

BCSPCA

STRATA COUNCIL GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

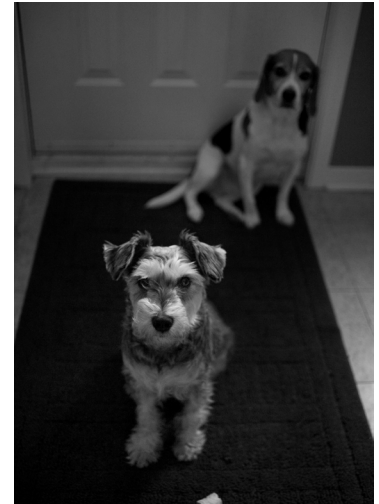
The BC SPCA frequently receives calls from frustrated condo owners and tenants unable to bring a pet into their home. We recognize both the need for pet-friendly housing, and for responsible residents who acknowledge the privilege of having pets in their homes. We have created a toolkit to help strata councils prepare for residents who have or want to have pets, discuss options with them, and better understand the complexities of this issue.

PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING OVERVIEW

THE PROBLEM

Pet-friendly housing is considerably limited in British Columbia. Landlords and stratas can choose whether they will permit pets. They can also restrict the sizes, kinds or number of pets.

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.

One restriction that is not based in scientific evidence is limiting the number of pets to one so that no pets can serve as companions to each other. Another unscientific restriction limits the height or weight of dogs or all pets. These policies have no grounding in research and cause unnecessary distress and conflict for owners, tenants, occupants and visitors.

Eighty percent of BC residents favour legislation that allows pet guardians the right to keep companion animals, according to a 2008 poll (McIntyre & Mustel). The BC SPCA believes that if more strata councils were aware of the significant benefits of pet-friendly housing, they would be more inclined to offer it.

BENEFITS OF PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING

With pets comes increased security for the building, as pet guardians are the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood during late-night and early-morning dog walks. The dog also 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.

CHALLENGES

Strata councils volunteer their time to take on a sizable workload. In some cases, one animal guardian who is unaware or doesn't care about fellow residents will cause conflict for all the residents, creating unnecessary repair costs or discomfort due to noise. Although there are owners and tenants who will not respect policies, a preventative approach can be taken to create a culture of respect before problems occur. The BC SPCA has provided guidelines below that will help to mitigate this conflict and ensure all residents have peaceable enjoyment of their property. Thank you for doing your part to realize the positive benefits of pets and ensure their place in your community!

SAMPLE PET POLICY

The BC SPCA recommends that the Strata Property Act Schedule of Standard Bylaws be modified by each Strata Council to state: Use of property 3 (4): “An owner, tenant or occupant must follow the local municipal bylaw to determine the number of pets that may be kept on a strata lot.” The BC SPCA also provides the following policies for Strata Councils who are experiencing conflict regarding animal interactions, cleanliness, noise, or would like more regulation of pets on their property in order to provide more clarity for owners regarding the “Use of property” section of the bylaw.

- 1.** The owner must submit a pet registration form for each pet. Should the owner, tenant, occupant or visitor acquire a new or additional pet, the owner must complete a new form.

- 2.** All pet(s) must be spayed or neutered. If there is a reason the pet(s) cannot be neutered or spayed, please provide explanation in writing.

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

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

- 5.** The owner, tenant, occupant or visitor will pick up the pets’ waste immediately from any area on the residential property. Failure to act promptly will be a breach of the Schedule of Standard Bylaws Use of property 3 (2).

- 6.** The owner, tenant, occupant or visitor will maintain a regular flea control and vaccination program appropriate to the type of pet. Should flea infestation from these pet(s) occur on the residential property, the Strata Council may require all owners who use the space to have the carpets shampooed and de-fleaed. Failure by the owners to act promptly on the Strata Council’s request will be a breach of the Schedule of Standard Bylaws Use of property 3 (2).

- 7.** The owner must act in accordance with Schedule of Standard Bylaws Use of property 3 (1)(b). If the owner, tenant, occupant or visitor's pet is disturbing the quiet enjoyment of others, the owner, tenant, occupant or visitor will remediate the problem through work with a pet trainer, behaviourist, daycare, or sitter/walker.

- 8.** The owner 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.

- 9.** The pet(s) must not be left in the rental unit if the owner, tenant, occupant or visitor will be absent from the 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 Strata Council.

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

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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

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

Resident Signature _____ **Date** _____

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

Signature (Strata Council) _____ **Date** _____

Dear Strata Corporation,

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.

Pets 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 owner or 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).

Will you adopt a strata bylaw that demonstrates compassion and humanity? Good, fair policies restrict unwanted behaviour rather than prohibiting the “enjoyment of property” outright. Think of policies written to regulate liquor, enjoyment of parks, transit; each of these ensures that the unwanted behaviours are curbed while still allowing for shared enjoyment of the associated benefits.

WE RECOMMEND THAT STRATA OR RENTAL BUILDING BYLAWS:

- Permit the same amount of pets as regulated by the municipality.
- Mandate a registry of owned and frequently cared for animals in the building so that any reported issues can be easily resolved.
- 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.
- Mandate all waste in common areas be immediately removed and the area cleaned.
- Mandate vaccination and flea control program appropriate to the type of pet.
- Provide owners and tenants with information about their rights and responsibilities related to noise.
- Encourage pet guardians to provide their pets with regular exercise and use dog walkers or day-cares 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 strata council 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

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