

For more detailed information and sample dog and cat resumes, check out the web site <http://www.rentwithpets.org> or contact the Dane County Humane Society at (608) 838-0413, ext. 113.

In addition to presenting a pet resume, offer to sign a pet addendum to your rental agreement that makes you responsible for possible damage to property or injury to others.

### **Be a good pet owner**

- If you have a dog, make sure to clean up its waste.
- Consider crate-training if you feel your dog may be destructive while you are not at home.
- Make sure your cat has access to a scratching post and that one or more litterboxes are readily available.
- If your cat is scratching something it shouldn't be, try putting aluminum foil or double-stick tape in that area to deter the behavior.

### **Can landlords charge pet owners higher security deposits?**

In the Cities of Madison and Fitchburg, a security deposit cannot be more than one month's rent—ever (MGO 32.07(2)(b); FO 28.04(2)(a)).

The State of Wisconsin imposes no limits on security deposit amounts. Ask your City Clerk if your area has regulations in addition to the state code. Unless locally specified, landlords may charge pet owners more.

### **Can landlords charge pet owners more for rent?**

Yes. In areas where landlords may not ask for a larger security deposit, they may charge a monthly pet fee of whatever amount they choose. It is always worth trying to negotiate if you feel the extra amount is unreasonable. However, you should plan some extra time for this, and **get everything in writing**. See the section on convincing landlords to

rent to you and your pet for specific things you can mention to negotiate with your landlord.

### **Can landlords automatically withhold money from pet owners' security deposits?**

No, landlords may only charge for actual damages. If your pet did damage the apartment, the landlord may charge you for the repairs. If you are paying additional rent for your pet and being charged from your security deposit, make sure you're not being double-charged. Ask to see receipts for charges a landlord claims. If you feel you are being charged unfairly, contact the Tenant Resource Center for more information.

### **Where can I get more information?**

- The Humane Society of the United States has a web site, <http://www.rentwithpets.org>, which has sample pet resumes and detailed information on how to find housing that accepts pets.
- The Dane County Humane Society, at <http://www.giveshelter.org> or (608) 838-0413, has a list of landlords who rent to pet owners.
- Cats International provides information on feline problems and can be reached at <http://www.catsinternational.org> or (262) 375-8852.

11/05

The **Tenant Resource Center** is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to promoting positive relations between rental housing consumers and providers throughout Wisconsin. By providing information and referrals, education about rental rights and responsibilities, and access to conflict resolution, we empower the community to obtain and maintain quality affordable housing.

## **Pets**



### **Tenant Resource Center**

1202 Williamson St., Suite A  
Madison, WI 53703

9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday

**Rental Rights** (608) 257-0006

**Toll-free outside Dane County**

(877) 238-RENT (7368)

**Office/TTY** (608) 257-0143

**Mediation** (608) 257-2799

[asktrc@tenantresourcecenter.org](mailto:asktrc@tenantresourcecenter.org)

[www.tenantresourcecenter.org](http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org)

### **Housing Help Desk**

1819 Aberg Ave. Room 2

(Dane County Job Center)

(608) 242-7406, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

If you need an interpreter, materials in alternate formats, or other accommodations to access our services, call our office at (608) 257-0143.

**Si Ud. necesita servicios en español, llame al (608) 257-0143.**

No part of this brochure should be regarded as legal advice or considered a replacement of a landlord's or tenant's responsibility to be familiar with the law. If you need legal assistance, seek the services of a Wisconsin housing attorney.

## Do I need permission to get a pet?

Probably! If you are currently in a lease, **check your lease** before you get a pet. If your lease requires permission to have a pet or to add a pet, make sure you get permission from your landlord **in writing** and keep a copy for your records. A landlord may just add something to your lease. Make sure both you and the landlord initial and date the change. If your landlord refuses to allow you to have a pet, wait until you move to a pet-friendly apartment.

If you're looking for a new apartment, make sure that you have permission **in writing** to have a pet.

## What can happen if I get a pet without permission?

You could be evicted if it is prohibited in your lease. Your landlord must first give you a written notice stating that you have five days to get rid of your pet. If you don't comply, the landlord can start the eviction process in small claims court at the end of the five days. Being evicted makes it hard to find housing, can affect your credit, and does not relieve you from paying rent unless the landlord finds someone new to move in or your lease ends.

## If one tenant has a pet, does the landlord have to allow everyone to have pets?

No. The landlord may give pet permission to some tenants and not others as long as s/he does not discriminate against certain tenants because of membership in a protected class, such as race, religion, sex, etc.

## What if I have a disability and depend on a service animal?

**This is a special situation.** Because of federal fair housing laws that require landlords to allow reasonable accommodations for tenants with disabilities, the landlord may not prohibit a service animal from living in the unit or charge the tenant extra rent or deposit. A service animal should not be considered a pet.

The tenant may be required to provide a note from a physician that verifies the service animal is needed as an accommodation to the person with the disability, but the animal need **not** be a certified service animal.

If the landlord refuses to allow the service animal, you may call the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) at (800) 669-9777 or (800) 927-9275 TTY. HUD has publications available about fair housing and can direct you to your local fair housing office. You can also locate your local fair housing council at (877) 647-3247 and [www.fairhousingwisconsin.com](http://www.fairhousingwisconsin.com).

For more information about service animals, call Access to Independence at (608) 242-8484 voice or (608) 242-8485 TTY.

Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy is a statewide organization that provides information about the legal rights of persons with disabilities. Contact the Madison office at (608) 267-0214 voice/TTY and (800) 928-8778, or the Milwaukee office at (414) 342-8700 voice/TTY and (800) 708-3034.

## How do I find landlords that rent to pet owners?

Check the regular rental listings—many landlords advertise that they allow pets. Some humane societies also keep lists of landlords who rent to people with pets. If you are looking for an apartment in Dane County, contact the Dane County Humane Society at 838-0413, ext. 113 or check their online listings at <http://www.giveshelter.org>. You can also search rental websites for units that allow pets.

## How can I convince a landlord to rent to me and my pet?

Contact the person who has the authority to grant you permission. This may be the resident manager, property manager, or owner of the building.

Ask why the landlord has a no-pets policy. By addressing up front your landlord's concerns, you can gain insight into how to best present your own request. Consideration of your landlord's position will encourage him or her to be more open to yours.

When negotiating with the landlord, be careful about waiving a lot of rights in order to get permission for a pet. If the landlord seems unreasonable, you may want to keep looking for another apartment.

## Market yourself as a good pet owner

Prepare a "pet resume" and include proof of your claims. Include the following in the resume:

- **Good rental history.** Write about your pet's great rental history. Since some landlords now require pet references, include letters of reference from current or previous landlords who can verify that your pet did not damage the apartments and letters from neighbors who can attest to your pet's good behavior and your own sense of responsibility.
- **Training.** Mention that your pet is well behaved. If your cat is litter box trained or uses a scratching post, be sure to say so. If your dog does not bark when left alone or has attended obedience classes, mention this and include receipts or a graduation certificate.
- **Veterinary records.** State in the resume that your pets are well cared for and include copies of health certificates showing that your pets are spayed or neutered, free of fleas and ticks, and up-to-date on their vaccinations.
- **Renters insurance.** Depending on what kind of pet you have, you may be able to purchase liability insurance for any damage your pet may do. If you have this insurance, mention it in your resume and include a copy of your policy.
- **Interview.** Invite the landlord to "interview" your freshly groomed, well-behaved pet at your current home to show that your pet has not caused any damage.