

YOUR HOME

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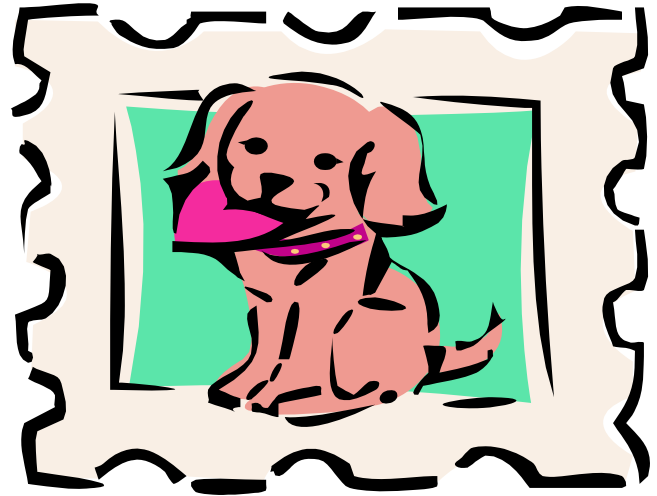
TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

Get Organized for a Stress-Free Move

Summer is a prime moving season for many families, especially those with young children who want to settle in their new home before the school year starts. Experts at Move.com offer several tips for making your move a seamless and stress-free experience.

1. When hiring professional movers, get written estimates from at least three licensed companies. For a few extra dollars, consider buying moving insurance. Investing in full value protection means any lost or damaged articles will be repaired or replaced.
2. Take photos of every room in the new home while they are vacant. Then write down every item from your current home and which room those items will go before you begin packing them.
3. Begin packing early, even if it's one room or one cabinet at a time. Toss or donate any items you don't need. And remember to fill out change-of-address notices and schedule utilities ahead of time.
4. If you have children or pets, consider hiring a sitter or daycare for moving day, or find a safe place for them so they're not underfoot.
5. When breaking down larger items, like shelving units, into smaller pieces, put the screws, washers and other small components in a sealed baggie and label it clearly. Keep all baggies with small parts in one box and carry it with you on moving day.
6. Take pictures of electronic hook-ups for TVs, DVRs, home theater systems and computers before unplugging them. Print out the pictures and label them in detail, so you will be able to set up the systems properly once you are in the new home. Also keep all loose wires in separate baggies or boxes that are clearly labeled.
7. Dispose of any household products you no longer use, such as paints, pesticides and detergents. Contact the city's waste disposal department for guidelines on how to dispose of them safely. For items that you plan to take with you, like laundry detergent or cleaning products, pack them in a small box within a larger box to protect against leaks and seal the boxes securely.

Plan ahead and start packing early, so you can enjoy the moving experience with less stress.



Puppy Love

Pets have become an important part of American family life, according to a recent Harris Poll. More than three out of five Americans (62 percent) have a pet, and 91 percent of them consider their pet to be a member of their family.

Among pet owners:
69 percent have dog
51 percent have a cat
11 percent have fish
7 percent have a bird

Pet owners show their love in several ways: 57 percent of owners say they let their dog or cat sleep in the bed with them and 33 percent purchase holiday gifts for them. However, two-thirds of owners say they have never dressed their pet in some type of clothing, and 83 percent say they have never taken their pet to work with them.

Moving can be stressful for pets, so be sure to stick with their routine as much as possible and, if possible, have a family member or friend care for them while you pack, according to VanLines.com. Also make sure your pet's vaccinations and treatment doses are up to date. Give your pet an early dosage before moving to a new city, and ask your veterinarian for references for vets in the new city.

fast fact >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

There were 6,132 farmer's markets operating in the U.S. as of mid-2010, a 16 percent increase from 2009.

Source: U.S. D. A.



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GERM HOT SPOTS



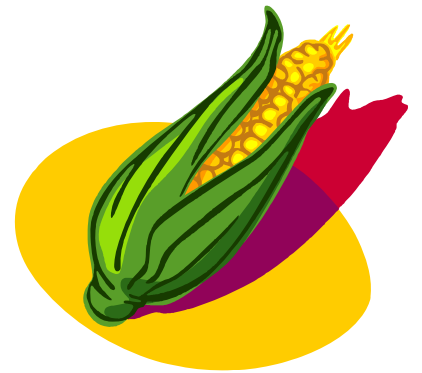
The kitchen may be a popular place for families to get together to prepare and enjoy their meals, but a recent study by NSF International finds that it may also be the “germiest” room in the home. That’s because coliform bacteria can be found on many household surfaces in the kitchen, including dish sponges and rags, kitchen sinks, countertops and cutting boards. The sources of coliform can be traced to food items, such as unwashed produce, raw meat and poultry. The bacteria also can be brought in through improperly washed hands or through contact with household pets, including pet toys and dishes.

Dish sponges are the top hot spot for germs, according to the study. “Sponges pick up bacteria during the cleaning process and are typically not properly – or regularly – sanitized before their next use,” explains Dr. Rob Donofrio, Director of Microbiology at NSF International. “Additionally, sponges are often wet and left in damp areas in or near the sink, providing optimal conditions for germ growth. They also have many nooks and crannies which can be great places for germs to multiply.”

To clean, place wet sponges in the microwave for two minutes every day and replace every two weeks or more as needed. Or better yet, use dishcloths, towels or rags, which can be sanitized by washing them in hot water with bleach. Replace dishcloths every one or two days.

Another hot spot for germs -- the kitchen sink -- should be washed and disinfected at least once or twice a week with a disinfecting cleanser. Sanitize kitchen drains and disposals monthly by pouring a solution of one teaspoon household bleach in one quart of water down the drain. Wash kitchen sink strainers in the dishwasher weekly.

Knowing where the germ hot spots are in your home and taking steps to clean and sanitize them properly will help protect you and your family from harmful bacteria.



DID YOU KNOW?

An average ear of corn has 800 kernels in 16 rows.

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