



A Guide for Renting with Pets

HOUSING-RELATED ISSUES IS A COMMON REASON WHY PETS ARE RELINQUISHED TO ANIMAL SHELTERS.

The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) recognizes that pet guardians often have difficulty finding rental housing due to pet restrictions and landlord conflicts. Unfortunately, rental housing that welcomes pets is not common in our community.

Lease restrictions are recognized as significant factor for pet relinquishment, particularly no pet policies, and limits on size and number of pets. Pet relinquishment can be very distressing, as many people consider their pets to be family members. Few available housing options for pet guardians results in animals being unnecessarily surrendered to shelters, such as our facility.

In an effort to raise awareness about this issue, reduce the number of pet surrenders due to housing-related issues, and keep pets and families together, we have put together this guide for landlords and pet guardians. **We believe that pet friendly housing can be a beneficial situation for landlords, tenants, and companion animals.**

Please note: if you are having a dispute with a landlord-tenant issues, please seek professional legal assistance. The information on this page is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

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Tenant and Landlord Rights in Alberta

There are a few things you should know about the law and renting with pets in Alberta. The Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLEA) has developed a helpful booklet that answers Frequently Asked Questions for landlords and tenants about renting with a pet.

[Click Here to View CPLEA'S Renting With A Pet Guide](#)

Benefits of Pet Friendly Housing for Landlords

Many landlords are reluctant to provide pet friendly housing due to concerns about potential damages, disturbances to other tenants, and cleanliness. These concerns are understandable, but are largely based on anecdotes. The overwhelming majority of pet guardians are responsible tenants, which is reflected by the available research on pet friendly renting.

A study on pet renters in 2005 identified some significant benefits to pet friendly housing.

When comparing pet friendly rentals to rentals with no pet policies, the study reported that pet friendly rentals had:

- Increased rental profits
- Longer length of tenancy
- Lower vacancy rates
- More applicants for vacant rental units
- Reduced time to rent a vacant unit
- Reduced money and time spent advertising

A significant benefit to pet friendly housing is increased rental income. People are generally willing to pay higher monthly rates for rentals that permit pets and will also provide a pet deposit. Landlords can also save significant time and resources. Extra profits and the coverage provided by a pet deposit greatly outweigh any damages caused by pets, which is reported to be minimal. **There are no significant differences in damages reported by landlords who rent to tenants with or without pets.** Therefore, landlords may be overlooking opportunities to increase profitability and reduce costs by not offering pet friendly housing.

The number of people acquiring pets is also rising, and subsequently, so does the number of renters with pets. Landlords who restrict pets will be missing out on many qualified renters.

If you are considering offering pet friendly housing, consider not imposing restrictions on types or size of pets. A common issue that pet renters face is size limitations on dogs.

There is no evidence to suggest that size restrictions reduce the incidence of nuisance behaviours or damages. These restrictions are arbitrary and exclude a significant pool of potential tenants. Alternatively, landlords should screen pets individually based on proof of responsible care and references.

Furthermore, pet friendly housing may help to reduce the number of pets abandoned in rental units on moving day. Unfortunately, this is not uncommon. Tenants may leave pets behind if they are evicted and cannot bring their pet with them or have issues finding alternative options. This leaves landlords to report pet abandonment to local authorities who enforce the Animal Protection Act (APA), resulting in the animal being seized and brought to a municipal pound or animal shelter. This causes stress for everyone (and pets) involved and incurs costs.

If you're a landlord who has found an abandoned pet in your property, please call:		
Inside Edmonton	City of Edmonton Animal Care & Control	311 or 780-442-5311
Inside Calgary	Calgary Humane Society	403-205-4455
Rest of Alberta	Alberta SPCA	1-800-455-9003 Option #1

There are many pet renters who are willing to provide proof of responsible care during the screening process. Landlords can easily identify suitable tenants by utilizing effective screening tools, outlined in the Screening Tools for Landlords section below.

Screening Tools for Landlords

Some tools that landlords can use for screening pet renters includes:

- A pet agreement or policy
- References from a past landlord or a pet professional (i.e. dog trainer, pet sitter)
- Proof of responsible care (i.e. proof of spay/neuter, current vaccinations, pet license, obedience training enrollment or completion certificate)

Landlords can use these tools to identify tenants who are responsible pet guardians. The majority of pet guardians are respectful of rental property and are willing to provide documentation and proof of responsible care.

[Here is a sample pet agreement](#) for Alberta renters prepared by the Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta!

Information for Pet Guardians

If you are seeking a new rental residence:

- Be aware that landlords can decide whether or not to allow pets in their rental properties. If a landlord does not allow pets or the building has a no pets policy, then pets are not allowed on the property. The only exception is for qualified service or guide dogs, under the *Service Animal Act* and *Blind Person's Rights Act*.
- Do your research in advance and take your time. Use search engines that filter for pet friendly rental housing listings.
- Reach out to friends or family, using networking sites or social media to find pet-friendly rental opportunities.
- Put together a pet resume! See the Pet Resume section below for details.
- Be prepared to pay a pet deposit, which may be required monthly or annually. If applicable, ensure that the deposit details are clearly outlined in the lease agreement.
- Before you sign a lease, confirm the rental has a pet friendly policy and that your pets meet all restrictions. Landlords are allowed to restrict the type, size, and number of pets. If your pet is in breach of any restrictions set by your landlord, you could be evicted.
- Do not sign a lease that says "no pets allowed" even if you see other pets on the premise or have a verbal agreement with the landlord. The permission of pets must be indicated in writing by the landlord.
- Document the condition of the rental with photos before you move in. If your pet does cause any damage in future, the damage can be documented and your pet deposit can be used to cover any repairs.

Creating a pet resume:

Showcasing responsible pet guardianship and your pet's best qualities can help provide your landlord some assurance. Consider including the following information:

- A photo of your pet and a brief description.
- Veterinary records.
 - For example, a spay/neuter certificate, and current vaccination and/or deworming records
- Proof of a current pet license.
- For dogs, any training certifications. For example, proof of enrollment in an obedience class or a certificate of completion.
- References from a previous or current landlord who has provided rental accommodations for you and your pet.
- References from a dog walker, pet sitter, day care, or kennel.

[Here is a sample pet resume](#) from the Humane Society of the United States!

If you are currently renting and have a pet or are interesting in getting a pet:

- Always keep a signed copy of your lease agreement that is easily accessible, should you need to retrieve it in future.
- If you get a pet without your landlord's permission or your lease has a no pet policy, you could be in breach of your terms of agreement and risk eviction. You must have your landlord's agreement in writing, as without a written agreement, you may not be protected against eviction. A verbal agreement is not sufficient.
- Dispel concerns about pets by providing your landlord with studies or resources that highlight the benefits of pet friendly housing. Provide them with a copy of this guide or see the Resources section below.
- You must follow the [Residential Tenancies Act](#), and if you are renting a condominium, the [Condominium Property Act](#). If your pet interferes with the rights of other tenants (i.e. nuisance behaviours), you could be evicted under the Residential Tenancies Act.

- Be a responsible pet guardian.
 - Clean up after your pet and adhere to all municipal bylaws.
 - Ensure your pet receives routine care (i.e. grooming, nail trims, veterinary exams) to ensure cleanliness and physical health.
 - Keep dogs on leash when outdoors.
 - If you have a cat, keep them indoors or use safe outdoor alternatives, such as a 'catio' or a harness/leash where they can't reach your neighbour's property.

- Prevent issues where possible and promptly address any concerns from neighbours or your landlord. If you receive noise complaints (i.e. dog barking) seek behavioural assistance from a certified professional and/or alternative options for your dog when you are away from home, such as a pet sitter, dog walker, or dog day care.

- If you are having a dispute with your landlord about your pet, offer a solution. For example, if your pet is causing damage to the rental property, seek assistance from a qualified professional (i.e. certified trainer, veterinarian, behaviourist) immediately and provide proof to your landlord. An attempt to remedy the issue may prevent your landlord from terminating your lease.

Behaviour Support from EHS

The Edmonton Humane Society can help with pet behaviour difficulties through our free behaviour hotline, a private consultation, or training classes. Some common behavioural issues that could lead to a landlord giving notice of termination includes:

- Destructive scratching by cats
- Inappropriate elimination (house-soiling) by dogs or cats
- Excessive barking by dogs
- Destructive behaviour by dogs (i.e. chewing, scratching) often caused by separation anxiety

If you are experiencing any of these difficulties with your cat or dog and would like to talk to a professional about your concerns, our EHS trainers are here to support you.

- Email askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com or call us at **780-491-3521**
- Ask your question
- Tell us the best way and time to reach you back
- Allow for 1-2 business days for our team to answer your questions and provide suggestions on how to handle your situation

You can also find [free behaviour resources from us here](#).

Renting during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Please also be aware of any updates or changes to rentals in Alberta due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can [find more information for Alberta Landlords and Tenants during COVID-19 here](#).

If you are having a conflict with your landlord or are at risk for eviction:

- Review your lease and ensure you haven't breached any terms of agreement. Contracts cannot be changed without both sides agreeing and landlords must follow the law and go through a legal process to evict tenants.
- Seek legal advice from an attorney and have them review your lease agreement. There are some agencies that offer free legal advice to people with housing concerns.
- Have a conversation with your landlord to see if you can diffuse the situation. If the concern is related to a pet nuisance issue, it may be relatively easy to address.
- Contact local agencies that can answer questions about landlord-tenant issues. See the Landlord-Tenant Resources section below.
- If you need to leave your residence immediately but can't bring your pet.

Resources

Sources

Shore, E.R., Peterson, C.L. & Douglas, D.K. (2003). Moving as a reason for pet relinquishment: A closer look. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 6(1), 39.

Perrin, T. (2009). The business of urban animals study: The facts and statistics on companion animals in Canada. *The Canadian Veterinary Journal*, 50(1), 49.

Carlisle-Frank, P., Frank, J.M. & Nielson, L. (2005). Companion animal renters and pet-friendly housing in the US. *Anthrozoös*, 18(1), 59-77.

BC SPCA. Renter's guide <https://spca.bc.ca/ways-to-help/take-action/animals-in-the-home/pet-friendly-housing/>.

Alberta Landlord-Tenant Resources

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (Landlord and Tenant Law)

Website: <https://www.landlordandtenant.org/>

Government of Alberta (Information for Tenants and Landlords)

Website: <https://www.alberta.ca/information-tenants-landlords.aspx>

Residential Tenancy and Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS)

Website: <https://www.alberta.ca/residential-tenancy-dispute-resolution-service.aspx>

Phone: 780-644-3000

Toll free: 310-000 before the phone number (in Alberta)

Email: rtdrs@gov.ab.ca

Alberta Courts (Residential Tenancies Process)

Website: <https://albertacourts.ca/pc/areas-of-law/civil/residential-tenancies-process>

Helpful Links

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLEA). Renting with a Pet

<http://www.cplea.ca/wp-content/uploads/RentingWithAPet.pdf>

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta (CPLEA). Renting with Assistance &

Support Animals <https://www.cplea.ca/wp-content/uploads/AssistanceSupportAnimals.pdf>

Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Information for renters with pets

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/information-renters-pets>

Alberta Animal Health Source. Renting with Pets

<https://www.albertaanimalhealthsource.ca/content/renting-pets>