

## Green Matters: Paper, Plastic or Neither?

Retailers worldwide see value in trading disposable bags for reusable totes.

By Wendy Bedwell-Wilson

The ubiquitous plastic bag. With nearly every purchase, pet-specialty retailers reward customers with these carry-alls that make it convenient to haul heavy cans, greasy bones or baskets full of treats and toys from the store to the car to the house. For shoppers, they're often the best choice for packing their purchases.

They may not be the best choice, however, for the environment.

A majority of shoppers reuse plastic bags to scoop pet waste or line garbage cans—94 percent, according to Consumer Reports National Research Center—but many plastic bags invariably catch wind and parachute across fields, festoon fences alongside the freeway, bob like jellyfish in oceans, and choke waterways and landfills. The Environmental Agency reported that in million tons of plastic up as waste in the alone.

In response, across the globe have consumers' need to themselves from their plastic bags. A growing cities, counties, states have forced people to turkey, outright plastic bags from the or imposing charges on use them.

On April 22, introduced the Plastic that would impose a 5-grocery and retail proposed legislation cleaning bags, take-out bags. Funding raised implementing the Conservation Fund to trash reduction and and paying off the



Janene Zakrajsek, owner of Pussy & Pooch Pethouse and Pawbar in Los Angeles, offers paper, plastic and tote bags, but they're all made with recycled materials—including the totes, which display her store's logo.

"We use about 90-percent paper bags for purchases," Zakrajsek said. "Our paper bags are made from at least 30-percent recycled material, and our plastic bags are made with 15- to 25-percent recycled material consisting of a combination of post-industrial and post-consumer resins with a minimum of 5-percent post-consumer recycled. We ask all our customers if they would like a bag, and we do sell reusable totes from [manufacturer] From Scratch as an option, too."



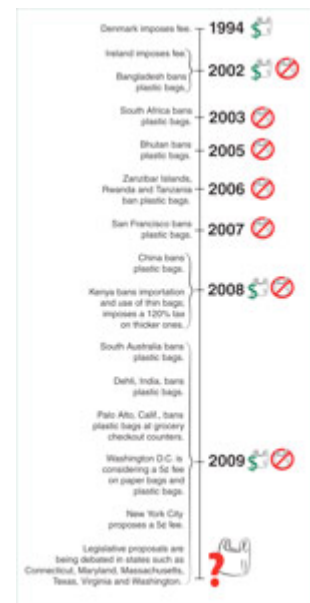
Protection 2007, 3.8 bags ended United States

governments recognized wean addition to number of and countries quit cold banning supply chain those who

Congressman Jim Moran (D-Va.) Bag Reduction Act of 2009, a federal bill cent tax on plastic carryout bags from stores beginning Jan. 1, 2010. The would apply to grocery-store bags, dry-food bags, retail bags and service-station program (1 cent), the Land and Water clean up pollution (1 cent), state and local watershed protection programs (1 cent), national debt (2 cents).

"Plastic bags pose a serious threat to the environment, animal life and possibly even human health," commented Moran in a press release. "The time has come to implement a national program that encourages the use of reusable bags instead of plastic."

The United States is not alone. Cities and states in England, Australia, Canada, Ireland, China and India, among others, have enacted similar surcharges or bans, all with the aim of reducing plastic-bag use.



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