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How to find and keep a landlord who will tolerate Fido and Whiskers



Gazette files Left, Zoe, a 4-month-old Yorkie at the time, and Lucy.

SAVVY CITIZENS

Apartments.com reports that landlords have loosened their pet policies over the past 18 months. The online apartment-listing firm says landlords are responding to a spike in demand from renters searching for pet-friendly digs.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some renters are homeowners displaced by foreclosures who have taken their pets with them, while others are longtime renters with pets looking to upgrade during a soft market.

Here are some tips to keep your landlord happy with your pet:

READ THE FINE PRINT -- Make sure to read your lease, understand the pet policies and be ready to pony up more money for your pet. Some pet deposits will cover damages, and others won't. Also, some leases will list your pet as a tenant on the lease and include a clause prohibiting you from getting another pet. Include pre-existing damage to your apartment in your lease, so you and your pet aren't blamed for it when you vacate, suggests Peggy Abkemeier, general manager of Rent.com.

GET PERMISSION -- If you already have a lease in place but want to add a furry companion, pass it by your landlord first. Some properties have strict no-pets-allowed policies. If you sneak one in, you run the risk of the landlord finding out, forcing you to choose between getting rid of your pet or breaking your lease, which could be costly.

DO A TARGETED SEARCH -- If you're looking for a new place with your pet, narrow your search using online apartment-search sites. Typically, you can check off which kind of place you're looking for on the search form: cat-friendly only, cats and small dogs only or all pets. Read descriptions carefully for any caveats.

OPEN YOUR WALLET -- Apartments.com estimates that more than half of renters pay more than \$500 for a pet deposit. But that widely varies by area, apartment and type of pet.

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR -- "Dogs can talk to each other through the walls. It's good, and it's bad," says Huffman. So if you can't muzzle your dog while you're at work, try obedience school to tame its barking, Abkemeier recommends. But remember that pet-friendly apartments are typically louder anyway.

DON'T LET THEM WANDER -- Don't let your cats or dogs wander public areas or hallways unleashed. Most apartments have rules against that. Regardless, it's disrespectful to your neighbors and could be dangerous to your pet. And last, pick up after your dog.

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