

RENTING WITH PETS: A GUIDE FOR TENANTS



In South Australia, keeping pets in private rental properties (other than those in a strata or community title scheme) including rooming houses, is at the discretion of property owners.

In terms of strata or community title properties, residents must not, without the strata or community corporation's consent, keep any animal at the property.

Responsible pet owners can make very good tenants; the kind that sign long term leases and take good care of their homes.

With two out of three households owning a pet, it's clear that we love our pets. So why are pet-friendly rentals so thin on the ground?

There is still a stigma that surrounds a tenancy with pets, but you can give yourself the best chance to secure your next rental by taking positive action.

It is important to be aware that special circumstances exist for access to accommodation for people who use assistance dogs, assistance animals and therapeutic animals. Further advice on these matters can be obtained from the Equal Opportunity Commission of South Australia on 8207 1977 and the Australian Human Rights Commission on 1300 656 419.

STEP 1: FINDING A PET FRIENDLY RENTAL

There's no denying it's a tougher market out there for pet owners. However, there are some simple things you can do to help find a suitable rental property for you and your pet.

Search online: Many rental agencies are starting to respond to the demand for pet friendly rental accommodation and have search functions on their websites which will allow you to check a 'pets allowed' option. Using these search functions will help save you time.

Use social media: Update your Facebook account with your rental requests, tweet it to your followers and keep an eye on content-generated classified sites.

The word on the street: Even if you don't have a social media account, keep your friends and family in the loop. People, on the whole, like to help out and the more ears you have to the ground means that you could find a property much sooner.

Also, talking to your current landlord may be beneficial. They may be aware of other suitable rental properties for you through their networks.

STEP 2: APPLYING FOR AND SECURING A PET FRIENDLY RENTAL

Good preparation and communicating your ability to be a responsible tenant with a pet is important when you are trying to secure a suitable rental property. Here are some tips which may help.

Be prepared: The key is to come prepared and clearly demonstrate to your prospective landlord that you are, and will continue to be, a responsible pet owner.

A pet application form (pet resume) is a good way to provide a prospective landlord with key and honest information on your pet's qualities and other details such as registration and proof of vaccinations. A pet reference combined with a renter reference can help provide a strong case for responsible pet ownership.

A pet agreement is also worth considering so that the approval to keep pets can be documented.

Further advice on what information to include in pet application and pet agreement forms, which can be modified to suit individual situations and agreements, can be found at www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/renters

References: Ask your current landlord to provide a reference for you and your pet.

Stand out from the crowd: Competition can be tough so be opportunistic, try to make yourself stand out and get in early. Have all your information ready so that you can apply on the spot.

Also, double check that your rental application is not missing any details and that all the necessary paperwork is attached. You can help yourself by ensuring you're an organised and well prepared applicant.

Apply widely: Unless a property specifically states that 'No Pets are Allowed', it's worth asking whether pets may be considered and submitting your application along with supporting documents such as a pet application.

Be honest: Remember that honesty is always the best policy. If you're not entirely honest about your pet owning status, you will put at great risk any rental tenancy you may acquire and cause yourself unnecessary stress. Also, be honest if your pet is to be kept inside regularly.

Even if the landlord does not object to a pet, the rules of a strata or community scheme usually require the consent of the strata or community corporation to keep an animal.



STEP 3: RESPONSIBLE RENTING WITH PETS

Following these simple steps will help you demonstrate to your landlord that you are a responsible pet owner.

House pride: maintain a high standard of cleanliness and sanitation at all times, cleaning up and disposing of any animal waste as soon as possible.

Love thy neighbour: A couple of simple actions can help to ensure that your relationship with your neighbours (and your landlord) stays positive:

- Introduce yourself and your pet to your surrounding neighbours – in the first week of moving in if you can.
- Let your neighbours know that if they have any issues, you'll be happy to talk things through with them.

Love thy pet: While the basics of care might apply across the board to all companion animals (enough food and water, a safe place to sleep, physical and mental exercise, socialising etc.) each pet will also have individual needs. You can understand your pet's specific needs by talking to your vet and by spending quality time with your pet and paying close attention to their behaviour. Further, don't forget to ensure you follow your local council's requirements in relation to registering your pet.

HELPFUL TIPS

Here is some general information you may find useful:

Home alone: It's estimated that dogs will spend up to 14 hours a day sleeping and cats even more. Keeping your pet's mind active and their body physically satisfied can be helpful to weed out boredom and nuisance behaviours. Here are some tips to help you do this:

- Provide safe, interesting toys on a rotating basis to challenge your pet and consider providing a scratching post or a climbing tree for your cat.
- Make the most of the time you spend with your pet when you're around. Remember that regular exercise and play can entertain and help use built up energy.
- Arrange for a trusted neighbour, friends or family to drop by and give your pet some love and attention during time that you're away.
- Some pets feel anxious when left at home alone and may suffer from 'separation anxiety'. Leaving a radio on can often be helpful. Alternatively, seek professional assistance if your animal appears to be affected by this.

Noise and barking: Barking can be a problem and is generally caused by boredom, separation anxiety, territorial behaviour or a reaction to noises and fear.

A simple solution to barking behaviour is to keep your toilet trained dog inside (if possible). While the noise may be insulated, dogs also feel more secure inside and are less likely to bark at passers by or other dogs. It's also important to ensure your dog gets some regular exercise.

Training: Just like people, dogs especially need guidance and clear and consistent boundaries, so it's vital that dogs are trained and socialised from a young age.

Although there can be challenges renting with pets, it's important to know your rights, be honest with your prospective landlord and be prepared to provide helpful information about your pet that can be used to assist in decision making.

For more information, please visit:

www.sa.gov.au/tenancy/renters

For further advice on:

- Landlord and tenant rights and obligations, please call Consumer and Business Services on 131 882
- Strata and Community Titles, please call the Legal Services Commission on 1300 366 424 or see the [Strata Titles Legal Guide](#)

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of South Australia