

## A fresh smell for your client's home

By Rick Bunzel

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Buyers judge a house by many attributes but generally if it smells, it won't sell. Odors that a lot of longtime homeowners have gotten used to can torpedo a sale. It's been proven in scientific studies that our olfactory senses or smells help us remember a particular time and place. Realtors can use that to their advantage when staging a home. However in some cases a few air fresheners or baking cookies isn't going to cover a larger problem. I sense real problems in homes when I see every room having an air freshener in it and savvy buyers will sense a problem also. Smokers and pet odors top the list as most offensive to our noses and unfortunately are the most difficult to remove.

Most pet odor comes from fur, dander or urine. Pets mark their territory by rubbing their fur on objects and with urine. That's why your kitty rubs your ankles with her sides and dogs pee on couch corners. Minimize pet odors by not allowing pets to sleep on couches and carpets. Provide them with a separate rug or bed and encourage them to use it. Deodorize often with Febreze, a product found on most grocery store shelves. Keep pets bathed and groomed more often than usual, so as not to add to existing pet odor. Encourage cleaning the litter box frequently and see if it can be moved to an out of the way area.

Urine odors are tougher as most of the time the dog or cat has urinated or sprayed in the same area repeatedly and the urine has soaked in to the carpet pad or furniture batting. In these cases replacement of the carpeting may be the solution. For furniture the offending area can usually be taken care of by a professional. Consult your local cleaning professional for the best solution.

Smoke odors are more of a challenge, particularly when they have occurred over years. The smoke film can be pervasive and found through all parts of the home as well as soaking into fabrics such as carpets and couches. In many cases the film from the smoke has coated the walls and needs to be removed or painted over. A professional upholstery and rug cleaner should be called to clean as many areas as possible.

Commercial ozone treatments are now being widely used. This is an industry strength treatment and may take as long as 48hrs to apply. Ozone is a sterilant, yet it is safe because it is made of three oxygen molecules, and once the treatment is done the air changes to a completely non-toxic state very quickly. Lightning strikes produce ozone in nature and most people will associate the sweet smell after a thunderstorm with ozone. Today ozone generators are commonly being used in hot tubs and pools to sterilize the water. The same ozone at high levels can also remove odors from a home. Ozone is very toxic at high levels so all pets, plants etc. will have to be removed during the treatment. Because of these qualities ozone may be the safest, yet most powerful odor treatment available. Many restoration and carpet cleaning companies are offering ozone treatments. Price will vary based on size of home and treatment duration but expect the cost to be \$200-\$500.

For homes with lesser problems carpet freshener, Febreze and one or two plug-in air fresheners are your main tools. Sprinkle carpet freshener liberally throughout your home and let it soak up the odors for at least an hour before vacuuming. Plain baking soda will work without adding a fragrance. In most homes the air will pass through the furnace several times a day during heating.

and cooling seasons and a dirty filter will add to the offensive smells. Having the filter changed to hypoallergenic filters will help remove some of the smells well as other airborne nasties.

Don't make the mistake of installing too many Plug-in air fresheners. This tends to offend buyers by creating a pungent overpowering smell in the air. Its better to get rid the of sources and ventilate the home with clean fresh air.

Additional information for new homebuyers can be found at [WWW.PacCrestInspections.com](http://WWW.PacCrestInspections.com).  
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