

The Landlord Report

from Realty Management Associates, Inc.

PETS OR NO PETS

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Most owners shudder when you mention pets. To be perfectly honest, this is an understandable reaction since there are times when tenants allow their pets to cause considerable damage. However, when facing the issue of pets, property managers and/or landlords often need to use a logical approach. Saying “no” to a pet right away can often lead to illegal pets or possibly missing the best tenant.

The Application

Whether or not a landlord allows a pet, it is always advisable to have an area for disclosing pets in an application-to-rent. It is important to obtain as much information on the prospective tenant, particularly if you want to determine whether they do have or do *not* have pets. If another landlord reveals that the applicant has a pet, this becomes solid ground for refusing the applicant.

Consider Pets Negotiable

If you are saying no to all animals, consider saying, “pets negotiable.” The problem in stating a definite “no” is the prospective tenant may be the right person for the property. When you say “negotiable,” it allows the landlord to select a tenant who has an appropriate pet or just decline the applicant. Well-qualified applicants generally extend the care for their pets to

caring for the property. It would be better to have them list their pets, examine the information, and then make an informed decision.

Do Pets Work in The Property?

This is a logical step to consider. Obviously, a townhouse with a postage stamp backyard generally is not suitable for a German Shepherd, Springer Spaniel, or a Great Dane. The perspective tenants may tell you their pet never makes a mess, has never caused damage, they walk it everyday, always pick up any animal droppings, and it is accustomed to living in a one-bedroom apartment for years. Common sense must prevail when renting the property to someone with a pet or pets. Look at the property objectively and discuss the issues with our management company on what pets are suitable for the property *before* putting it on the market.

Avoid Some Animals

There are pets to avoid and mostly this comes down to “dangerous and destructive.” Some people relegate this to a Pit Bull, Rottweiler, Doberman, large or small snakes, rats, etc. However, *any* animal that is vicious or dangerous, large *or* small, can be a problem. Good tenant screening often takes care of this problem. It is a good idea to have a list of “unwanted” pets that

are completely unacceptable. Insurance companies often carry a “dangerous pet” list and you can check with your provider on what animals they could have listed and could cause problems with claims.

It is also important that to determine what *defines* a pet and if it meets the requirements of the zoning laws for the property. There are areas that allow farm animals, but this is not normally the case – this will

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OUR SERVICES

Thinking of Buying or Selling?

If you are thinking of buying or selling in our area, we can assist you. Just call, and we will have an agent contact you to help you with your Real Estate needs. There is no obligation and no pressure. Check out property values today!

Referrals are Rewarding

Know someone who is looking for management services in our area? Refer them to us and we will "reward" you. We value your business and would like to show our appreciation to you.

Looking for Management Elsewhere?

You, or someone you know, may need a property manager in other states. Because of our proud affiliation with NARPM, The National Association of Residential Property Managers, we have contacts throughout the country and may be able to assist you.

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eliminate people who may want to raise chickens, a cow, sheep, horses, etc.

"Increase" the Security

The security deposit is also important when allowing pets. Using the term "increased security," rather than "pet deposit" allows you to use all of the security deposit in the event of damage instead of limiting "pet damage" to a pet deposit. There have been many legal disputes throughout the country on the term "pet deposit."

Additionally, it is very important that you do not exceed any state law on security deposits when increasing deposits. Use common sense when asking for a large deposit. If the total funds to rent the property exceed what prospective tenants are willing to pay in the current market, this would be a negative action to take.

Service Animals are NOT Pets

Always remember that if a person is handicapped and they have an authorized service animal, they are NOT pets. You can screen handicapped persons just like any other applicant, but you cannot turn them down just because they have a service animal. Generally, most service animals are fully trained and well behaved. It must be the rental history, not the service animal, that determines whether to accept or deny the applicant.

Additionally, under Federal Fair Housing, you cannot charge any amount of deposit for a service animal. It is illegal and landlords can incur serious fines and damages if they charge the handicapped for a "pet."

The Bottom Line

When you are in doubt concerning pets, use common sense and proceed with caution. Discuss your questions and concerns with us and we can assist you on the subject of pets. Then, if you still feel you want to say "no" to a pet, you can. 🏠

