

FIELD RESOURCE

Selling with Pets in Brisbane

Open homes, photos, smell, and buyer perception

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Most Brisbane homes have a pet. Most buyers also have a pet, or have grown up with one. The issue is not that buyers dislike pets. The issue is that visible pet evidence in photos and at inspections shifts a buyer from imagining their own life in the home to thinking about who currently lives there. Smell, hair, scratched doors, and a worn lawn are all small signals that quietly compound. This guide covers what to remove, what to clean, where the pets go on inspection day, and how the home should be described in marketing.

How buyers perceive pet evidence

Buyers walking through a home are doing two things at once. They are assessing the property, and they are imagining themselves living in it. Pet evidence interrupts the second part. It tells the buyer the home belongs to someone else, and that someone else has a routine the buyer is stepping into.

- A buyer who notices a pet bowl in the kitchen will then notice the scratch on the back door, the worn patch on the carpet, and the faint smell in the lounge. One signal primes the next.

- Buyers rarely raise pets as a concern in feedback. They simply offer less, or they do not return for a second inspection.

- Pet evidence in the listing photos is the most damaging form. It shapes the buyer's view before they ever walk through the door.

- A home that reads as pet-free in photos and at inspections still sells well to pet owners. The reverse is not true.

Pre-photo preparation

Photos are taken once and used for the full campaign. Get this right and the rest of the campaign is easier. Get it wrong and every inspection starts from a weaker position.

- Remove every pet item from view before the photographer arrives. Bowls, beds, toys, leads, brushes, litter trays, scratching posts, food bags, treat jars, and the basket of old tennis balls by the back door.

- Wash all soft furnishings the pet has touched. Throws, cushion covers, rugs, and the dog's favourite armchair cover. Steam clean carpets and any upholstery the pet sleeps on.

- Check skirting boards, door frames, and the bottom 30cm of walls for paw marks, scratches, and rub marks. Touch up paint where needed.

- Lawn and garden need a full clean before the photographer steps outside. No droppings, no chewed toys, no bare patches showing.

- If the pet has a permanent feature like a kennel, run, or fenced section, decide with your agent whether it stays in the photos or is temporarily removed.

Smell is the biggest hidden issue

Owners cannot smell their own home. This is well documented and it applies to every household, not just pet owners. The smell of a pet builds gradually and the people living with it stop noticing within days. Buyers notice within seconds.

- Ask two people who do not live in the home, and who will be honest, to walk through and tell you what they smell. Your agent should also be candid about this on the first appraisal visit.
- The worst offenders are carpet, soft furnishings, curtains, and any porous surface the pet sits on regularly. Hard floors and tiled areas hold less.
- Steam clean all carpets professionally before photos and again before the first open home if the campaign runs more than three weeks.
- Wash curtains and replace any cushions or rugs that cannot be deep cleaned. Replacement is cheaper than a price reduction.
- Air the home for an hour before every inspection. Open windows, run ceiling fans, and use the air conditioning to circulate.
- Avoid masking products. Plug-in air fresheners, scented candles burning during inspections, and heavy sprays all read as a cover-up. Buyers register the underlying smell and the cover-up at the same time.
- A clean home with windows open and a light, neutral note from a diffuser used hours earlier is the right standard. Nothing more.

Where the pets go on inspection days

Pets do not belong at inspections. Even the calmest dog or the most invisible cat changes the way buyers move through the home. Plan the pet logistics for every open home and every private inspection in the campaign, not just the first one.

- Dogs: take the dog out of the home for the full inspection window. A walk, a friend's yard, a doggy daycare, or a family member's house. Build in 30 minutes either side so the dog is not in the home immediately before or after.

- Cats: secure cats in a carrier and take them out, or board them with family for the inspection block. Cats hiding under beds or appearing on benches during inspections is more common than owners realise.

- Birds, reptiles, and other caged pets: cover the cage and move it to a low-traffic room, or remove from the home if practical. Cages are a strong visual signal.

- Remove all evidence at the same time. The bowl on the floor, the lead on the hook, the bed in the laundry. Have a labelled tub by the back door for everything that needs to disappear in the ten minutes before each inspection.

- For private inspections booked at short notice, the same rules apply. Do not let a buyer through with the pet still in the home because the timing is awkward. Reschedule by 30 minutes if you have to.

Garden and lawn pet damage

Backyards take more pet wear than any other part of the home. In Brisbane, with our climate and outdoor living, the backyard is often the deal-shaping space. Worn grass and damaged garden beds undercut the value of the outdoor area.

- Bare patches and yellowing on the lawn need to be addressed before photos. Returfing small sections is straightforward and the new grass strikes quickly in our climate. For larger areas, consider a full turf at the start of the campaign.
- Worn pathways where the dog runs the fence line. Either repair the grass, lay stepping stones to make it look intentional, or screen with planting.
- Damaged garden beds. Replace mulch, restore plants the dog has chewed or trampled, and tidy edges.
- Fences and gates with claw marks or chewed sections. Repair or repaint. A damaged fence reads as deferred maintenance even if the only cause is the dog.
- Outdoor pet structures. Kennels, runs, agility equipment, and rope lines. Decide what stays for photos and what is stored offsite for the duration of the campaign.
- Pick up droppings every morning of the campaign, not just before inspections. Buyers walk through gardens at unexpected moments.

Evidence to hide before every inspection

A short, repeatable checklist for the ten minutes before any inspection. The same list works for the photographer, the first open, and every subsequent inspection.

- Bowls, mats under bowls, water fountains, and any food storage on the bench or in view.

- Beds, blankets, and any soft items the pet uses. These hold smell and carry hair.

- Toys, treats, dental chews, leads, harnesses, collars, brushes, and grooming gear.

- Litter trays for cats. Move out of the home entirely for the inspection, not just into a cupboard. Buyers open cupboards.

- Scratching posts, perches, climbing trees, and any furniture the cat has claimed.

- Hair on furniture, carpets, and dark surfaces. A quick run with a lint roller and a vacuum on every cushion and rug.

- Photos of the pet on the fridge, on the wall, or in frames around the home. These read as pet evidence even when the pet is not present.

- Smudges on glass doors and windows at the pet's height. Brisbane sliding doors with a dog on the other side show every nose print in afternoon light.

How the agent describes a pet-owned home in marketing

The marketing copy and the inspection conversation should be neutral. The home is not a pet home, it is a home. Buyers who want to bring a pet will project their own pet into a clean, neutral space.

- No mentions of pets in the copy. No "pet-friendly garden", no "fully fenced for the family dog", no "secure yard for pets". These read as confirmation the home has hosted pets, which raises buyer questions about wear.

- Fenced yards can be described in functional terms: "fully fenced rear yard", "side gate access", "level lawn". These are accurate and pet-neutral.

- If a buyer asks directly whether pets have lived in the home, your agent should answer honestly. The goal is not to hide history, it is to avoid leading with it.

- Photos should not include pets, pet items, or any signal of a pet. This includes the wide shot of the lounge with a dog bed visible in the corner, which buyers notice instantly.

- For homes with a strong pet feature kept in place, like a custom run or a securely fenced section, brief your agent on how to describe it without making the home about the pet.

Campaign rhythm with pets in the home

A campaign in Brisbane typically runs four weeks for a private treaty and four to five weeks to auction. Living through that with pets requires a routine that is sustainable, not a heroic effort for one weekend.

- Build a single inspection-day kit. The tub by the back door with bowls, beds, and the lint roller. Pack and unpack the same way every time.
- Plan the pet's out-of-home destination for every Saturday and every weekday inspection slot in the campaign. Confirm with the daycare, friend, or family member at the start of the campaign rather than the morning of.
- Steam clean carpets at week one. Schedule a second clean at week three if the campaign extends.
- Top up lawn and garden repairs every fortnight. Small fixes are invisible. A patch left for four weeks reads as deferred maintenance.
- Communicate with your agent about which buyers in the campaign are pet owners. They are usually the most forgiving of any minor evidence, but the home should still present neutrally to them.
- If the campaign extends to a second listing or a second auction date, repeat the full pre-photo preparation. Do not assume the home still presents the way it did at launch.

A home with pets sells for the same price as a home without pets, provided the buyer cannot tell the difference. Smell, hair, and small visual signals are what shift the result. Treat the preparation as a routine for the length of the campaign, not a one-off effort for the photos.

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