



Pet Ownership Guide

Introduction

We recognise the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring and that many people wish to keep a pet.

Pets can offer companionship, comfort and improve people's health and wellbeing.

We generally do not have any objections to tenants keeping pets in their home as long as they do not cause a nuisance or damage the property.

This guide provides information about how to apply for a pet, responsible pet ownership and how we will tackle nuisance behaviour from a pet.

Our aim is to encourage responsible pet ownership and to ensure animal welfare is promoted.

Applying to keep a pet

We are happy to give permission for you to keep a pet in most cases. However, you will need to seek our permission beforehand.

You need to ask for permission to keep cats, dogs, caged animals such as hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, reptiles, insects, and birds, both those kept inside and outside the home, and for aquariums as well. You will also need to let us know if you need to keep an assistance dog such as a guidance or hearing dog and we will give you permission for this.

Depending on your property and the size and location of your garden, we may give permission for you to keep chickens.



If you'd like to keep a pet in your home, you will need to complete a pet request permission form. You can get a copy of this from our website, or from your housing office.

In this form you will need to provide details about the pet and agree:

- to be responsible for the pet
- to ensure it does not cause a nuisance to neighbours
- to ensure that any mess / fouling is cleared up immediately
- to look after the animal's welfare
- to ensure the pet doesn't cause damage to the property or garden

Once we have received your form we will aim to respond to your request within ten working day. To make a decision we will consider:

- whether you have any pets in your home already
- the size of your property and garden
- whether the garden needs fencing

We will write to you to let you know our decision. If there are no problems then we will give permission, but if we have declined, we will explain the reasons why.

Please note, you are responsible for your pets at all times.

Animals you will not be given permission to keep

We will give permission for you to keep a pet in most cases. However, certain types of pets are not permitted and these are:

- farm animals including sheep, goats, pigs, cattle and horses



- poisonous insects and venomous spiders, snakes and reptiles. These are listed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- dangerous dogs which are specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 – including pit bull terrier, dogo argentino, fila brasileiro and Japanese tosa

We will not give you permission if:

- you to have a dog or a cat and you live in a general needs flat which has a communal entrance
- you already have more than one pet
- there have been on-going or previous problems with pet ownership either with a previous landlord or with us

We may also refuse permission if we consider the pet to be unsuitable for the size and type of your property. We will determine suitability on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the welfare of the pet you are applying to keep.

Responsible pet ownership

Although pets can be loving companions, some animals can cause a nuisance to neighbours.

Dogs cannot be allowed to roam freely on communal areas; you must keep them on a lead when you take them for a walk in these areas. Dogs cannot be left barking in the house or garden all day causing a noise nuisance problem.

Before deciding to keep a pet you should answer the following questions:

- How committed are you to owning and caring for a pet? Does the pet fit your lifestyle and family circumstances?
- Is your accommodation suitable for this pet? Is there easy access to garden areas, do you live near a busy road, is your flat suitable for the type of pet you want to keep?
- How much is it going to cost? There are some items that it is possible to budget for, such as the initial cost of the pet and any equipment that you

need, and ongoing costs such as food and bedding. But what about unexpected costs such as vets' bills?

- Should you insure and / or microchip your pet? Both are advisable but both cost money
- What will happen to your pet if you are away from home or on holiday?
- Could your choice of pet cause a nuisance to your neighbours?

Most of us want to get on with our neighbours. Is it worth having a chat with them before you make the final decision?

Other issues to consider:

- Is there a local vet who can care for your animal?
- Are regular vaccinations required?
- If you are planning to keep a dog or cat you should make arrangements for it to be neutered. This is also encouraged by animal charities to reduce the number of unwanted pets

Small rodents such as hamsters can have 14 - 20 babies in a litter so you can have a population explosion on your hands if you don't keep males and females apart!

What your tenancy agreement says about pets

You must not:

- keep any animal which is unsuitable such as wild, dangerous or venomous creatures or livestock
- cause a nuisance by breeding animals or birds in your home
- allow any animal you keep at your home to cause a nuisance or danger to anyone in the neighbourhood
- allow your property to become hazardous to health
- allow animals to foul in communal areas, or on footpaths or play areas
- feed pigeons, squirrels and other vermin either at your home or in communal areas

- keep a dangerous dog at your home
- leave your dog on its own for long periods of time as this may cause it to become distressed and result in it barking and causing a nuisance to your neighbours

You must:

- keep pets and animals in appropriate enclosures, which are adequate for their needs and from which they cannot escape
- keep a dog on a lead in communal areas and on our land
- clean up after your dog by removing and disposing of faeces hygienically

If a pet causes damage to your home or nuisance or annoyance to anyone in your neighbourhood, we will take action against you and may ask you to rehome it from your home.

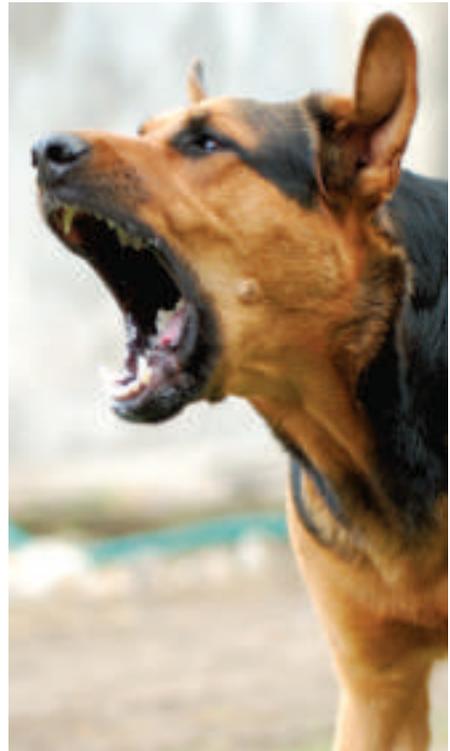
What is nuisance behaviour by a pet?

While most pets are well behaved, all owners have a responsibility to ensure their

pet does not cause a nuisance to others.

Often it is not the type of pet that will cause a nuisance to neighbours but the way its owner cares for it and controls it. Pets kept in unhygienic conditions can cause a smell nuisance to neighbours. Dogs left to bark for long periods may be a noise nuisance to people living nearby.

This is not an exhaustive list, but here are some examples of behaviour that we would treat as a nuisance:



- roaming and unattended animals
- pets fouling in communal areas or in owners' or neighbours gardens and this not being cleared up immediately
- excessive noise, such as a dog barking all the time
- unpleasant odours from pets
- aggressive animals posing a danger to residents and the public
- attracting other animals by leaving food outside the property and causing a nuisance to other residents

Remember you are responsible for your pet and their behaviour at all times. If your pet is causing a problem to a neighbour the most helpful thing you can do is to try and see things from their point of view. How would you feel if you lived next door to a dog which barks incessantly, or your children come in from playing in the communal area with dog excrement on their shoes?

If a neighbour approaches you with a problem then try to sort it out amicably.

What to do if you are having problems with your neighbour's pets



If you feel you can, then approach the owner and see if you can sort out the matter informally.

Here are some tips:

- **Take early action – don't wait until the situation is unbearable and your patience has been exhausted before approaching the owner**
- **Try not to jump to conclusions – listen to the other person's response and don't make unfounded allegations**
- **Try to remain calm – do not shout or make abusive remarks and do not retaliate**
- **If you feel at risk or threatened then walk away**

If you are not confident about approaching the owner then speak to your housing office.

What we will do about nuisance pets

Anyone can make a complaint about pet nuisance. We will refer the complaint to the relevant housing officer to deal with. Reports of pets behaving in a way which may cause harm and injury will always be treated seriously.

We will investigate all reports and take action where necessary to prevent nuisance or anti-social behaviour caused by pets.

The housing officer will work with tenants and residents to investigate and resolve reported incidents. To resolve the complaint they may work with

agencies such as the RSPCA, environmental health, the dog warden, or the police.

Where there is serious recurring or persistent problems that remain unresolved we may withdraw permission for the pet to be kept and will insist that the animal is rehoused.

What to do if you suspect an animal is being neglected

If you suspect that a neighbour is guilty of cruelty or neglect towards an animal then you should report this to the RSPCA. You should telephone the 24 hour National Cruelty and Advice Line on 0300 1234 999. The RSPCA will ask you a series of questions and they promise to keep your details confidential.



Useful contacts

RSPCA

The RSPCA is a charity which investigates complaints of cruelty and neglect. It runs animal hospitals and clinics for low income households and centres which house dogs looking for new homes. It also provides general animal care and welfare advice and campaigns on animal welfare issues. The charity may provide financial assistance with neutering animals.

For more information contact:

RSPCA
(Bristol & District Branch)
48 Albert Road, St Philips,
Bristol BS2 0XA

Telephone: **0117 9714 197**
Email: **info@rspca-bristol.org.uk**

National contact details

Advice Line: **0300 1234 555**

24 hour National Cruelty and
Advice Line: **0300 1234 999**

Website: **www.rspca.org.uk**

Dogs Trust

The Dogs Trust is a dog welfare charity providing advice on all aspects of dog ownership. It runs 15 centres across the UK for dogs looking for new homes. It campaigns on animal welfare issues, and runs education programmes. It subsidises neutering and provides free micro-chipping in certain areas.

For more information contact:

Dogs Trust
Head Office, 17 Wakley Street,
London EC1V 7RQ

Phone: **020 7837 0006**
Website: **www.dogstrust.org.uk**

CATS PROTECTION

Cats Protection is a charity which provides advice on cat care, runs a rescue service and a service to find new homes for cats. It may provide financial assistance with neutering cats.

The organisation has a number of branches across England and Wales.

For more information contact:

Cats Protection

National Cat Centre,
Chelwood Gate, Haywards Heath
Sussex RH17 7TT

Phone: **08702 099 099**

Website: **www.cats.org.uk**

PDSA

The PDSA is a charity which runs animal clinics to provide veterinary care for sick animals owned by low income households.

PDSA

Head Office, Whitechapel Way
Priorslee, Telford,
Shropshire TF2 9PQ

Phone: **0800 731 2502**

Website: **www.pdsa.org.uk**

PDSA PetAid Hospital

556 Bath Road, Brislington,
Bristol BS4 3JZ

Phone: **0117 977 5911**

Website: **www.pdsa.org.uk**

Blue Cross

The Blue Cross provides subsidised neutering services for people in receipt of certain state benefits.

More information can be obtained from:

Blue Cross

Shilton Road, Burford,
Oxfordshire OX18 4PF

Tel: **01993 822651**

Email: **info@bluecross.org.uk**

Website: **www.bluecross.org.uk**

Veterinary surgeon information

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

The RCVS holds a list of registered veterinary surgeons. This can be found on their website.

More information can be obtained from:

Royal College of

Veterinary Surgeons

Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, LONDON SW1P 2AF

Phone: **020 7222 2001**

Website: **www.rcvs.org.uk**

Any UK vet

A website which provides details of all veterinary practices in the UK.

www.any-uk-vet.co.uk





 0300 123 2222



Merlin Housing Society

Building 1, Riverside Court
Bowling Hill, Chipping Sodbury
Bristol, BS37 6JX

www.merlinhs.co.uk