

Tips for finding pet-friendly housing

By Lisa Bloch

It's news to no one that living in the Bay Area is incredibly expensive. And it's even more challenging if you're looking to rent a place to live with your furry (or feathery) friend. Sadly, one of the most common reasons people surrender their pets to Marin Humane is because they can't find housing that will allow them.

It's heartbreaking to see someone tearfully give up a beloved pet after trying unsuccessfully to find a place to live that's pet-friendly.

Here are a few steps to take to make the process easier.

Finding housing

First, allow yourself plenty of time to find a pet-friendly rental. Several websites, like Craigslist, Apartments.com and Realtor.com, let you filter by pet-friendly options. Present yourself and your pet(s) as responsible future tenants by following these tips.

Prepare a "pet resume packet" that includes:

- Your pet's references (for example, past property owners and neighbors, trainers, groomers, veterinarians, dog walkers and pet sitters).
- A statement from your veterinarian of your pet's current good health, including proof of current vaccinations.
- Proof of spay/neuter, if applicable.
- Proof of your pet's license (all dogs in Marin County are required to be licensed).
- A photo of your pet — well lit and happily in the company of people is helpful.
- A disaster kit and plan that includes your pet(s). This should include an emergency contact for matters relating to your pet in your absence.
- Any training certificates.
- Proof of any pet health insurance.

Marin Humane also has a downloadable "Responsible Dog Guardian Pledge" on its website, which outlines your promise to maintain your dog's safety and security, to follow all animal-related rules, etc.

Once you've prepared your pet's resume, consider arranging a meet-and-greet for your pet and new property owner.

Be prepared to pay a pet deposit. This fee is due at the beginning of the rental term and must be refundable under California law, not including amounts withheld for the cost of any damage caused by your pet beyond reasonable wear-and-tear.

Struggling to afford a pet deposit? Marin Humane's Pet Safety Net can offer financial assistance, payable directly to a property owner or rental agency. Go to marinhumane.org/safetynet to learn more.

Moving in

- Verify written pet permission in your lease or rental agreement. Don't sign a lease with just a "handshake" provision for your pet.
- Know your pet deposit or security deposit amounts and terms.
- Document the condition of your rental with photos before you move in.

After you move in

- Be a good neighbor! Always clean up after your pet and consider asking neighbors if they hear any noise from your animal(s). It's better to be proactive than to hear about a problem only after a neighbor is irritated and has possibly reported it to the property owner.
- Use a security camera while you're away that records time and date to see if complaints are legitimate.
- If you get a pet nuisance complaint or pet welfare concern inquiry, try to work directly with the complaining neighbor to stop the problem if it's warranted.
- Once the problem is solved, ask your neighbors to communicate that to the property owner.
- If your pet does cause damage, document it and make sure reasonable amounts are deducted from your pet deposit.

Marin Humane has a comprehensive guide for renters on its website at marinhumane.org/housing.

Property owners, please consider making your properties pet-friendly. With safeguards in place, like a pet deposit and requirements of licensing, your concerns should be assuaged and you'll help keep pets and people together.

Lisa Bloch is the marketing and communications director for Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin articles and welcomes animal-related questions and stories about the people and animals in our community. Go to marinhumane.org, find us on social media @marinhumane, or email lbloch@marinhumane.org.