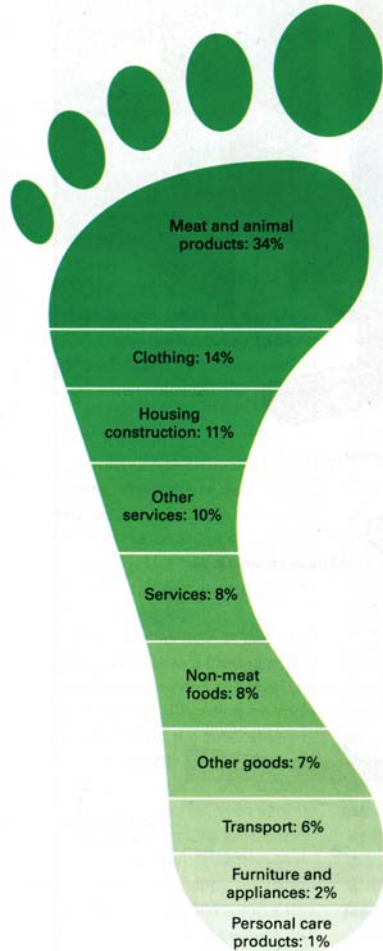


what's our eco-footprint?

Find out so you can tread more lightly



Each week we make many purchasing decisions – from groceries, clothes and books, to appliances, cars, plane trips and public transport, and more. The impact of all these decisions is measured by what is called the ecological footprint. The footprint calculates the amount of land needed to sustain a person's lifestyle, considering the items they consume. In Australia, the size of the average eco-footprint is 6.6 hectares of land used by each person in their lifetime. However, this is far beyond the planet's capacity, which is 1.8 hectares per person. We're using more than most countries and taking resources away from our kids and grandkids.

Here's how the eco-footprint is made up

Meat and animal products: 34%

Meat and dairy products use lots of resources. But by eating one less serve of red meat a week, in a year you'll save up to 10,000 litres of water and 300kg of greenhouse pollution!

Clothing: 14%

Huge amounts of water, energy and chemicals go into making garments. The average T-shirt, for example, takes about 1.5kg of pesticides and fertilisers to produce, while the amount of water used in the production and transportation of clothes bought annually by the average household is 150,000 litres. If every so often you buy one item less, or repair, rather than replace, your clothes, you'll be doing the planet a big favour.

Housing construction: 11%

When purchasing or building a new house, consider whether it has been designed to be water and energy efficient. And if it's located near public transport you won't have to rely on your car every time.

Other services: 10%

Green plumbers, green electricians and green architects can do work around your home using sustainable materials that will have positive long-lasting environmental impacts. To find someone in your area, visit the Green Pages at www.greenpagesaustralia.com.au/

Services (restaurants and accommodation): 8%

When booking a holiday, keep an eye out for those which offer accommodation that's accredited by Green Globe. This is the international benchmark that demonstrates responsible behaviour for environmental, social and economic impacts.

Non-meat foods (vegetable products): 8%

The more processed the food product, the more energy and water is needed to produce it. When you're shopping, look for organic products. Organic food doesn't contain chemical fertilisers or pesticides and is also free of genetically modified organisms. At home, feed the soil with manure, compost and other organic material, and grow your own vegies if you can.

Other goods: 7%

Much of the environmental impact of goods comes from manufacturing and maintenance. Before you purchase new goods, such as power tools, camping gear, lawnmowers and gardening equipment, first check to see whether you can borrow or rent.

Transport: 6%

Cars and other road transport are major contributors to greenhouse pollution, and Australia's emissions are still growing. If you can't walk or cycle to your destination, public transport is the next best way to cut your contribution to global warming. Did you know, for every litre of petrol you save, you prevent 2.5kg of greenhouse gases from going into the atmosphere?

Furniture and appliances: 2%

When it's time to buy new appliances, it's smart to look for those which are energy and water

Let's all work together

As every issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* is bought by about 300,000 people, we started to imagine the environmental savings we could make if we all worked together.

This is why in every issue we'll be asking you to do one positive action for the environment each month.

This month's action is for all of us to reduce our consumption of red meat by 150g (this is a serve that's about the size of your palm). If all of us do this, our combined effort will save 1,500,000kg* of greenhouse pollution and 60,000,000 litres* of water. And if you think your one contribution is insignificant, remember these words from environmentalist David Suzuki: "Every single one of us is insignificant. But if you have hundreds of thousands of insignificant people, that adds up."

We'd like you to let us know if you joined us in helping the planet. Simply go to our website yahoo7.com.au/bhg click on the Our Planet logo and check the box in our This Month's Action poll to let us know.

*A 150g serve of red meat produces about 5kg of greenhouse pollution and requires about 200 litres of water to produce, depending on the location and the nature of the farming system.

efficient – check the star rating. For example, an energy-efficient fridge can save up to 300kg of greenhouse pollution per year. Visit www.energyrating.gov.au or www.waterrating.gov.au for more details. And try to source wood-based products like tables, chairs and beds, from timber that has the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited logo on it. This indicates it comes from a forest that has been managed responsibly.

Personal care products: 1%

Many toiletries contain a vast range of synthetic chemical additives, including fragrances and colours. Because of this, in a year, a woman could absorb up to 2kg of chemicals from the cosmetics and toiletries she uses. To prevent this, look for natural beauty products that contain plant-based ingredients and essential oils.

Discover your personal eco-footprint Visit yahoo7.com.au/bhg where you can link to the GreenHome website of the Australian Conservation Foundation. When you get there, use the Eco-calculator to discover the size of your personal eco-footprint.

Ask the experts

Do you have a question or want advice on how to make your home and lifestyle greener? Email your question to Sophie Scott, GreenHome guru from the Australian Conservation Foundation. We'll publish her responses in upcoming issues. Email: greenhome@acfonline.org.au

PASS THIS ONTO A FRIEND.