



# PET-CENTRIC DESIGN

A fur-family home makeover

BY DIANA LAMBDIN MEYER

Anyone with multiple pets in their household knows the feeling — it's time for bed and you start down the hallway to the bedroom. The excited critters fight for space, running and banging into you as you walk.

"I'm like a human pinball bouncing off the walls every night and every morning as we head to the kitchen," says Risa Groh, "mom" to four dogs and one cat, all of whom jostle to be closest to her wherever she goes.

That's why, when she and her husband, Brandon, designed and built their dream home outside Kansas City, Mo., she insisted on 6-foot-wide hallways. International residential standards call for a minimum of 36 inches, although typical hallways are 42 to 48 inches wide. The spacious hallways "give me a chance to stay on my feet



and not step all over the babies," Groh says. For the same reasons, the Grohs designed extra space for the inevitable four-legged company in the bathrooms.

The Grohs are not alone in making substantial decisions about their home to accommodate animals. A recent survey by Realtor.com and HarrisX revealed that 82

percent of Americans with pets consider their animals' needs of equal or greater importance than human needs.

"Having an animal-accessible home is





**Custom wallpaper** featured in the Groh's dog spa includes images of the family's pets, including their beloved late black Lab, Jet.

more important to many pet owners than extra square footage or a shorter commute to work," says Clare Trapasso, executive editor at Realtor.com.

While a fenced-in yard is the most common feature, 28 percent of homeowners with pets installed a dog shower/bath station. Risa calls theirs a dog spa.

The 10-foot-by-18-foot room, just off the garage, includes the family's washer and dryer. Otherwise, the space is all for the animals. It includes a 48-inch-wide stainless steel dog wash station, typical of that found at PetSmart and other grooming establishments. Adjacent to that is a drying station and space for Risa to trim nails and perform

other grooming tasks. A custom-built cabinet stores leashes, sweaters and toys. A doggie door allows free access to the 6-acre, fenced-in property.

The dog spa is just off the kitchen, where the Grohs also prepare the animals' food. Since the dogs don't have the best table manners, the Grohs installed a glass pocket door between the kitchen and spa so they can keep an eye on the dogs at mealtimes.

A detail that makes the spa room special to the couple is its custom wallpaper, which features images of their animal family, particularly their first dog, Jet, a black Lab who lived with them for 16 years. The Groh family's love for Jet is also memorialized in the stained concrete surface of their front porch. When the concrete was poured, they mixed in some of his >





Wine fridge or built-in dog feeding station? The choice was a no-brainer for dog lover Kristin Yantis when she remodeled.

ashes, “so he’ll always be sitting on the porch with us.” The home’s front door has a Victorian doorknob and brass door knocker, both of which feature stylized black Labs.

The 2,800-square-foot house has no basement or stairs, because of problems that Jet had with his hips after an accident. The

Grohs may also benefit from the single-story design as they get older, but their first concern was for the dogs as they age.

The massive stone-trimmed gas corner fireplace in the primary bedroom is not there to spark romance or for Risa and Brandon’s comfort. “Our boy Hank gets so cold, so this



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**CLARE TRAPASSO,**  
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space is for the dogs’ beds and for them all to snuggle,” Risa says.

Kristin Yantis made quite a concession for her yellow Lab, GG, when she remodeled her townhouse near Vail, Colo., three years ago.

“I had space in my kitchen island for either a wine refrigerator or a dog feeding (and) water station,” Yantis says. “So now I walk down to the refrigerator in the garage for a bottle of wine. It’s good exercise.”

Yantis’ builder created a pull-out space that includes two large removable bowls, one for water and one for dry food. Yantis loves that it is hidden away when she has guests and is extremely easy to clean. Her kitchen pantry includes a dog food bin that she found at California Closets. Her builder was so pleased with the outcome, she says, he re-created it in his own home and has since built similar dog feeding stations for other clients. ■