

26 free and fast ways to help animals right away

You'd love to spend more time helping animals but, with a tight work schedule and even tighter resources, it can seem nearly impossible. Yet, there are a few simple things you can fit into even the busiest day that can make a big difference right away. Try one or a handful of these 26 tips and feel great knowing you're helping the pets and wildlife in your neighbourhood.

In 30 seconds you can:

1. Turn off unused lights and unplug electronics you're not using. This reduces energy consumption and light pollution.
2. Slap your vehicle hood loudly when you climb into your car, especially during the winter. The noise startles any small animals that may have sought the warmth of your engine, and gives them time to escape before you turn the ignition.

In one minute:

3. Pop a couple of reusable shopping bags into your car and use them on your next errand run. This keeps plastic bags out of our landfills and ditches, and away from foraging animals.
4. Add a line to your email signature encouraging readers to spay or neuter their pets. Research shows altering one cat can prevent up to 20,000 unwanted kittens in just four years.
5. Recycle materials such as paper, cans and glass to slow the use of natural resources.

Got 5 minutes?

6. Put your cleaning supplies up in a secure cupboard or a container with a tight fitting lid to prevent accidentally poisoning pets and children.
7. Carry a plastic bag or other litter container in your vehicle and use it. Empty it regularly and feel good knowing you've helped create a safer, healthier and prettier environment for all.
8. Move your bird feeder a few feet away from your window. This reduces the chance of a bird confusing its reflection with that of a rival, which could lead to the bird attacking the image and hurting itself.
9. Give your dog toys too large for him to take entirely into his mouth – Frisbees, chew ropes, Kongs. This will help prevent him accidentally swallowing it and prevent a stressful trip to the vet's.
10. Use boiling water to kill stray plants in your sidewalk or driveway instead of dangerous pesticides.
11. Swap straight vinegar for your cleaning bleach for safe household cleaning. It gives the same clean while preventing accidental poisoning. It deodorizes too!
12. Download and printout your copy of the animal shelters and veterinarians in New Brunswick from the NBSPCA web site, www.sPCA-nb.ca under Resources. Keep this information close to the phone to quickly get help when you find an animal in distress.

10 minutes to safer pets

13. Pick up litter around a favourite park or walking trail. Leaving a place cleaner than you found it makes you feel good, knowing you have created a safer place for all.
14. Put a grid, netting or cover over your rain barrel or other water container so small animals and children can't fall in and drown.
15. Attach a sturdy towel to the edge of your swimming pool to hang into the water. Pets can rarely navigate the slippery sides of a pool. The towel provides small animals with something to grab and escape out of the pool should they fall in.
16. Birds need water in the winter as much as in the summer. Maintaining a container of open water will be just as welcome as a bird feeder.

30 minutes can mean a lot to the animals

17. Donate clean towels and blankets as well as old newspapers to your local animal shelter.
18. Create an animal rescue kit for your car with a towel, spare leash, dog biscuits/pop top can of cat food, and a list of local veterinarians and shelters, available at the www.spca-nb.ca web site under Resources.
19. Keep your crafting and your pets separate. Allow a separate room or containers for your supplies to avoid accidental poisoning from glue or paint, or their swallowing sharp needles or blades.
20. Change your oil or top up your antifreeze at a gas station, not in your driveway. Pets find the sweet taste of antifreeze hard to resist, and doing this chore away from home keeps temptation safely out of their way.
21. Leave a portion of your lawn or garden unmowed to provide a refuge for wildlife.
22. Plant and maintain a tree.
23. Leave dead trees standing as long as they don't pose a safety hazard to people or property. They are a source of insects and nesting hollows for birds and other small animals.

Anytime

24. Leave young wild animals you encounter alone. Creatures, like deer, often leave their young in a safe place while searching for food. Human interference can mean the mother abandoning the young animal.
25. If your schedule doesn't permit a full time pet, perhaps you can share the care of a neighbour's animal. Sharing walks or feedings can benefit everyone, if the pet parent is agreeable. This makes it easier for both of you and the pet is sure to appreciate the extra attention!
26. Slow down while driving, and keep a sharp eye on the ditches when traveling in areas wildlife are known to hang out. Startled animals may leap in front of your vehicle, and while going slower, you have more time to react and avoid a collision, meaning safe travels for both you and the animals!