

BCSPCA

PROPERTY OWNER AND MANAGER GUIDE

- Pet-Friendly Housing Overview
- FAQ
- Sample Pet Policy
- Interview Questions
- Sample Pet Registration Form
- A Letter from the BC SPCA: To share with a fellow property owner or manager

INTRODUCTION

The BC SPCA frequently receives calls from frustrated people unable to find a home to rent with their pet. The BC SPCA believes that if more property owners and managers were aware of the significant benefits of pet-friendly housing, they would be more inclined to offer it.

The BC SPCA recognizes both the need for pet-friendly housing, and for responsible tenants who acknowledge the privilege of having pets in their homes. We have created a toolkit to help property owners and managers prepare for potential renters with pets, discuss options, and better understand the complexities of this issue.

PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING OVERVIEW

THE PROBLEM

Pet-friendly housing is considerably limited in British Columbia.

Winston the beagle and Pepinot the miniature schnauzer were not accepted at most houses and apartments in Vancouver. These two dogs were adopted from the SPCA after having been abandoned in an apartment on moving day. Serving as companions for each other, their guardians agreed to pay \$400 more per month in order to have a home for their family.

Not all guardians of dogs and cats can afford to pay more to keep their family members. Across the province, about 20% of companion animals surrendered by their guardians are for a lack of available pet-friendly housing. This represents about 1,500 pets yearly.

The BC SPCA frequently receives calls from frustrated people unable to find a home to rent with their pet. Almost 80% of BC residents favour legislation that allows pet guardians the right to keep companion animals, according to a 2008 poll (McIntyre & Mustel).

Pet guardians also face heavy competition for housing due to B.C.'s low vacancy rate. Limited rental stock means pet owners are willing to pay more than renters who do not have pets.



BENEFITS OF PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING

One major advantage to landlords offering pet-friendly housing is increased rental income. People with pets will pay more for housing: units that limit the type or size of pets tend to be cheaper than those without restrictions by \$100. Tenants with pets also stay longer — an average of 46 months, compared to 18 months for people without pets.¹ This saves landlords from having to spend time and money finding new, reliable tenants. Data from the FIREPAW study also indicates there is no difference in damage between tenants with and without pets.

Another direct benefit is increased security, as pet guardians are the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood during late-night and early-morning dog walks. A dog often stays behind to protect the home when his or her guardian isn't there.

Companion animals have even greater benefits to society at large. They assist children with development of language skills, empathy, responsibility and self-esteem. Studies have also shown that companion animals help reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety and stress.

¹ FIREPAW, <http://www.firepaw.org/CompanionAnimalRentersPetFriendly.pdf>

OWNER'S RIGHTS: PET DEPOSITS AND EVICTION

A landlord may require a pet damage deposit of up to half of one month's rent either when the tenant has one or more pets at the start of a tenancy, or later when the tenant acquires a pet and the landlord's required agreement is obtained. Some pet insurance companies have third-party property damage coverage.

Pet damage deposits are generally treated the same as security deposits and are used to repair any damage left by a pet at the end of tenancy.

A landlord may require an additional pet policy as an addendum to the rental agreement. This package contains a pet policy that can be used to promote responsible guardianship and prevent potential conflicts during the tenancy.

If, during a tenancy, a landlord discovers that a tenant is in violation of the rental agreement, a written warning known as a "breach letter" is issued. The letter states that the tenant must comply with the rental agreement by a specific date, and that failure to do so will result in eviction. The process of terminating a tenancy cannot begin until the landlord has issued the breach letter.

For regulations surrounding pets, visit the Residential Tenancy Branch website:
www.rto.gov.bc.ca

FAQ

Q. IS THERE ANY WAY TO MAKE SURE A PET GUARDIAN IS RESPONSIBLE?

A. Useful tools for screening tenants with pets include: conducting a rental interview, requesting pet reference forms and a pet resume, asking the tenant to bring his/her pet to the interview, looking for a well-groomed, well-mannered pet and having the tenant sign a pet policy. See the Interview Questions section for a list of questions to help you identify responsible pet guardians.

Q. HOW MUCH DEMAND IS THERE FOR PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING?

A. In today's market, you may receive far more applications for pet-friendly tenancy than you can accommodate. This means you will have the ability to select only those with whom you are most comfortable.

Q. HOW MUCH MONEY CAN I GET FOR A PET-FRIENDLY UNIT?

A. You could expect to get 20-30% more money for a pet-friendly unit due to high demand.

Q. DO TENANTS IN PET-FRIENDLY UNITS STAY LONGER THAN THOSE IN UNITS THAT DON'T PERMIT PETS?

A. Pet owners have a high motivation to succeed as tenants. Tenants in pet-friendly units stay for an average of 46 months, compared to 18 months for tenants in units that don't allow pets.

Q. CAN I RESTRICT THE SIZE, KIND AND NUMBER OF PETS?

A. Yes, you can make any restrictions in a pet policy amendment to the lease agreement. Included in this package is a pet policy that promotes responsible guardianship using evidence and experience from property managers who allow pets.

Q. CAN I CHARGE AN EXTRA DAMAGE DEPOSIT FOR TENANTS WITH PETS?

A. You can charge a one-time pet deposit of up to 50% of one month's rent, regardless of the number of pets a renter has. This is additional to the normal security deposit.

FAQ

Q. CAN I RESTRICT TENANTS WITH PETS TO CERTAIN FLOORS/AREAS WITHIN THE COMPLEX?

A. Yes, as part of the pet policy that you establish, renters must acknowledge and abide by any no-pet areas on the property.

Q. CAN I HAVE A TENANT SIGN A PET POLICY?

A. Absolutely. Pet policies assist property managers and tenants to develop and implement rules regarding pets in rental housing. It accommodates the needs and concerns of most parties.

Q. CAN I PROHIBIT PETS IN MY RENTAL PROPERTIES?

A. “No pets” policies are permissible with the following exception: landlords must allow reasonable accommodations for residents with a disability and allow an animal who assists a resident in his/her day-to-day living.

Q. ARE THERE OTHER BENEFITS TO BECOMING A PET-FRIENDLY PROPERTY MANAGER?

A. Your property will enjoy the added security of your tenants walking their dogs early in the morning and late at night; if anything is amiss, your tenants are the first to know.

RENTAL UNIT PET POLICY

This Agreement forms part of the current Tenancy Agreement between the landlord and the tenant. Failure by the tenant to comply with any of the following terms and conditions will be considered a breach of a material term of that Tenancy Agreement and may result in the Landlord requiring the tenant to permanently remove the pet(s) from the residential property and/or issuing a Notice to End a Residential Tenancy.

1. The tenant may have the following described pet(s) in the tenant's rental unit, subject to the terms and conditions within this Agreement and in accordance with clause 18 of the tenancy agreement. Should the tenant no longer own these pet(s), this Agreement automatically ends. In the event that the tenant acquires another pet, a new Agreement will be entered into.

Description of Pet(s) - species, breed(s) if known, name, color(s), age, permanent ID #:

2. All dogs, cats and rabbits must be spayed or neutered. A copy of a document certifying that these pet(s) are neutered or spayed must be provided to the Landlord. If there is an age or medical reason the pet(s) cannot be neutered or spayed, please provide explanation in writing by a veterinarian. Failure to do so within 14 days following the date below will nullify this Agreement and the tenant will not be permitted to keep these pet(s), pursuant to clause 18 of the Tenancy Agreement.

3. All pet(s) must be licensed or registered annually in accordance with any existing municipal bylaw.

4. All dogs, cats and rabbits must have permanent identification in the form of a tattoo or microchip.

5. Pet(s) must be on a leash and under control or in a secure cage at all times when outside of the tenant's rental unit and in building common areas.

6. The tenant will pick up the pets' waste immediately from any area on the residential property, including any area considered part of the tenant's rental unit.

7. Pursuant to clause 18 of the Tenancy Agreement, the tenant is responsible for any and all damages caused by the pet(s). This includes, but is not limited to, damage to the walls, floors, carpets, linoleum, bathtub, drapes/blinds, patio or balcony.

8. The tenant will maintain a regular flea control and vaccination program appropriate to the type of pet. Should flea infestation from these pet(s) occur in the rental unit or on the residential property, the landlord may require the tenant to have the carpets shampooed and the rental unit de-fleaed at any time. Failure by the tenant to act promptly on the landlord's request will be a breach of this Agreement. Should flea infestation attributable to the tenant's pet(s) occur subsequent to the tenancy, the landlord may seek compensation from the tenant for the subsequent flea removal treatment.

9. The tenant will act in accordance with the municipal noise bylaw. If the tenant's pet is disturbing the quiet enjoyment of others, the tenant will remediate the problem through work with a pet trainer, behaviourist, daycare, or sitter/walker.

10. The tenant must ensure that all pet(s) are kept well-groomed, in particular that the nails of dogs and cats are kept trimmed to limit potential noise and damage related to pacing and scratching.

11. The pet(s) must not be left in the rental unit if the tenant will be absent from the rental unit for an extended period of time. If the pet(s) are left in the care of an alternate caregiver in the unit, the name and telephone number for the caregiver must be provided to the landlord or property manager.

12. Prohibited or restricted exotic animals, as defined by the B.C. Wildlife Act Controlled Alien Species Regulation are not permitted as pets.

Tenant Signature _____

Date _____

Property Manager Signature _____

Date _____

Note. This Pet Policy is intended as a general guide to assist landlords and tenants develop and implement rules regarding pets in rental housing. Although this policy will accommodate the needs and concerns of most parties, we encourage you to expand or modify it to fit your individual circumstances

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

One of the benefits to offering pet-friendly housing in today's market is that you'll have far more applications for tenancy than you can accommodate, and therefore the ability to select only those with whom you are most comfortable. To assist with this process, these are key questions to ask during the rental interview.

- What type of pet(s) do you have?
- How long have you had your pet?
- Is your pet altered (spayed/neutered)? If not, why?
- Does your pet have a regular veterinarian? How often does your pet visit the vet? Do you have liability insurance or a medical plan for your pet?
- Does your pet have any medical or behavioural problems? What have you done to address these issues?
- Did you have any problems with your pet at your previous address? What steps did you take to resolve them?
- Can I contact your previous landlord?
- Would you object to my inspecting your suite after you and your pet move in?
- Who will care for your pet when you go away on vacation?
- Does your pet have a license (if required by the municipality) and wear an up-to-date ID collar?
- Does your pet have permanent identification such as a tattoo or microchip?

SPECIFICALLY FOR DOG GUARDIANS:

- Has your dog ever bitten anyone?
- Is your dog housetrained?
- Has your dog had obedience training?
- How often is your dog exercised; how do you exercise him/her?
- What happens to your dog if you are required to work late, or are delayed getting home? How does your dog react to being left alone for extended periods?
- What steps have you taken to address your pet's separation anxiety (if applicable)?

SPECIFICALLY FOR CAT GUARDIANS:

- Does your cat use a litter box?
- Do you keep your cat inside?
- If your cat is outdoors at any time, do you have a cat bib or bell to ensure birds and small animals are not at risk?

BCSPCA

Pet Registration Form

INFORMATION		
Tenant(s)		
Address		
Home Phone	Mobile Phone	Work Phone

Type of pet:

Dog
 Cat
 Rabbit
 Other (specify): _____

Pet(s) is spayed/neutered (renter may be asked to provide documentation)

Pet(s) is up to date on vaccinations (renter may be asked to provide documentation)

Pet's physical description (list size, age, weight, breed, etc.):

Emergency Contact	Name	Address	Phone Number
Veterinarian	Name	Clinic	Phone Number

Declarations

Tenant(s) declare the above information to be correct and agree to abide by the established Pet Policy.

Tenant Signature _____ **Date** _____

Landlord grants approval to keep pet(s) described above.

Signature (Landlord or other authorized) _____ **Date** _____

Dear property owner,

Each year at the BC SPCA, over **1,500 pets are surrendered due to a lack of available pet-friendly housing**. These account for ~20% of all animals surrendered by owners to the BC SPCA. These numbers do not account for the thousands of pets, often cats, that are abandoned into the streets or left in the apartment by their previous owners who were unable to find more affordable pet friendly housing.

One major advantage to landlords offering pet-friendly housing is increased rental income. A 2003 study of 103 property owners and 120 tenants on the subject of Pet-Friendly Housing (FIREPAW, published in Anthrozoos) generated data that demonstrates a few key findings. People with pets will pay more for housing: units that limit the type or size of pets tend to be cheaper than those without restrictions by \$100. Tenants with pets also stay longer — an average of 46 months, compared to 18 months for people without pets. This saves landlords from having to spend time and money finding new, reliable tenants. Data from the FIREPAW study also indicates there is no difference in damage between tenants with and without pets.

Another direct benefit is increased security, as pet guardians are the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood during late-night and early-morning dog walks. A dog often stays behind to protect the home when his or her guardian isn't there.

Pets also have proven physiological, psychological, and social benefits to humans. A review of the benefits produced by Paws SF in 2007 shows that dog ownership slows heart rates, decreases risk for cardiovascular disease, and decreases blood pressure. Studies also found increased dopamine and endorphins and decreased cortisol (a stress hormone) following time spent with a dog. Children who are introduced to pets at an early age have fewer allergies, asthma, and wheezing and less frequent illnesses.

Subjects recovering from grieving who had pets reported lower medication use and less depression. Female pet-owners who have suffered physical abuse reported pets as an important source of emotional support.

These benefits affect people of all ages and from all walks of life, demonstrated by the reality that over fifty percent of the population has pets. Discriminating against a possible tenant based on their positive relationship with their pet creates additional stress for all involved. Conversely, when housing and community environments are supportive of animal ownership, it has been found that the human-animal relationship is strengthened (O’Haire, 2009).

WE RECOMMEND A PET POLICY:

- Permit the same amount of pets as regulated by the municipality.
- Encourage pet guardians to spay or neuter their pets, as evidence has shown that this can reduce conflict and aggression.
- Mandate annual licensing with the municipality.
- Mandate permanent identification for cats, dogs, and rabbits.
- Require on leash in all common areas.
- Mandate all waste in common areas be immediately removed and the area cleaned.
- Ensure all damage is repaired by the tenant.
- Mandate vaccination and flea control program appropriate to the type of pet.
- Ensure all noise issues are remediated by pet guardians providing their pets with regular exercise and the use of dog walkers or daycares for dogs who experience anxiety being left alone during the day.
- Mandate regular grooming and nail trimming to limit the sound of scratching on the floors.
- Ensure the information of a caregiver is available to the property owner should the guardian be away for an extended period of time.
- Prohibit exotic animals in line with B.C.’s Controlled Alien Species Regulation.

A pet policy is available at www.sPCA.bc.ca/petfriendlyhousing.

Animals in British Columbia’s shelters are relying on you to make the housing stock available so that they can have a long-lasting place to call home.

Please do not hesitate to contact us directly with any questions or concerns, or to access our resources to make housing pets a positive experience for all involved. Thank you for doing your part to realize the positive benefits of pets and ensure their place in your community!

Kind regards,

The BC SPCA Policy and Outreach Team
advocacy@sPCA.bc.ca
1-800-665-1868