



## How Green: Doggie Litter Box Keeps Owners, Earth Happy

Thursday, January 31, 2008

By Gene Koprowski  
**FOX NEWS**



Man's best friend gets ready to do his business on The Pet Loo

By Pup-Pee Solutions Pty Ltd.

**Sondra Baker purchased a puppy last spring. But the suburban Chicago resident rarely takes the canine, an 85-pound Bernese Mountain Dog named Oscar, out for a walk to the park a block away.**

Instead, the beast does his business in her condo several times a day — and not on old newspapers laid out on the kitchen floor.

Rather, Oscar, like many other dogs around the country, uses a new pet toilet called the "Pet Loo."

A veritable backyard in a box, the toilet is bigger than a kitty-litter box and contains synthetic grass and turf, simulating the outdoors.

Pet owners direct their critter to the loo, and let nature take its proper course.

No. 1 drains directly through the grass into a collection tray, and No. 2 sits on the grass to be picked up using a biodegradable plastic bag. Both are then flushed down one of the home's toilets by the pet owner at a later, more convenient time.

"I was a little skeptical at first," said Baker. "I thought it was expensive. You see these gadgets on TV to buy for your kitchen and they never work. I was wondering, 'Will the dog really use it?' But he did."

• [Click here to watch video clips of the Pet Loo in action.](#)

According to Packaged Facts, a market-research firm based in Rockville, Md., the U.S. market for eco-friendly pet products is expected to hit \$1 billion by next year.

That's because pet waste is becoming a significant environmental problem. The city of San Francisco is eyeing ways to transform pet waste into methane gas, and thus create a new, environmentally-friendly energy source.

Up the coast in Washington state, the Snohomish County government is spending \$500,000 to contain pet waste, which is polluting nearby streams.

The county reports that nearly 20 tons of pet poop are created by the rural area's 126,000 dogs every day, and left in backyards where dangerous E. coli bacteria and roundworms fester.

The problem appears to be even bigger nationally. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, there are 44.8 million households that own dogs in the U.S.

Not wanting to let this opportunity go to waste, marketers are coming forth with eco-friendly products.

There are biodegradable plastic bags for picking up pet poo such as the "FlushEze" bags offered by PetHabitats.com and the "Doggie Dooley" in-ground septic tanks for dogs sold by Drsfostersmith.com.



But one of the more compelling products is the "Pet Loo." Developed in Australia and sold in the U.S. since May of last year, the product is available both on the Internet at [www.thepetloo.com](http://www.thepetloo.com) and at a number of distributors in California and Florida.

Prices are \$328USD for the standard size, while smaller pooches can opt for the \$218USD "Pee Wee" edition.

"This is about the greenest product you can get," said Pet Loo distributor Clive Stevens. "It keeps waste out of yards and forests. That itself reduces pollution, considerably.

"There are 70 million dogs in the U.S., approximately," Stevens added. "Each one of them does its business somewhere, every day. The owners can use this, and dispose of the waste through their toilet, just like human waste."

Stevens says there are other environmental benefits as well. The loo eliminates pet stains on the carpet — messes that have to be cleaned with possibly hazardous chemicals. The device also reduces stress for dog owners.

The Pet Loo makers recommend pouring a few cups of water over the device once per day, and hosing down the grass in the back yard or shower once per week. Soaps or chemicals cleansers are no-nos as they might destroy the artificial grass's antimicrobial properties.

"People often worry about being late from work, and having to take their dogs on a walk," said Stevens. "Also, if they get home very late, it may not be safe. Who wants to take the dog for midnight walks before they go to bed?"

Shut-ins can also benefit from using the product. The value of pet companionship is well known in the medical community, especially for the elderly and those without nearby family members. But many in both groups are too weak to walk a dog outside.

Now, said Stevens, "if you can't get out, you can still have a pet."

The Pet Loo itself doesn't smell, but what's deposited on top of it certainly will until it's picked up.

For that reason, the makers recommend it be placed in the same area you'd put a kitty-litter box — on a deck or balcony or in a back kitchen, laundry room or basement, away from highly-trafficked areas.

It also shouldn't be placed where dogs are fed, since our furry friends instinctively don't poop where they eat.

Though the Pet Loo was developed for dogs, some cat owners are interested as well.

"We received a call from a veterinary clinic in California the other day," said Stevens. "We [were] talking to the vet about selling it, and she told us it was not for her dog, but for her cat. She said, 'My cat will only go on the grass. So I thought this would be ideal — I don't have to let the cat out all the time.'"

My family and I tested the Pet Loo in recent weeks with our own cat as well — in our home in Chicago.

The cat, a 13-year-old Himalayan, inspected the box, a 33-inch by 33-inch device, and plopped down upon the artificial turf on the top, perhaps assuming it was a newfangled scratching post.

We saw no evidence that the cat was inclined to use the Pet Loo. She retreated to the kitty-litter box when the urge arose later in the day. Perhaps more specialized training would be needed.

Dog owners are enthusiastic about it, however.

"We live in a condo on the third floor — and the park is a block away," said Baker. "When we were house training, we saw that the dog was going to go on the carpet. We couldn't scoop him up and go out to the park fast enough.

But this Pet Loo does work as advertised," she added. "It's not fun to clean, but it is easy to clean!"

So is the Pet Loo, really a "green" technology, or just an synthetic facsimile?



Yes. Using the product will definitely reduce outdoor pollution of a certain sort, cutting down on the spread of disease and the contamination of standing water. It will also save time for owners and reduce the stress of pet ownership for many.

Those benefits truly promise to make the planet a better place in which to live for pet owners — and others who run afoul of their best friends' leavings.