

4 Tips for Selling Homes with Pets that Won't Put You in the Doghouse

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Selling a home is stressful enough for home owners, but selling a home with pets can be even more stressful. In addition to the usual concerns home owners have, clients with pets also have to consider if they should move their animals out while the home is for sale, how much it will cost to repair any pet-related damage and if pet odor will deter potential buyers.

Unfortunately for pet owners, the truth is that pets can turn away potential buyers and even lower the perceived value of their home if they are not addressed prior to listing. However, when properly prepared, homes with pets can be cleaned and staged in a way that makes the existence of the pets almost undetectable.

The first step is to sit down with your clients and talk to them about the issue of selling a home with pets. Most regard their pets as family members, so telling them that not all buyers like pets can be emotional. Consider making the following tips part of your listing presentation discussion so that the matter is addressed right away.



1. Eliminate Pet Odor

Although your clients might have become accustomed to it, pet odors can deter potential buyers. Our sense of smell has a powerful effect on our emotions and on our perception. The scent of pet odor in a house is sure to stick in a potential buyer's mind, and this will likely cause them to deduct the cost of carpet replacement from their offer. Even worse, if a buyer walks in the home and smells a dirty cat litter box or soiled carpet, they might not even proceed with the tour. To eliminate pet odor and keep potential buyers moving through the home, consider the following:

- If not replacing carpet, have it professionally steam cleaned. Don't forget to also clean upholstered furniture and area rugs. Any surface that holds in pet odor should be cleaned, replaced or removed.
- Weather permitting, advise clients to open windows for a few days leading up to showings to help air out the home.
- Be cautious when using air fresheners. You don't want buyers to be blasted with the smell of artificial flowers that scream the seller is hiding an odor. Some fresh flowers can not only help with fragrance, but also add to the home staging. Also consider air neutralizers and odor absorbing products. Rather than masking the smell, these items actually absorb odor and neutralize the air.
- Consider placing an air purifier in the pet's main living area to filter the air.
- Replace air filters that might have trapped pet dander and odor.

2. Repair Pet-Related Damage to Home and Yard

As much as we love our pets, the truth is they cause extra wear and tear on the home, especially in the yard. Assess the home and consider recommending the owner repairs as much of the pet damage as possible before showing. Some areas to look at include:

- Over-seed the yard or patch lawn areas to repair brown spots.
- Fill in holes created by canine gardeners. Not only are they unsightly, they can be potentially dangerous if someone were to trip in it.
- If doors and/or window screens have been damaged and scratched, replace them.
- Clean pet hair from hard-to-reach places such as behind appliances and behind doors.
- If wood or laminate flooring is scratched beyond repair, consider repairing the floor. This might be a large investment up front, but it can yield great results at sale.

3. **Consider that potential buyers might be afraid of animals and vice versa.** Educate your clients about pet liability and discuss having the pets temporarily (either during the entire sale process or on days when there are showings and open houses) relocated if possible. If your client does not have a relocation option, talk to them about crating their animals during showings and open houses. For pets that are not already crate trained, it can take time for them to enjoy being in the crate. Suggest your client contact a pet trainer to learn how to introduce their pet to a crate. Your clients can create positive associations with the crate by giving the pet a treat-filled toy or bone to keep them busy while in the crate. This is not only essential for the safety of potential buyers, but it also protects animals from getting out of the house, getting hurt, or causing harm to others.

4. **Speaking of stress, animals can experience anxiety from having a lot of strange foot traffic in their home.** Potential buyers might be distracted by a stressed pet and a nervous barking. Recommend that your client talks to their veterinarian to get a product recommendation to help their pets cope with this stressful event. National pet stores sell items such as plugins that release stress calming pheromones. The plugins do not emit any scent and can last up to three months. The pheromones released are only detected by the animals and will not affect humans.

Above all, when selling a home with pets remember that they are part of your client's family. Your clients will appreciate your compassion and willingness to not only help them sell their house, but to also reduce the stress on them and their pets.