

TENANTS WITH PETS

A Landlord's Guide



**RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERS
MAKE RESPONSIBLE TENANTS**
A guide to help Landlords rent
to Tenants who have Pets
2002

INTRODUCTION

With around two thirds of Australian households owning a pet, it's no wonder we are often confronted with tenants seeking 'pet-friendly' accommodation.

A well managed pet-friendly policy can help improve profitability, broaden your pool of prospective tenants, lower vacancy rates, reduce tenant turnover and promote a sense of tenant safety and security.

This brochure looks at some important facts about people and pets, and provides useful information on how property owners and managers can benefit from having a policy which allows for tenants with pets.

COMMON CONCERNS AND FACTS

Responsible pet owners make excellent tenants. Caring for pets takes as much, or more, effort and responsibility as caring for where we live.

Letting one tenant own a pet does not mean letting all tenants own a pet. By having in place clear guidelines on the keeping of pets in your property, irresponsible pet owners can be carefully screened out without penalising responsible pet owners.

Different types of dogs suit different environments. For example, not all big dogs need lots of exercise, just as some small dogs need plenty of room to run. There is a type of dog or cat to suit almost every living environment. The main thing is to make sure that potential tenants are responsible and caring and look after the appropriate exercise and socialising needs of their pets.

Tenants with more than one pet need not be seen as a problem. Most companion animals, including dogs and cats, are social beings and companionship is one of their highest priorities. Two pets may in fact be better than one as a playmate can help alleviate boredom.

PET POLICY GUIDELINES

Below is a guide to preparing a pet policy. There are no hard and fast rules and individual policies can be developed to suit individual properties – from single dwellings to multistorey apartments.

1. Screening applications

A few simple questions will help sort out responsible pet owners and tenants.

2. Have a written agreement

A written agreement will ensure everyone has the same information regarding rules and regulations for pet owners.

3. Charge a pet deposit

Most Australian states do not permit the payment of specific 'pet deposits' or 'pet bonds' however, in Western Australia an additional pet bond of up to \$100 may be charged.

4. Set realistic limits

The pet policy should have clear guidelines on the type and number of pets allowed per dwelling.

5. Specific parameters

It is useful to set specific parameters concerning which common areas pets are and are not allowed to go, when dogs must wear leads and whether any types of pets must be confined to tenants' apartments.

6. Ensure cleanliness and healthy pets

Responsible pet owners will agree to immediately clean up after their pets and take all necessary sanitation precautions. They will also have a medical record of their pet to show all required vaccinations have been administered.

7. Establish written disciplinary procedures

Written procedures which are jointly agreed to and state clearly what actions will result in a warning or some form of punitive action will reduce disputes and make for better relations between management and tenants.

8. Determine emergency arrangements

Property owners may wish to have on hand details of local vets in case of emergency.

9. Available services

Be able to outline to prospective tenants the location and availability of parks, pet washing services and other amenities in the local area.

10. Cleanliness of Premises

Tenants should readily agree to undertake to keep the property in excellent condition and free from animal odours and hairs.

LANDLORD CHECKLIST

Below are suggested questions to help owners establish whether potential tenants are responsible pet owners. The list is not exhaustive and landlords/managers are encouraged to develop additional questions to suit their own requirements.

In addition, property owners are encouraged to ask prospective tenants to bring their pets to the interview: a well behaved and cared-for pet is one of the best signs of responsible pet owners.

General Suggestions:

- What type of pet do you have?
- How long have you had him/her/them?
- Do you have papers showing they are vaccinated and in good health?
- Have there been any complaints about your pet(s) at your current/last address?
- If so, how were they resolved?
- Did your pet(s) cause any damage at your current/last address?
- If so, how did you resolve the problem with your landlord?
- May I contact your current/past landlord to discuss your pet(s) further?
- Who would look after your pet(s) when you are away on business/holidays?

Cat Specific

- Has your cat been spayed or neutered?
- Does your cat use a litter box?
- Do you allow your cat outside?
- How does your cat get along with other animals and with people?

Dog Specific

- Has your dog been spayed or neutered?
- Is your dog house trained?
- Have you and your dog completed a dog obedience class?
- How and how often do you exercise your dog?
- Do you keep your dog on a leash when you go for walks?
- Do you make a point of cleaning up after your dog?
- How much time does your dog spend at home alone each day?
- Do you usually allow your dog inside your home?
- How does your dog get along with other dogs and with people?

SAMPLE PET POLICY

A sample pet policy is provided below for your convenience. It is provided as a guide and is designed to have as wide an application as possible. However, we recognise that certain additions or adjustments may be necessary to suit specific properties or locations.



Introduction

The owners/management of _____ wish to encourage tenants to value and enjoy this rental property as they would their own home. We want to give tenants every opportunity to pursue their own interests while acknowledging that their fellow tenants and/or neighbours have the same rights.

In line with this, we have developed a policy relating specifically to the keeping of pets on this property which must be adhered to at all times. By doing so, we can ensure that pet owning tenants, non-pet owning tenants and the owners/managers of this property have their individual interests recognised and protected.

PET POLICY

1. Permission to keep pets on this property is granted solely by, and at the discretion of management. It is subject to strict adherence to this policy. Pets will not be allowed on this property without a current, signed copy of this policy.
2. Only common household pets are allowed. Each type of pet must be approved by management and a limit on the number of pets per dwelling can be imposed at the management's discretion.
3. Decisions by management about the suitability of pets will be made upon the sighting of medical certificates and on the pet's temperament and behaviour.
4. Pets are not permitted on common property of Strata Titled premises unless on a leash or as otherwise agreed upon.
5. Tenants are responsible for keeping all areas where pets are housed clean, safe and free of parasites. Owners must immediately pick up and dispose of all pet waste.



SAMPLE PET AGREEMENT

Below is a sample pet agreement upon which property owners/managers can base their own. As in the case of the other materials provided, it is designed to have a broad application but we acknowledge that specific alterations/additions may be required.

This pet agreement is an amendment to the leases between _____ and _____

(Tenant)

dated: _____

(Landlord)

It ensures that:

1. The tenant has read and signed the pet policy attached to this agreement; and
2. That the tenant agrees to abide by the pet policy and that the landlord agrees to permit the tenant to keep the pet(s) described in this agreement in accordance with the pet policy.

Type of Pet	Name	Age	Description
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3. The tenant shall be liable for any damage or injury whatsoever caused by the pet(s) and shall pay the landlord or the designated agents immediately for any costs incurred as a result of damage or injury caused.
4. The tenant accepts full responsibility and indemnifies the landlord for any claims by or injuries to third parties or their property caused by or as a result of actions by their pet(s).
5. The tenant provides the following information and promptly notifies the landlord/managing agent of any change.

Emergency caretaker of pet(s)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Postcode: _____

Veterinarian

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Postcode: _____

This brochure was prepared by the Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC). The overall objective of ACAC is to provide a forum for the pet care industry to promote the benefits of socially responsible companion animal ownership to individuals, the wider community and all levels of Government through education, advocacy, research and international affiliations.

Membership

ACAC is a non-profit organisation. Its Board is made up of representatives from pet care industry organisations which support the above objectives. Current members are:

- Australian Veterinary Association
- Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association
- Pet Food Industry Association of Australia
- Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Australia
- Petcare Information and Advisory Service
- Veterinary Manufacturers & Distributors Association
- Delta Society Australia
- Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (Inc.)
- Avcare
- Australian National Kennel Council



For additional copies of this brochure please write to:

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