



A Guide
for
Pet
Owners

13 Steps to Finding Rental Housing That Accepts Pets

*Includes
Guidelines for
Moving with
Your Pet*



Contents

Why The Humane Society of the United States Created This Booklet

“Moving” and “landlord won’t allow” are among the top reasons given by pet owners when relinquishing their dogs or cats to animal shelters. If more rental housing permitted pets, millions of dogs and cats could be placed in homes—and stay in those homes—when their caregivers move.

These reasons are why The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) helps rental managers, property owners, and pet caregivers solve the challenges of keeping pets in rental properties. It’s all part of our Pets for Life® program, designed to keep pets with their families, where they belong, for life. In addition to helping people keep their pets when they move, we also help people solve other problems that threaten human-pet relationships, such as behavior issues and allergies to pets.

For more information about Pets for Life or for any other information about pet care and behavior, visit www.petsforlife.org, or write to Pets for Life, The HSUS, 2100 L Steet, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

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FOR A COMPLETE SET of links to state and local websites that list pet-friendly rental properties, visit www.rentwithpets.org.



You've Probably Heard Heartbreaking Stories . . .

. . . OR HAVE EXPERIENCED THEM YOURSELF: You need to move and can't find suitable rental housing that will accept your pets. Far too many pet caregivers have felt forced to give up their pets because they thought pet-friendly housing wasn't available.

But if you are a responsible pet owner looking to rent and are overwhelmed by the challenges of finding pet-friendly housing, don't despair. With planning and a few compromises, you can find pet-friendly housing in virtually any area of the country. After all, isn't your pet worth it?

So let's get moving. Just follow these 13 steps to find housing where your pets are welcome.

13 Steps to Finding Pet-Friendly Housing

1 Give yourself enough time. Nobody likes the hassles involved with moving, much less finding rental housing that accepts pets. If you are renting now, start to check ads and contact real estate agents and rental agencies at least six weeks before your lease expires.

2 Understand why many housing communities reject pets. Put yourself in the shoes of landlords, housing managers, property owners, or condominium association board members for a moment: They may have had bad experiences with irresponsible pet owners who didn't safely confine their animals or pick up their feces, sneaked pets in, or left ruined carpets and drapes when they moved out. They may be worried about complaints from neighbors about barking dogs and wonder how they are going to deal effectively with pet owners if problems arise. All these concerns are legitimate.

That's why people looking for apartments, houses, or condominiums to rent must be able to sell themselves as responsible pet owners who are committed to providing responsible pet care and being responsible neighbors.

3 Make use of available resources. Contact the humane society or animal care and control agency serving the area into which you are moving; the agency may be able to provide you with a list of apartment communities that allow pets. If you know any real estate agents, rental agents, or resident managers who own pets themselves or who share your love of animals, ask them for leads.

While there is no substitute for making a professional connection with someone who understands how important your pet is to you, look for a community apartment guidebook at the supermarket or near newspaper

distribution boxes on the street. The guide may indicate which apartment communities allow pets and may list any restrictions, such as species allowed or weight limits. In addition, be sure to check local newspapers. Finally, for a complete set of links to websites that list pet-friendly rental properties, visit www.rentwithpets.org.

4 Recognize that it may be futile to try to sell yourself and your pet to a large rental community with a no-pets policy. You're more likely to be successful if you focus on places that allow most pets, allow certain pets (for example, cats or dogs weighing less than 20 pounds), or that don't say, "Sorry, no pets." Individual home and condominium owners may be easiest to persuade. Ideally, look for a community with appropriate pet-keeping guidelines that specify resident obligations. That's the kind of place that's ideal for pet owners because you'll know that other pet caregivers there also are committed to being responsible residents.

5 Gather proof that you're responsible. The more documentation you can provide attesting to your conscientiousness as a pet owner, the more convincing your appeal will be to your future landlord. Compile the following documents:

- A letter of reference from your current landlord or condominium association verifying that you are a responsible pet owner
- Written proof that your adult dog has completed a training class or that your puppy is enrolled in one
- A letter from your veterinarian stating that you have been diligent in your pet's medical care and documentation that your pet has been spayed or neutered and vaccinated against rabies (sterilized pets are healthier, calmer, and far less likely to be a nuisance to neighbors); most veterinarians routinely fulfill such requests for their clients

6 Make your request to the individual or group with the ultimate authority to grant your request. Usually this will be the owner of the house or apartment. The owner may, however, delegate the decision to a property manager or resident manager. Check to see if, in addition to obtaining the landlord's approval, you must also submit a written request to the building's board of directors (or association, in the case of a condominium community).

7 Ask if a no-pets policy is the result of a negative experience with a previous resident. Addressing your landlord's prior experience may show you how to present your own request most effectively.

8 Let the landlord, manager, or condominium board know that you share any concerns about cleanliness. Point out that your pet is housetrained or litter-box trained. Emphasize that you always clean up after your dog outdoors and that you always properly dispose of your pet's waste.

9 Promote yourself. Responsible pet owners make excellent residents. Because they must search harder for a place to live, pet caregivers are more likely to stay put. Lower vacancy rates mean lower costs and fewer headaches for landlords and real estate agents. Let prospective landlords and managers know that you understand that living with a companion animal is a privilege, not a right.

10 Promote your pet. Offer to bring your pet to meet the owner or property manager, or invite the landlord to visit you and your pet in your current home. A freshly groomed, well-behaved pet will speak volumes. Emphasize that the same pride you take in caring for your pet extends to taking care of your home. Many landlords are concerned about fleas, so be sure to let your prospective landlord know that you maintain an active flea-control program for your pet and home. Provide written proof that your pet is spayed or neutered and is, therefore, healthier, calmer, and less likely to be a nuisance.

Make it clear to the landlord, manager, or condominium board that you keep your cat inside and your dog under control at all times and that you understand the health and safety benefits of doing so.

If you can't arrange for a meeting, consider making a small scrapbook with photos of your pampered pet in his or her current home, and/or create a "résumé" for your pet. (See page 8 for a sample pet résumé.) Scrapbooks and résumés are unique ideas that are guaranteed to make a strong, positive impression.

11 Be willing to pay a little extra. Tell your prospective landlord or resident manager that you are willing to pay an extra security deposit to cover any damages your pet might cause to the property.

12 Get it in writing. Once you have been given permission by a landlord, manager, or condominium committee to have a pet, be sure to get it in writing. Sign a pet addendum to your rental agreement. Comprehensive agreements protect people, property, and the pets themselves. If your lease has a no-pets clause, verbal approval won't be enough. The no-pets clause should be removed from the lease (or crossed out and initialed) before you sign it. Be sure it has been removed from or crossed out on your landlord's copy, too.

You may be required to pay a pet deposit, some or all of which may be nonrefundable. Be sure to discuss deposits and monthly pet-related fees in advance. And have these fees put into writing, too. Request a copy of any house rules pertaining to pets. Let the landlord know that you will abide by the rules set for the broader community and respect the concerns of residents who do not own pets.

13 Be honest. Don't try to sneak your pet in. Keeping an animal in violation of a no-pets rule contributes to the general inclination of landlords not to allow pets. You also may be subject to possible eviction and other legal action.

Are You a Responsible Pet Owner?

If so, your chances of finding a pet-friendly place to rent will be greatly improved.

Providing for your pets' physical needs and caring for them with love and commitment are the first requirements of responsible pet owners. But these are not the only requirements! Pet caregivers cannot reasonably or responsibly ignore the impact their animals can have on their neighbors. This is especially true of those living in multifamily rental properties. Here are a few commonsense rules to keep your neighbors happy—and your pets safe.

Responsible Pet Owners

- Clean up after their pets and dispose of the waste in a sanitary manner
- Keep their dogs on leashes at all times when outside their units
- Help their cats stay safe and live longer by keeping them indoors
- Ensure that their dogs or cats are licensed and outfitted with visible identification at all times
- Obey local animal nuisance laws (which generally define “excessive noise” by any animal as continuous or incessant for a period of 10 minutes, or intermittently for one-half hour, to the disturbance of any person at any time of the day or night)
- Spay or neuter their dogs, cats, rabbits, or ferrets to improve the health and behavior of the animals and to prevent their animals from adding to the tragic problem of pet overpopulation
- Maintain an active flea and tick control program so these pests won't spread to neighboring units, the common areas of a building, or public places
- Keep pet portfolios that include proof of licensing, proof of spaying or neutering, current records of vaccinations and veterinary care, dog training school diplomas, references from previous landlords, and information on pet first aid and nearby emergency veterinary clinics
- Maintain pet emergency kits that include emergency plans and supplies in the event the homes must be quickly evacuated because of disaster

Sample letter of reference from landlord

Dear _____:

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Peterson and her cat, Buddy. I wish all my residents were as well behaved as Buddy. When Ms. Peterson and Buddy vacated their apartment unit, it was in better condition than when they moved into it. During their five-year residency at Brookside Apartments, Ms. Peterson and Buddy have been excellent members of our rental community, and I would be very happy to discuss why they should be welcomed in yours.

Sincerely,

Property Manager
Brookside Apartments

Sample letter of reference from veterinarian

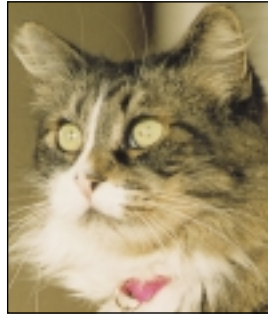
Dear _____:

It is with extreme pleasure that I write this letter of reference for Ms. Peterson and her cat, Buddy. Buddy has been a regular patient at Westwood Bernardo Veterinary Hospital since he was adopted by his caregiver, Ms. Peterson, from the local humane society seven years ago. Ms. Peterson is a model pet caregiver, and I wish all pet caregivers were as conscientious as she is in her care of Buddy. Buddy is neutered, receives yearly checkups and necessary vaccinations, and is on a flea-control program. Please feel free to contact me personally or any member of my staff to discuss Ms. Peterson's and Buddy's unquestionable suitability as housing residents.

Sincerely,

David Zanders, D.V.M.
Westwood Bernardo Veterinary Hospital

Résumé of Buddy Peterson



DESCRIPTION

Buddy is a well-behaved, friendly cat who enjoys the great indoors. When he's not busy sleeping in the sun, he enjoys playing with his toys, gazing out the window, and watching baseball on TV with his owner. He is litter-box trained and always uses his scratching post. Buddy has been the beloved animal companion of Ms. Peterson for seven years.

HEALTH AND GROOMING

Buddy is neutered and flea-free. He enjoys regular grooming and is a longtime patient of veterinarian Dr. David Zanders.

ABOUT BUDDY'S CAREGIVER

As a responsible cat caregiver, Buddy's owner regularly cleans and properly disposes of Buddy's litter. When his caregiver travels, Buddy is cared for by a professional pet sitter who also brings in the mail, waters the plants, and keeps an eye on their home. Ms. Peterson is willing to pay an extra security deposit for the privilege of having Buddy.

REFERENCES

Their current landlord can be reached at 202-555-1234. Attached are letters of reference from former neighbors, Buddy's pet sitter, and health records from Buddy's veterinarian documenting that he is neutered, is current on his vaccinations, and receives regular veterinary care.

Ms. Peterson would be happy for a potential landlord to meet Buddy and thanks you for considering them as prospective residents of your community.

Moving Your Pet Safely

After you've found pet-friendly housing and are ready to move, follow these recommendations to keep your pet safe on moving day.

Plan ahead. Advance planning will make your move less stressful on you and your pet. Pack over a period of time and try to maintain your pet's normal routine.

Invest in a high-quality, sturdy pet carrier. If you have a dog or cat whom you want to keep safely confined on moving day, get a carrier ahead of time and gradually accustom your pet to spending time in the carrier.

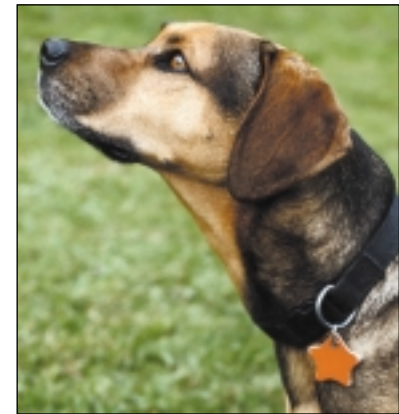
Purchase a new ID tag for your pet. As soon as you know your new address, get a pet ID tag with this information and telephone numbers. (Or obtain some other visible form of pet identification, such as a collar with ID information imprinted on it or an identification band that attaches to the collar but does not dangle like a traditional tag.) An up-to-date ID tag is a lost pet's ticket home.

Keep your pet secure. On moving day, place your pet (whether in the carrier or not) in a safe, quiet place, such as the bathroom, so that he or she cannot escape. Place a large sign on the door that says, "DO NOT ENTER," and be sure that friends or professional movers are aware that the room is off-limits.

Make your car trip safe. If you're traveling by car and your dog enjoys car travel, you may want to accustom him to a restraining harness.

Because most cats aren't comfortable traveling in cars, and for their own safety as well as yours, it's best to transport them in a well-ventilated and securely placed carrier. Never leave pets alone in a parked vehicle during warm weather as the temperature rises quickly and can injure or kill them. In any season, a pet in a parked vehicle is vulnerable to being harmed or stolen. Never put an animal in the trunk or open bed of a pickup truck or in the storage area of a moving van.

Talk to your veterinarian. If your pet doesn't enjoy car rides, consult with your veterinarian about behavior modification or medication that might lessen the stress of travel. Depending on your destination, your pet may also need additional vaccinations, medications, and health certificates.



Find hotels in advance. Listings of pet-friendly hotel accommodations can help you find overnight lodging during your move. Both national and regional editions of *Pets Welcome: A Guide to Hotels, Inns and Resorts That Welcome You and Your Pet*, by Kathleen and Robert Fish, are available. Also check out these websites: www.petswelcome.com, www.traveldog.com, and www.TravelWeb.com.

Plan ahead for air travel. Check with your veterinarian, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the airline if your pet will be flying. For more travel tips, see *Traveling with Your Companion Animal*, available on The HSUS website at www.hsus.org. You will need to take precautions to ensure your pet's safety, so give yourself ample time to work out all the arrangements.

Prepare your new home. Take with you all the familiar and necessary things your pet will need from day one in your new home: food, water, medications, bed, litter box, food and water bowls, and pet health records. Also have on hand a recent photo of your pet, for use if your pet becomes lost.

Settling into Your New Home

Moving to a new home may be stressful to your pet. So be patient and understanding and provide lots of affection. Here are some pointers to help you settle in safely and sanely.



Cats

For the first few days, it's smart to confine your cat to one room of your new home while you work on putting the rest of the place in order. Prepare the room with your cat's bed, litter box, food and water bowls, and toys.

Now is the perfect time to make your cat an indoor-only pet. Indoor-only cats live longer and healthier lives. Resist attempts by your cat to go outdoors. If your cat hasn't established an outdoor territory, he or she is less likely to be interested in going outdoors. Accessories such as window perches and cat enclosures can ease the transition. If you play with your cat and supply lots of attention, your cat should have all he or she needs indoors. Visit www.hsus.org/safecats for complete tips on how to keep your cat safe and happy.

Dogs

Ideally, your dog's first introduction to his or her new home will be with familiar furniture already in place, including his or her bed and crate, toys, and food and water bowls. If you must be away from home for many hours each day, look into having a pet sitter visit with and walk your dog—or consider dog day care.

Safety

Make your new home safe for all pets by providing a secure place for hazardous items that can:

- **poison**—such as cleansers, insect sprays and pesticides, medications, chocolate, certain plants, and antifreeze
- **burn**—such as plugged-in appliances, boiling liquids, open flames
- **electrocute**—such as worn lamp cords
- **strangle, choke, or obstruct breathing**—such as choke collars, small balls, sewing thread and needles, pantyhose, and bones
- **topple or crush**—such as precariously placed appliances, top-heavy filing cabinets, and lamps
- **allow escape or theft**—such as loose screens and inadequate fences; never leave your pet unattended on a balcony or chained in a yard

Veterinary Care

As soon as possible, choose a veterinarian and take a practice drive to the nearest emergency veterinary clinic. Also learn basic pet first aid.

Disasters

Wherever you live, disasters, such as fires, floods, earthquakes, or hazardous materials spills, may occur. Be prepared to ensure your pet's safety in case of a disaster. Start by keeping a list of community animal welfare resources. For our free disaster tips brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped, business-sized envelope to Disaster Tips, The HSUS, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

Advice for Renters with Disabilities

Even if your lease contains a “no-pets” clause, you may have the right to keep a pet in your apartment if you have a disability and one of the following three conditions applies:

- You can prove that your pet is necessary for health reasons
- The landlord verbally agreed that you could have a pet, despite your lease
- The landlord tries to add a “no-pets” clause to a rental agreement or enforce an existing “no-pets” clause after knowing about but not objecting to your pet for a significant period of time

Assistive Animals

Pets of people with disabilities are legally considered “assistive animals.” Even a resident who is not physically disabled may have a special emotional need for a pet. The health benefits of animals are well accepted by the medical profession. A simple statement from your doctor is sufficient to prove to a landlord that you require an assistive animal.

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 applies to virtually all forms of housing, whether they are for sale or rent. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) investigates housing discrimination complaints under the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If your housing manager refuses to acknowledge your right to have an assistive dog, call the HUD Distribution Center at 1-800-767-7468 for a referral to the HUD office nearest you. When you call, also request the free publications *Residents, Rights, and Responsibilities* and *The Fair Housing Act*.

If you and your landlord are unable to agree on whether you have the legal right to an assistive animal, you may be able to take advantage of free community services that mediate landlord-tenant disputes. Call your local rent control board (if your city has rent control), tenants’ union, landlords’ association, bar association, or community mediation organization. Your local humane society may also be able to help you.



Additional Information

For more information, contact:

Doris Day Animal League
227 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Suite 100
Washington, DC 20002
202-546-1761
www.ddal.org

Delta Society National Service Dog Center®
580 Naches Avenue, SW
Suite 101
Renton, WA 98055-2297
425-226-7357

Read more about service animals in housing at
www.deltasociety.org/dsz102.htm

National Accessible Apartment Clearinghouse
201 N. Union Street
Suite 200
Alexandria, VA 22314
1-800-421-1221

E-mail: clearinghouse@naahq.org
www.forrent.com/naac/naac2.html

The National Accessible Apartment Clearinghouse connects individuals with disabilities with apartments that have been designed for or adapted to meet their needs

This information about the pet-keeping rights of disabled persons was adapted from Best Friends for Life: Humane Housing for Animals and People, a brochure published by the Doris Day Animal League.



A program
to keep
pets and
their people
together



To order more copies of this booklet,
visit our website at
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or write to
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2100 L Street, NW
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THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

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