

Pet Owners Make Great Tenants

"I have to surrender my pet because I am moving house."

These are some of the saddest words we hear at RSPCA ACT and way too frequently. While Australia has one of the highest percentages of pet ownership in the world, there are still many people that would love to own a pet, but cannot because they are renting.

Last year, I spoke at a property management conference in Canberra. One of the questions I asked the audience was, "How many of you have first-hand experience with a pet causing significant damage to a property that you were managing?" A show of hands only resulted in two people that could answer that question. When I asked, "How many of you have first-hand experience with children causing significant damage to a property that you were managing," almost all of the hands went up in the room.

Finding a rental home that accepts animals can be challenging, and as a result in many people simply giving up and surrendering their animals to RSPCA ACT or other rescue groups. Landlords are potentially missing out on some great tenants and additional income by holding on to the notion that pets are bad for rentals. So here are some good reasons why landlords should consider pet owners as tenants:

- **Pet owners are often willing to pay extra for the ability to bring their pets with them to a rental** – people love their pets like family members. Many of them will willingly pay more for a decent home that allows them to take their pet with them.
- **There's more demand for pet friendly properties than people realise** –Today is a tenant's market and therefore many properties are sitting vacant much longer. By adding the words, "pets will be considered" to every advertisement, you'll likely find a higher number of potential good tenants interested in the property.
- **Tenants will generally want longer leases and extended stays** – it's stressful for both the tenant and their pets to move and even harder to find another place that will allow pets. Therefore, tenants with pets will likely stay longer.
- **They tend to be more responsible since they are willing take on additional responsibilities of a pet**– with pet ownership comes additional responsibilities. While not all tenants will pass this test, individuals that have already demonstrated their capacity to care for something other than themselves tend to be fairly responsible.
- **People who really want pets will have them anyway** – Various studies around the world have said that 11 to 20% of pet owners who live in rental properties have a pet without their landlord's permission.

Add a pet interview and agreement to your rental contract. Not all pets suit all homes. Do some research and screen potential renters to ensure that you find the right pet and family.

As with all generalities, there are certainly exceptions. Don't let horrible pet stories in just a few tenanted homes scare you to the point that you are missing out on reliable tenants. Give pets a chance!

Author: Tammy Ven Dange is the CEO of RSPCA ACT. More information about Pet Policies FAQs for Owners Corporations can be found at www.rspca-act.org.au.