

## TO A PRACTICAL HOME

## TRYOUT

## How to stuff a cat

**Cat-in-the-Bag Cozy Comfort Carrier** looks like a bad idea.

You're supposed to stick the family cat in a cloth bag through the zippered bottom so that her head pokes out a hole in the top. A Velcro collar adjusts to fit snugly around her neck.

Then you get as far away as possible from the hissing, spitting bag of angry fur with claws.

Just kidding. Cat-in-the-Bag, the creation of Jeanne Starmack of Ellwood City, actually works, keeping cats calm and safe during car rides, nail-cutting, pill-popping, eye-dropping, etc.

For years, I've suspiciously eyed Ms. Starmack and her model cats at the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show. They lounged in their bags for an hour or more, sometimes dozing, as she and her helpers cradled them or passed them to onlookers. "What kind of tranquilizers do you use?" I wanted to ask.

I was pretty sure that Maggie, our cat at the time, wouldn't stand for it, and she didn't seem to mind being in her carrier for the occasional 3½-hour drives we made to Buffalo, N.Y. Then Maggie died last year and we got Steeler, a much younger, more easygoing cat.

This spring, my wife and sons were determined to bag Steeler. I figured it was worth \$20 just to watch them chase the cat around the house.

Then I got a surprise: She likes it! Hey Mikey! Just like the home show's cats on Quaaludes, our busy kitty crouched quietly in her sky-blue bag on their laps. She looked mildly concerned when they held her like a baby, but she never squirmed until one of the boys picked her up by the strap. You're not supposed to do that, of course. The strap is for securing the cat and carrier in a seat belt.

We didn't use the strap on our next trip to Buffalo (if you're so inclined, check out the photo of the pathetic-looking belted cat on Ms. Starmack's Web site). But Steeler did ride contentedly in her bag on several laps, then was carried through a busy retirement home without incident.

No more worries about tumbling carriers or caterwauling from the back seat (if only they made one kid-sized). Cat-in-the-Bag comes in regular (up to 10 pounds), large (10-20 pounds) and extra large (over 20

**TRYOUT** is a collection of mini-reviews and news about plants products for the home. To submit ideas, e-mail Home & Garden editor Kevin Kirkland at [kkirkland@post-gazette.com](mailto:kkirkland@post-gazette.com) or call 412-263-1978.



Sadi Starmack shows how Cat-in-the-Bag Cozy Comfort Carrier works with her cat Allie.

pounds). Information: [www.cat-in-the-bag.com](http://www.cat-in-the-bag.com) or 1-866-332-9804

### Lawn is always yellow

Dog owners (and their neighbors) know that it's nearly impossible to have a lush green lawn when Fido's watering it.

We've written in the past about **K-9 Turf** and **K-9 Patch**, whose pet-safe ingredients condition the soil and repel the salt and magnesium that comes from dog urine. Gypsum, which increases a lawn's pH, is one of the ingredients in this 7-5-5 fertilizer blend (the numbers correspond to the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash, respectively).

K-9 Turf is available locally at Best Feeds Garden Centers, \$12.99

for a 30-pound bag, which treats 3,000 square feet.

Other companies have also come out with products to mellow that yellow grass, including pills that change the pH of your dog's urine before it ever hits the dirt and, for those who have just given up altogether, a synthetic lawn that comes in rolls. These are all featured in the June issue of Dog Fancy magazine:

**Dog Repair Kit** by ENCAP includes grass seed, mulch and soil conditioner. A 1½-pound bag covers 100 square feet and costs \$5.99. ([www.encap.net](http://www.encap.net)).

**Dog Spot Eliminator** from The Organic Farm Store is a soil amendment that fights dead spots in the lawn. An 11-pound container runs \$12.25 at [www.theorganicfarmstore.com](http://www.theorganicfarmstore.com).

**Lawn Rescue for Dogs** by Pet Naturals of Vermont is a chewable supplement that balances pH in urine using cranberry, yucca, brewers yeast and other good stuff. A bottle containing 120 chicken-liver-flavor tablets is \$8.99 on [www.petnaturals.com](http://www.petnaturals.com).

**ProGreen Synthetic Grass** replaces the real thing in your backyard or dog run. Holes in the turf's backing allow urine to run through to the ground. A bacteria solution can be sprayed on to break down organic materials and odors. Made by ProGreen International, it costs \$2.66 to \$4.74 a square foot at [www.progreen.com](http://www.progreen.com).

### What's in that mutt?

If you've ever wondered what dog breeds your Heinz 57 (57 varieties) has in his family tree, a new test will tell the tale.

The **Canine Heritage Breed Test** is a DNA-based, diagnostic test that can genetically determine the breed composition of dogs. Made by MMI Genomics, part of MetaMorphix Inc. of Beltsville, Md., the test can identify 38 major breeds, accounting for about 75 percent of the dogs in this country.

Swab the inside of your dog's cheek, send off the swab in the enclosed mailer and wait four to six weeks for the results. The cost, \$65, is a small price to pay to find out how much of a hound dog your dog's dad really was ([www.canineheritage.com](http://www.canineheritage.com) or 1-800-DNA-DOGG).

— Kevin Kirkland, Post-Gazette