

Pet Proofing Your Home

A Room-by-Room Guide to Keeping Curious Paws Safe

WITH HELPFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER READING



Pets are cherished members of the family, and much like small children, they explore their surroundings with enthusiasm rather than caution. From sharp tools and toxic plants to tempting food scraps and loose cords, everyday household items can quickly turn into hazards. The good news? With a little planning and awareness, you can create a safe, pet-friendly environment that supports a long, happy, and healthy life for your furry companions.

THE BACKYARD

For most pets, the backyard is an exciting outdoor playground, but it can also be one of the most dangerous spaces if it's not properly managed. Begin by checking fences and gates for gaps, weak spots, or loose panels that could lead to escapes or injuries. Choose pet-safe lawn treatments, avoid toxic fertilisers, and research plants carefully before adding anything new to your garden. Ensure that your pool fencing is secure and is council approved. Also be mindful of bites from spiders, ticks and snakes, particularly if you live in the country or close to bushland.

Standing water should be removed to prevent mosquito breeding, while rubbish bins and compost containers should be secured with tight-fitting lids to stop curious pets from climbing inside. With regular inspections and mindful garden choices, your yard can remain a safe and stimulating place for pets to explore.

Helpful Resources:

- **The Ultimate Pet-Friendly Backyard for Dogs Guide:**
<https://www.dogsnsw.org.au/media/4134/the-ultimate-pet-friendly-backyard-for-dogs-guide-nov-2021.pdf>
- **Vegetable Gardening and Pets:**
This resource offers information about the potential dangers for pets that could be lurking in your garden:
<https://www.backyardgardener.com/garden-themes/vegetable-garden/digging-deep-a-complete-guide-to-pet-proofing-your-vegetable-garden/>
- **Petscaping: Creating a Pet-Friendly Garden:** Beautifying your yard doesn't have to endanger your pets.
<https://thegreenscapecollective.com.au/petscaping-your-garden/>
- **Pet-Safe Garden Planning:**
Creating a pet-safe garden involves careful planning and thoughtful plant selection to balance safety and beauty. Key considerations include:
 - 1. Plant Selection:** Choose non-toxic plants such as camellias, bottlebrush, snapdragons, marigolds and bamboo palm. Avoid toxic plants like oleander, lilies, and azaleas.

Resources: 37 Plants that are Poisonous to Dogs: <https://morningchores.com/plants-poisonous-to-dogs/>
Toxic and Non Toxic Plant List to Dogs – <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list>

Pet Proofing Your Home

2. Fencing & Gates

Install sturdy fencing that suits your pet's size and breed. Cat owners may consider netting to prevent climbing escapes. Check with your local council regarding fence heights and restrictions. Many dogs are natural-born diggers. However, you can also utilise deterrents or install physical barriers that complements your fence. For example, planting shrubs around the fence line or installing landscaping rocks can do the trick. Some more permanent methods involving simple underground barriers are also available (see pictured right).



3. Raised Garden Beds

Raised garden beds protect plants, particularly seedlings, while keeping pets' paws out of delicate soil.

4. Digging Zones

Provide a designated digging area, such as a sandpit, to redirect natural digging instincts.

5. Water Features

Safe fountains or shallow ponds can provide hydration and cooling while enhancing your garden's atmosphere. A shallow kid's wading pool placed in a shady spot in the garden can also provide a cool release for your dog on a warm to hot day.

DECKS AND PATIOS

Decks and patios are natural gathering spaces for families and pets alike, but they often contain hidden dangers. Sharp furniture edges, exposed nails, fire pits and outdoor chemicals should be carefully managed. Keep clutter to a minimum, store cleaning products and lighter fluids in locked, weatherproof containers, and regularly inspect decking boards for splinters or loose fastenings.

Electrical cords should be covered, grilling utensils stored out of reach, and hot surfaces carefully monitored. Whether you're hosting a barbecue or enjoying a quiet evening outdoors, a few safety checks can help your pet relax alongside you without risk.

Helpful Resources:

- **How to Keep Your Pets Safe in the Summer Heat:**
Guidance on preventing heatstroke, burns, and dehydration:
<https://www.dogsnew.org.au/media/6212/an-experts-guide-to-a-safe-summer-jan-2024.pdf>
- **BBQ/Grilling Safety for Dogs:**
Tips for keeping dogs at a safe distance from grills and food:
<https://www.petmd.com/dog/seasonal/grill-safety-for-dogs>
- **How to Make Your Balcony Safe & Dog-Friendly**
Practical ideas from the American Kennel Club:
<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/making-your-balcony-fun-and-dog-friendly/>
- **Controlling Fleas & Ticks on Your Pet**
Guidance on safely using flea and tick products:
<https://www.dogsnew.org.au/owners/health/fight-fleas-terminate-ticks/>



GARAGES & SHEDS

These storage areas often contain the most dangerous substances in a home. Antifreeze, paint, solvents, pesticides, and cleaning products can be lethal to pets, even in small amounts. Store all chemicals in locked cabinets or on high shelves, never on the floor, and regularly check containers for leaks.

GARAGES & SHEDS

Promptly clean up spills and ensure good ventilation to prevent harmful fumes from building up. Reducing clutter also minimises the risk of pets chewing on cords, ingesting small objects, or becoming trapped. It's essential to keep these substances well out of reach and understand their risks.

Common Pet Poisons found in garages and sheds include:

- Antifreeze (Ethylene Glycol)
- Boric Acid (often found in ant bait)
- Coolant containing toxic glycols
- Lead from batteries or old materials
- Fertilisers with toxic compounds
- Wild mushrooms
- Pesticides



1300 TOX PET (1300 869 738)



EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

For further reading:

- <https://petcareshed.com.au/blogs/pet-supplies/pet-poisons-in-australia-common-home-and-garden-hazards>
- <https://animalemergencyservice.com.au/blog/common-household-poisons/>

KITCHENS

Kitchens are full of irresistible smells and tempting leftovers, making them particularly risky for pets. Foods such as chocolate, onions, garlic, grapes, and xylitol-sweetened products can be deadly. Secure food storage, sealed rubbish bins, and strict "no table scraps" rules are essential. Like childproofing, kitchen safety also means preventing burns and electric shocks. Keep pets away from hot stovetops and unplug small appliances when not in use.

Helpful Resources:

• **Dangerous Household Items for your Pet:**

The RSPCA provides a list of potentially dangerous and toxic items for pets that are commonly found in homes on this page, including food, alcohol, medications, batteries, magnets adhesives and household chemicals.
<https://kb.rspca.org.au/categories/companion-animals/household-and-garden-dangers/what-are-common-household-dangers-for-pets>

• **Foods That Can Be Poisonous to Pets:**

The food we eat is delicious, but some of it can be toxic to our pets. When your dog or cat enjoys occasional treats from the dinner table, a home-cooked diet, or even gets into food not meant for him or her, please keep in mind that these following foods are not safe. This is even more important during the festive season when family and friends can often think they are doing your dog a favour by feeding him a special treat.
<https://www.dogsnsnsw.org.au/media/2943/december-2016-toxic-foods.pdf>

• **Table Scraps can be Dangerous:**

Why feeding leftovers can make pets sick:
<https://www.vetmed.wisc.edu/table-scraps-with-many-human-foods-pets-should-pass/>

LIVING ROOMS

Living rooms often double as play areas, which means extra vigilance is needed. Electrical cords should be covered or secured, candles kept well out of reach, and fragile decorations placed safely away from curious tails and paws. Heavy furniture should be anchored to prevent tipping. These simple adjustments help create a calm, shared space where both people and pets can relax safely.

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BATHROOMS & LAUNDRIES

These rooms often contain highly concentrated detergents, cleaning products and medications. Always store these items in locked cabinets and keep toilet lids closed, as toilet water may contain harmful chemicals. Hot tools such as hair straighteners and curling irons should be unplugged immediately after use. Ventilation during cleaning is also important, as strong fumes can affect pets even if products aren't directly ingested.

- **Cleaning Products:** Regular cleaning sprays, bathroom detergents, and laundry products can contain ingredients that can harm pets if ingested or inhaled. It's crucial to store these products securely to prevent accidental access.
- **Medications:** Both human and veterinary medications can be toxic to pets. Pets should only be given medications that are specifically designed for them, and any medication should be stored in a locked cabinet to prevent accidental ingestion.
- **Pesticides & Insecticides:** These products can be harmful to pets, especially if ingested. It's important to use these products with caution and keep them out of reach of pets.
- **Zoonoses:** Pets can carry germs that can make people sick, such as salmonella. Maintaining good hygiene and keeping pets away from areas where they may carry these germs is essential.

By being aware of these hazards and taking precautions, pet owners can help ensure a safe environment for their furry companions.



Remove cleaning products, laundry powder and poisons

Helpful Resources:

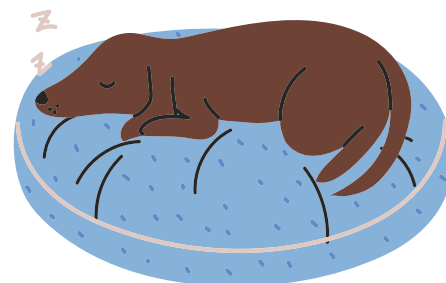
- **Toxicoses from Household Cleaners & Personal Care Products in Australia**
Exposure of animals, particularly pets, to certain household cleaners and personal care products can cause a variety of clinical signs. Household hazards that are concerning for exposure include detergents, soaps, shampoos and bleaches.
<https://www.msdevetmanual.com/toxicology/toxicoses-from-household-hazards/toxicoses-from-household-cleaners-and-personal-care-products-in-animals>
- **What are Zoonoses?**
Zoonoses, or zoonotic diseases, are diseases that can spread from animals to humans. Animals may carry germs without showing any signs of being sick. However, some of these germs may be harmful to humans.
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Factsheets/staying-safe-around-pets-and-animals.pdf>

BEDROOMS

Bedrooms may seem safe, but small items like jewellery, pills, cosmetics and cords can pose choking or poisoning risks. Secure blind cords, keep personal items out of reach and always check drawers, wardrobes and hampers before closing them. Providing pets with a comfortable, designated sleeping space can discourage unsafe burrowing and give them a secure place of their own to relax and sleep without disturbing your sleep.

Helpful Resources:

- **Is it Safe to Sleep With My Pet:**
<https://www.petmd.com/dog/care/is-it-safe-to-sleep-with-pets>
<https://www.petsradar.com/features/dangers-of-sleeping-with-your-pet>



ADDITIONAL PET SAFETY RESOURCES

- **Animal Poisons Helpline: 24/7 emergency veterinary advice**
<https://www.animalpoisons.com.au/common-poisons/> Ph: 1300 869 738
- **Most Common Animal Poisons List:** <https://www.animalpoisons.com.au/common-poisons/>
- **Pet Safety in Emergencies:** https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/dpi_factsheet-pet-safety-in-emergencies-second-edition.pdf
- **Tips for Keeping Pets Safe from Household Dangers:** <https://staysafe.org/home-safety/pet-safety-at-home-protecting/>
- **Preparing Your Home for Pets:** <https://nras.org.au/preparing-your-home-for-a-new-pet-checklist-and-tips/>
- **Pet Hygiene Tips:** <https://www.petmd.com/dog/slideshows/10-pet-hygiene-tips-you-should-be-following>

USEFUL FACT SHEETS TO DOWNLOAD

Animal Poisons Helpline: 24/7 emergency veterinary advice

Source: Fact Sheets: <https://www.animalpoisons.com.au/fact-sheets/> **Ph:** 1300 869 738

- **Emergency Instructions:** <https://animalpoisons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Emergency-First-Aid-Advice-%E2%80%93-Australian-Animal-Poisons-Centre.pdf>
- **Dangerous Foods to Dogs:** https://animalpoisons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Flyer-Food_web.pdf
- **Bites & Stings in Pets:** https://animalpoisons.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Flyer-BitesStings_web.pdf



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DANGEROUS
FOODS TO PETS



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BITES AND STINGS
IN PETS

Disclaimer: In situations of emergency it is always best to consult your local veterinarian.

Beyond Obedience: Understanding Behaviour, Science & the Future of Dog Training

A Talk with Sarah Rutten

Best-selling author of 'The Canine Perspective'

When: Sunday, 22 March 2026

Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm

Where: DOGS NSW Amenities Building

Cost: \$80 per person includes Morning Tea

To Book: E: info@dogsnsw.org.au / Ph: (02) 9834 0217



Sarah Rutten



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