

By Katie Knorovsky **Our Pets**



Pet-Proof and Pretty

From custom puppy gates to faux-suede couches, here's how to make both pets and people happy

Nancy Juda's white leather sofa wore the marks of canine invasion: drool spots and paw prints. At Andrea Evers's house, the proof was in the magenta tassel chewed to tatters by her mutt, Lucy.

Both women have been forced to face the reality of sharing their homes with four-legged housemates. But now their pads have become largely pet-proof thanks to interior designer Liz Levin, who specializes in crafting stylish spaces that cater to people and pets.

"People are acknowledging that, yes, their dog sleeps in the bed and lives on the couch," Levin says, "but they still want their homes to look pulled together, not like a dog pound."

Folks who cuddle with pets on the furniture struggle with keeping upholstery stain-free. Levin likes Sensuede, stain-resistant faux suede; Nano-Tex, a treatment that makes fabrics relatively invincible; and carpeting

made from a blend of wool and nylon.

"The fun part is realizing that we can flop down on the couch with the dog and not worry about it," Evers says.

Prodded by Levin, Juda—who lives in Bethesda—revised her aesthetic to fit her leash-in-hand lifestyle better: "I wanted everything white and airy, but I had to scrap that."

Levin helped her pick out earthy seagrass rugs and an Ultrasuede couch, both of which hide and resist stains. In the master bedroom, a coral Ultrasuede bench sits at the foot of the bed and doubles as a stepladder for the dogs.

"Our clients consider their pets part of the family, and they're looking for ways to integrate them," says Josh Baker, president of **Bowa**, a building company in McLean. Rather than plastic puppy gates, some pet owners establish boundaries with custom gates or Dutch doors. "The aesthetic is more consistent with the rest of the house."

Bowa's most popular pet requests focus on modifications that merge with a home's overall look. Litter boxes get stashed in cabinetry, with a hidden hinge or a cutout for access. Kennels are built into custom furniture, from hollow end tables to dens tucked below staircases. Clients have transformed mudrooms and garages into feeding and cleaning stations, complete with pet showers with a flexible hose. Baker recommends stain-resistant grout for tile and heavy-duty Lexan plastic to paw-proof doors. Most important, Levin says, is to design your home with your pet's personality in mind: "There aren't 100-percent solutions for every dog or every cat."

Even the frame of a house can be adapted. Instead of old-school doggie doors providing a passage to the back yard, Bowa can install automatic doors activated by a dog's collar. Built-in window seats act as pet perches, perfect for a guard dog to watch passing cars and bark at the mailman.

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