

# Gone to the dogs

If your house is on the market, you probably didn't put much thought into what to do with your pets before you put the sign in the yard. Most people don't because they have a pet system that works for them. Perhaps the dog stays in the fenced backyard all day. Maybe the cat goes out the crack in the garage door or stays inside all of the time. Whatever works for pet and owner may not, however, work when you must show your house to visitors.

As a pet lover, and owner of too many pets, I know all too well how difficult it would be for me to show my house with the zoo loose. Lucy (the big dog) would enthusiastically greet visitors at the door by jumping on them. Bob Stallings (the little dog) would push his way out the front door while nobody was looking. Two of the cats (Tom and Angel) would lurk by the deck door waiting for someone to open it; then they'd make a run for it. Milo (the old cat) would rub on visitors' legs, leaving a trail of



**CLAUDIA  
STALLINGS**  
Homework



orange hair on their good pants. The good news is that the fish (who remains nameless) will stay right where he belongs. Good fish.

I have clients who have two large Newfoundland dogs. While their house was on the market, they had to pack up the two dogs and three boys each time there was a showing. Although we all knew that the dogs were beautiful, gentle giants, they would have no doubt surprised and frightened potential buyers, not to mention being a distraction to those buyers who weren't afraid. It was difficult for my clients to accommodate the removal of the dogs, but it was also necessary to make the best of each showing, so the dogs had to go.

Another client helps find homes for stray cats, so she usually has several furry friends at home. She decided early on in her real estate transaction that she was going to move into her new home first, bring the cats with her and leave the home she was selling vacant and cat-less, so that it was easier to show. Good choice.

Even though it is tempting to leave the friendly beast in the backyard or in the garage during showings, it is really not the best idea. Buyers want to look at the entire house, including the backyard, and they want to go into the garage to see if their cars and stuff will fit. Buyers don't want to worry about the cat getting out if they open doors. They want to walk around the inside and outside of the house, and they should be free to do so, or the showing won't go as well as it

could. A crate is OK if your dog won't bark the whole time, but ultimately, it's best to take Max or Fluffy on a field trip when the time comes.

Those of us who are pet owners know that sometimes it's hard to keep up with the dog hair that rolls like tumbleweeds down the hall or keep the litter box spring-time fresh. If your house is for sale, do your best with the daily cleaning, but take special note of the other messes that man's best friend can make over time, and fix those areas before you show your house.

Check your exterior doors for mud and damage if your animal scratches to get in or out. Check your carpets, drapes, furniture and trim for places where shedding, scratching or chewing may have taken place.

Look in your yard for spots where the grass has been worn down, and give your house the "sniff test" to ensure that buyers remember the best things about your house, not that it smelled like a petting zoo.

When the showing is done and you and your pet have returned home, make sure everyone gets a treat.

**Claudia Stallings is a real estate agent with Coldwell Banker Wallace & Wallace Realtors. She is a seniors real estate specialist and has 15 years of experience in advertising, marketing and promotion. She can be contacted at 865-966-1111, via e-mail at [LetMeDoYourHOMEWork@charter.net](mailto:LetMeDoYourHOMEWork@charter.net) or on the Web at [www.LetMeDoYourHOMEWork.com](http://www.LetMeDoYourHOMEWork.com)**

