freely outdoors, and several cities are adopting leash laws for cats, with lively debates between homeowners, cat parents, veterinarians, and wildlife advocates. The one thing they all agree on is catios”, says Chomos. She believes both kids and adults should be mindful of creating and maintaining spaces that cater to their pets’ needs, comfort, stimulation, and safety.

Pets left unattended can easily ingest a harmful substance or object in addition to a variety of hazards impacting their health. According to [ASPCA Pet Health Insurance](#), the top cat and dog injuries include swallowed objects, bite wounds, fractured teeth, knee ligament tears, abscesses, bite wounds, and lacerations. Many of these maladies are preventable.

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There are many ways to make a home and its surroundings pet-friendly, especially if remodeling. Designers recommend home modifications to accommodate pets should be multifunctional so they could be repurposed by a future, non-pet owner.

Examples of pet-friendly additions include:

- Invest in home improvement features such as a fenced yard, pet-friendly flooring, washing station, pet doors, or a bench for a cat litter box.
- Create a nook or perch for a pet's comfy bed as a retreat. For older pets, factor in accessibility by adding ramps or low-rise steps.
- Create a built-in or raised feeding area for creature comfort.
- For dogs that experience sensory overstimulation from fireworks, thunder, or other loud noises, a laundry area or other room could be retrofitted with sound-buffering panels for a safe haven.
- Add childproof latches to cupboards to keep food and their wrappings, cleaning products, chemicals, laundry supplies or trash secured.
- Store toys, games, and craft supplies out of reach and keep knick-knacks, medications, and cosmetics off all accessible surfaces.
- Keep garage floors and driveways clean so pets aren't tempted to lick lethal antifreeze, spilled chemicals or other harmful substances, or choke on dangerous objects.
- For outdoor areas, be sure to provide shady areas for pets. Enclose vegetable gardens with fencing or use raised planting beds to deter pet intrusions.
- Keep toxic plants out of reach both indoors and outside. Refer to the toxic and non-toxic plants [list](#) compiled by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).
- Solve the "indoor/outdoor" cat dilemma by adding an outdoor enclosure that provides a safe and enriching environment. Catos also help protect birds and other wildlife and keep cats from wandering into neighbors' yards. CatioSpaces.com offers [DIY plans](#) for a window, patio, deck, garden, or yard and recently introduced litter box plans for a cat-friendly home.
- Include pets in preparedness and evacuation plans in the event of a disaster. ASPCA has a [disaster preparedness checklist](#) for pet safety.



Safety-minded pet owners are urged to be proactive by micro-chipping their pet, keeping all animals up to date on immunizations, learning basic first aid for pets, scheduling regular wellness visits to their veterinarian, and being alert to an animal's behavior changes. Adding pet alert static clings or decals to windows near your home's entry is a way to let emergency personnel know pets may be inside.

"National Animal Safety and Protection month is a helpful reminder to review your home to insure the health and wellbeing of your pets. After all, they add so much joy to our lives as valued family members", says Chomos.

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