

LetswithPets®

RENTING WITH PETS

A guide for tenants





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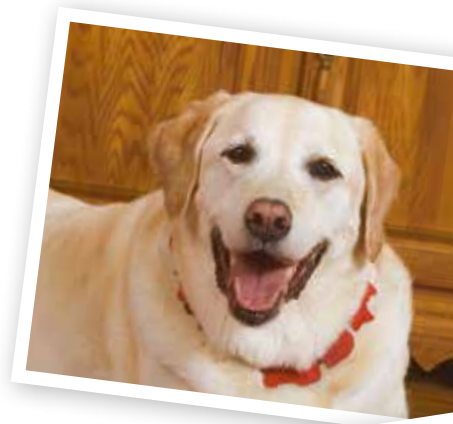
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INTRODUCTION

Dogs Trust understands that finding privately rented accommodation that allows pets can be very difficult. We know that many pet owners are forced to live in unsuitable properties or keep their pets without consent from their landlord. In some extreme cases, owners are even having to give up their pets or else face becoming homeless.

A survey¹ by Dogs Trust found that:

- Pet owners can take up to seven times longer to rent a home compared to non-pet owners
- 1 in 3 pet owners could not find a suitable property that would accept their pet

Dogs Trust launched its Lets with Pets scheme in 2009 to encourage landlords and letting agencies to accept tenants with pets and to help make the house hunting process easier for tenants with pets. This booklet contains advice on the simple steps that pet owners can take to show prospective landlords that you and your pets would make good tenants.

For further information and advice on topics such as moving home with your pets, please visit www.letswithpets.org.uk



¹ Dogs Trust survey of pet owners, 2011



LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION WITH YOUR PET

TOP
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TIPS

When you are looking for privately rented accommodation with your pet, there are a number of things you can do to make the house hunting process as simple as possible:

- 1 Don't leave your house hunting until the last minute** – Give yourself plenty of time to find a pet-friendly property and begin searching at least 6-8 weeks before you need to move out of your current home.
- 2 Be as flexible as possible** – The more restrictive your search criteria are, the more difficult it will be for you to find a pet-friendly property. Try to be flexible on location and property type as this will increase your chances of finding somewhere for you and your pet to live.
- 3 Write a CV for your pet** – Provide your prospective landlord with as much information about your pet as you can. Include the contact details of your veterinary practice and someone who can care for your pet in an emergency. You could also include details of your pet's last vaccinations and any flea and worming treatments they have had.
- 4 Get a reference for your pet** – By providing a reference from your previous landlord, you can show that your pet is well behaved and has caused no problems at your previous property. This will demonstrate that you are a responsible pet owner.
- 5 Introduce your pet to your landlord** – Meeting your pet in advance may put your landlord's mind at ease. You could invite your landlord to your current home so that they can see that your pet has caused no problems there. This is particularly important for dogs as it's an opportunity to show that your dog is well behaved.
- 6 Offer to pay a higher deposit** – Many landlords are concerned about pets causing damage to their property or furnishings. By offering to pay a higher deposit, you will reassure the landlord that you will cover any damage that your pet may cause.
- 7 Offer to have the property professionally cleaned** – Landlords often worry that accepting pets will lead to flea infestations, excess pet hair and dirty carpets and soft furnishings. To put your landlord's mind at ease you might consider offering to pay for the property to be professionally cleaned when you move out.
- 8 Be honest, don't sneak your pet in without permission** – It's never advisable to keep a pet in a property without the landlord's consent. This will only lead to problems in the future and could result in the termination of your tenancy. Always be honest about your pets from the start.
- 9 Get written permission** – If your landlord has given you permission to keep a pet in your property, make sure you get it in writing. You should ask for a clause to be added to your tenancy agreement and make sure that any 'No Pets' clauses are removed. This will prevent problems from arising in future.
- 10 Make moving day stress free for your pet** – When you are ready to move into your new home, think about what you can do to make moving day as stress free as possible. It's a good idea to ask a friend or relative to look after your pet for the day if you can. For more information on moving with your pet, go to www.letswithpets.org.uk

Providing a Pet Reference and CV

It's a good idea to provide landlords with a reference for your pet so you can show them you are a responsible owner and that your pet is well behaved.

Ideally you should ask your previous landlord to write the reference as they will be in the best position to recommend you and your pet as tenants. Ask your landlord to include the following points:

- How long did you live in their property with your pet?
- Do they consider you to be a responsible pet owner?
- Do they consider your pet to be well behaved?
- Did your pet ever cause any damage to the property?
- Did your pet ever cause a nuisance to neighbours or visitors?

Writing a **CV** for your pet is also a good way to persuade landlords that your pet would be a well behaved tenant. Use it as an opportunity to talk about your pet's behaviour and personality. You can cover the following points:

- Include your pet's name, breed, sex, age and microchip number
- Add a clear picture of your pet
- How long have you had your pet?
- Is your pet up to date with his vaccinations, flea and worming treatments?
- Is your dog/cat/indoor rabbit toilet or litter box trained?
- How long will your pets be left home alone for?
- Do you have a dog walker or someone coming in to check on your dog during the day?
- Mention any training your dog has had
- Do you have someone to care for your pets in an emergency?



Dogs Trust has produced example pet references and CVs, which can be downloaded free of charge from www.letswithpets.org.uk



LIVING RESPONSIBLY WITH YOUR PET

Once you have moved into your new property, it's important that you care for your pets responsibly. The information in this section is a guide to the steps you can take to ensure that your pets are happy and healthy.

Health & Welfare

Neutering

Neutering your pets is widely recommended for their health and wellbeing. Landlords are also more likely to accept neutered pets in their properties.

Neutering is a simple operation to prevent animals from reproducing. It involves the removal of the reproductive organs and is available for dogs, cats and rabbits. Most animals will recover quickly from their surgery and will be back to normal within a few days.

Neutering is very beneficial to your pets as it:

- Prevents unplanned pregnancies and unwanted litters
- May make your pet less aggressive and less likely to fight with other animals
- Prevents many common illnesses such as cancers, pyometritis and prostate problems





Microchipping

Microchipping is the most effective and secure way of permanently identifying your pet. It's available for most animals but is more commonly used for cats and dogs. Microchipping will become a legal requirement for all dogs in Wales from 2015 and for all dogs in England from 2016.

Microchipping is a simple procedure that involves implanting a microchip, which is the size of a grain of rice, under your pet's skin. It's no more painful than a normal vaccination.

Once microchipped, a unique identification number will be registered to your pet and your contact details will be placed on a national database. Microchipping your pet ensures that it can be easily identified if lost and returned to you as quickly as possible.



Vaccinations

Vaccinations are important to prevent your pet from developing potentially life threatening illnesses. Dogs, cats and rabbits can be vaccinated against a wide range of illnesses and should be given an annual booster each year. The following vaccinations are available:

Dogs

canine distemper, infectious hepatitis, leptospirosis, parvovirus, parainfluenza and kennel cough.



Cats

feline infectious enteritis (FIE), cat flu, feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline chlamydophilosis.



Rabbits

myxomatosis and viral hemorrhagic disease (VHD).



Pet Insurance

You can take out pet insurance for a wide range of pets, including cats, dogs and rabbits. Although it may seem unnecessary if your pets are fit and healthy, there is always the chance that they will need expensive and potentially life-saving veterinary treatment in future.

When you take out an insurance policy for your pet, there are a number of things you will need to consider:

- Check that there is no time limit on how long you can claim for each illness. If your pet gets a chronic illness that requires treatment for the rest of his life, a policy that only offers annual cover will only pay out for the first year.
- If your pet has already been treated for a condition before taking out your policy, the insurance company will most likely not cover any further treatment for that condition.
- Check how much the excess is for each claim. The excess will usually be between £40-£70 but this may increase as your pet gets older.
- Many insurance companies will not provide cover for older pets. If you have an existing policy for your pet, you may find that the premium will go up as your pet gets older.
- Insurance premiums for crossbreed dogs and cats will often be cheaper than for pedigree or purebred pets. Prices may also differ depending on where you live in the UK, as this reflects local differences in veterinary fees.





Being a Responsible Pet Owner

Fouling

Fouling by dogs and cats is one of the main causes of problems with both landlords and neighbours so it's important that your pets are toilet trained and that you always clean up after them.

Dogs will generally toilet in the garden or during their daily walks. Dog owners are responsible by law for cleaning up after their dog in public and can be fined for not doing so. You should also ensure that you pick up your dog's faeces from communal areas, walkways or in the garden.

Cat fouling is not covered by any law but you should provide your cat with a litter tray indoors to discourage him from fouling in neighbours' gardens.

Noise

If any of your pets are causing a nuisance to your neighbours through excessive noise, you will need to investigate the cause of the problem. This is most likely to happen with barking dogs. Dogs bark for many different reasons, including excitement, fear and boredom. If you are unable to solve the problem on your own, you should contact a veterinary surgeon or dog behaviourist for advice.



Damage to Property

Damage caused to properties and furnishings is one of the top reasons why landlords will not accept pets. Insurance policies for tenants, such as contents insurance, will not cover any damage caused by your pets so it's important that you do everything you can to prevent it from happening.

Small animals such as hamsters, gerbils and rabbits can cause a lot of damage as they have sharp teeth and enjoying gnawing, particularly on cables and wires. If you let your small pets out of their cages to exercise, you should ensure that they are supervised at all times.

Cats claw as part of their natural behaviour so you should always provide them with a scratching post and toys to occupy them while they are indoors. This should also prevent them from clawing at the carpets and furniture.



Dogs who are bored or left at home for long periods of time are more likely to cause damage to property and furnishings. Dogs Trust recommends that dogs are not left alone for more than 4 hours at a time. If you do need to leave your dog at home, you should ensure that you leave plenty of toys, such as food puzzle toys, to occupy them.

Abandonment and Neglect

All pet owners are responsible for their pet's health and wellbeing and have a 'duty of care' to provide them with adequate food and water, exercise, a suitable place to live and access to veterinary treatment.

If you are going away and you will be leaving your pet behind, you must ensure that someone will be able to care for him until you return. Usually this would mean taking your pet to a friend or family member or arranging for him to go to a kennel or cattery. In some circumstances you may be able to arrange for someone to come into your home to look after your pet.

If you do not provide for your pet's needs or if you abandon or neglect any animal in your care, you may be reported to the RSPCA and prosecuted.

ANIMALS AND THE LAW

There are various laws that apply to pet owners and we have listed the main ones below. For further information on animals and the law please visit the Lets with Pets website or www.gov.uk

The **Animal Welfare Act 2006** and the **Animal Health and Welfare Act (Scotland) 2006** place a duty of care on all pet owners to provide for their animal's basic needs, including adequate food and water, exercise, a suitable place to live and access to veterinary treatment. Under the Act, an animal does not have to suffer in order for its owners to be prosecuted for a welfare offence.

The **Dangerous Dogs Act 1991** makes it an offence to keep any dog of the type known as Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino or Fila Brasileiro, unless the dog is registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs. The Act makes it a criminal offence to allow any dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes instances where there is a fear that an injury may occur.

The **Control of Dogs Order 1992** requires every dog in public to wear a collar bearing the name and address of its owner. If a dog is not wearing a collar when out in public, it may be seized by the local authority and treated as a stray. The owner or person responsible for the dog may also be prosecuted and fined.







Lets with Pets
Dogs Trust
17 Wakley Street
London
EC 1V 7RQ

T: 020 7837 0006
F: 020 7833 2701
www.letswithpets.org.uk

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