



Calgary
Humane
Society

Calgary Humane Society Landlord & Tenant Toolkit

A practical guide to pet-inclusive housing, built to reduce pet surrender, strengthen tenancies, and help landlords manage risk with confidence.



Make your rental pet-friendly without adding unnecessary risk.

This toolkit gives landlords and property managers step-by-step guidance, ready-to-use templates, and proven practices to implement pet-inclusive policies that work for people, pets, and properties.

What this toolkit is for

- **Landlords (single units to portfolios):** Set clear pet expectations, screen confidently, and reduce turnover.
- **Property managers & housing providers:** Standardize pet policies across buildings and support staff with consistent tools.
- **Tenants, advocates, and partner organizations:** Understand what responsible pet-inclusive housing looks like and how to work with landlords.

Why pet-inclusive housing matters

- Helps prevent avoidable pet surrender driven by housing barriers.
- Expands your applicant pool in a low-vacancy market.
- Supports longer tenancies and reduced turnover for pet-owning renters.
- Reduces issues through clear expectations, documentation, and proactive communication.

What you'll get

1. **Getting started:** steps to become a pet-friendly landlord.
2. **Policies & risk tools:** pet agreements, lease addendums, deposits/fee guidance, vet/vaccination expectations, and damage prevention strategies.
3. **Screening & support:** pet resumes, reference checklists, and consistent screening questions.
4. **Property-type guidance:** low-, medium-, and high-density implementation strategies (including condo/by-law navigation).
5. **Communication templates:** language for approvals, expectations, concerns, and resolutions.
6. **Evidence & success stories:** landlord insights and myth-busting resources.
7. **Advocacy:** tools to support broader adoption of pet-inclusive housing.
8. **Calgary Humane Society resources:** programs and supports to help landlords and tenants succeed.

Built from Local Insights

In 2025, Calgary Humane Society (CHS), in partnership with the Haskayne School of Business, engaged landlords, tenants, and housing stakeholders to understand rising pet surrenders. A key finding: many landlords are open to pets when the right tools and supports are in place.



Contact Information

Calgary Humane Society:

403-205-4455 or hello@calgaryhumane.ca

Calgary Humane Society can support landlords and tenants with behaviour resources, consultations, and practical guidance to prevent issues before they become tenancy risks.

Calgary Humane Society Behaviour Helpline:

403-723-6019 or behaviour.help@calgaryhumane.ca

Calgary Humane Society (CHS) provides a wide range of community-based services designed to support both people and pets, with a shared goal of keeping families together and reducing preventable pet surrender. These supports are available to pet owners and, in many cases, can also assist landlords and housing providers in managing pet-related challenges in rental environments.

Calgary Humane Society Community Services:

403-205-4455 Ext. 6027 or community.services@calgaryhumane.ca





Introduction

Access to pet-friendly housing is one of the most significant and preventable drivers of pet surrender in our community. At Calgary Humane Society, we believe pets are family, and housing systems should reflect that reality. Every day, we witness deeply emotional and avoidable separations, well-loved, well-cared-for animals being surrendered while their owners are in tears, not because of a lack of commitment or care, but because housing options do not exist that allow them to stay together. These moments are not isolated; they reflect a broader systemic issue where families are forced to choose between stable housing and the pets they consider part of their household.

In 2025, Calgary Humane Society (CHS), in partnership with the Haskayne School of Business, conducted research to better understand the sharp increase in pet surrenders across Calgary. Intake data revealed a clear and concerning trend: the lack of affordable, pet-friendly housing is one of the leading causes of family separation. To better understand this issue, CHS engaged landlords, tenants, social service providers, and affordable housing organizations. What emerged was not a lack of willingness to support pet-inclusive housing, but rather a lack of tools, confidence, and consistent information to do so effectively.

CHS developed this toolkit to bridge that gap.

Our goal is to:

- Increase awareness of the impact of housing barriers on pets and families
- Equip landlords with practical, data-driven tools
- Support informed, confident decision-making around pet-inclusive housing
- Reduce surrender pressures on the shelter system through prevention

We believe that housing which welcomes pets as part of the family unit creates stronger, more stable communities benefiting landlords, tenants, and animals alike.

This toolkit is designed to help Calgary landlords move from reactive pet restrictions to proactive, informed, and confident pet-inclusive management.

What This Toolkit Includes

1. Getting Started: Becoming a Pet-Friendly Landlord

Practical, step-by-step guidance to help you confidently introduce pet-inclusive policies.

- Quick-start implementation guide
- First-time pet-friendly landlord guide
- Step-by-step onboarding process for pet-friendly units

2. Policies, Agreements & Risk Management Tools

Clear, structured tools to help manage pets responsibly and reduce risk.

- Pet agreements and lease addendums Templates for vaccination and veterinary requirements
- Guidance on deposits, fees, and pet insurance Clear expectations for tenant responsibilities
- Templates for vaccination and veterinary requirements
- Behaviour and training expectations
- Clear expectations for tenant responsibilities

3. Tenant Screening & Support Tool

Resources to help you confidently assess and select pet-owning tenants. Pet agreements and lease addendums

- Pet resume templates
- Tenant reference checklists (including pet-specific references)
- Screening questions for pet-owning applicants

4. Property-Type Guidance & Implementation Strategies

Tailored approaches based on the type of housing you manage.

- Tools for low-density housing providers (homes, suites, duplexes)
- Guidance for navigating condo bylaws and boards
- Resources for working with property management companies
- Best practices for shared or vulnerable housing environments

5. Communication & Relationship Building

Tools to support clear, proactive communication with tenants.

- Communication templates for landlord-tenant discussions
- Educational resources on responsible pet ownership

6. Evidence, Insights & Real-Word Success

Data and stories that build confidence in pet-inclusive housing. Communication templates for landlord-tenant discussions

- Case studies from Calgary landlords
- Testimonials from property owners
- Data highlighting positive rental experiences
- Myth-busting resources to address common concerns

7. Advocacy & Systems Change Tools

Resources to support broader adoption of pet-friendly housing.

- Advocacy tools for influencing building-level or corporate policies

8. Resources & Support from Calgary Humane Society

Section 1: Becoming a Pet-Friendly Landlord

Transitioning to pet-inclusive housing does not need to be complex or risky. With the right approach, landlords can confidently welcome pets while maintaining strong property standards, positive tenant relationships, and operational consistency. This section provides a clear starting point, helping you move from consideration to implementation with practical, manageable steps.

Many landlords already recognize that the lack of pet-friendly housing is a growing issue but are unsure how to take the first step. At the same time, there is a common perception that allowing pets increases operational risks such as property damage, noise, and additional maintenance. However, local research shows that these concerns are often overstated. In fact, landlords who prohibit pets report higher rates of property damage and cleaning or turnover challenges than those who allow pets. Landlords with experience renting to pet owners also report overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward their tenants, suggesting that resistance to pet-friendly policies is often driven by lack of exposure or outdated assumptions rather than actual risk.

At the same time, the opportunity is significant. Over 61% of Canadian households own a pet, yet only a small percentage of rental properties in Calgary allow them. With vacancy rates remaining extremely low, pet-friendly units offer a clear competitive advantage by attracting a larger pool of applicants, reducing vacancy periods, and encouraging longer-term tenancies. Renters with pets are more likely to stay in place due to limited housing options, which can lead to increased stability and reduced turnover. Many landlords also report that pet-owning tenants demonstrate strong responsibility, as they are caring not only for themselves but for an animal as well.

Local research reinforces that:

- Most landlords are open to pets when the right supports are in place
- Landlords who allow pets often report equal or fewer challenges than those who do not
- Pet-friendly units are in high demand and can provide a meaningful competitive edge

Step 1: Define Your Pet Policy

Start by determining what works best for your property, including the number of pets permitted and the types of pets allowed (such as cats, dogs, or small animals). Rather than relying on size, weight, or breed restrictions, it is recommended to focus on clear behaviour-based expectations that apply to all pets equally. This approach supports fair, consistent decision-making while better addressing the factors that actually impact tenancies. The goal is to create clear, reasonable guidelines that can be consistently applied and easily understood by both landlords and tenants.

Step 2: Put the Right Tools in Place

Strong pet policies are supported by clear documentation and well-defined expectations. At a minimum, landlords should use a pet agreement or lease addendum, set clear tenant responsibilities, and establish a straightforward process for addressing concerns or property damage if they arise. This toolkit provides practical templates and examples to help implement these tools quickly, consistently, and effectively.

Step 3: Start Small and Build Confidence

You do not need to change everything at once. Many landlords choose to introduce pets in a single unit or property first, allow pets with specific conditions, and then evaluate and adjust their approach based on real experience over time. Positive experiences with pet-owning tenants are often the strongest driver of long-term confidence and willingness to expand pet-friendly policies.

What Success Looks Like

Pet-inclusive housing is most successful when expectations are:

- Clear – Both landlord and tenant understand their responsibilities
- Consistent – Policies are applied fairly across tenants
- Proactive – Issues are prevented through communication and structure
- Supported – Landlords have access to tools and resources when needed

It is normal for landlords to have concerns about introducing pets into a rental property. Common concerns often include property damage, noise or disturbances, and increased maintenance requirements. However, local research shows that these risks are frequently overestimated, and that well-managed pet-friendly units experience comparable or even fewer issues overall. The key insight is that challenges are not caused by pets themselves, but rather by unclear expectations and a lack of structured policies, both of which can be effectively addressed through the tools provided in this toolkit.

Calgary Humane Society is here to support landlords in implementing pet-inclusive housing.

Through this toolkit and ongoing support, Calgary Humane Society can help you:

- Navigate common challenges
- Access practical tools and templates
- Build confidence in pet-friendly policies



Section 2: Policies, Agreements & Risk Management Tools

Creating a pet-friendly rental environment does not mean accepting unnecessary risk. In fact, the opposite is true.

Clear policies, structured agreements, and proactive expectations allow landlords to reduce uncertainty, prevent issues, and create positive, long-term tenancies.

This section provides practical tools to help you move from blanket pet restrictions to confident, well-managed pet-inclusive housing.

2.1 Pet Agreements & Lease Addendums

A pet agreement (or lease addendum) is the foundation of successful pet-inclusive housing.

It ensures that both landlord and tenant have clear, shared expectations around pet ownership within the rental property.

A strong pet agreement should include:

- **Pet details**
 - » Type, breed, size, age, and number of pets permitted
- **Behaviour expectations**
 - » Pets must not exhibit aggressive or disruptive behaviour
- **Supervision requirements**
 - » Pets should not be left unattended for extended periods
- **Noise control**
 - » Expectations around barking, whining, or disturbances
- **Cleanliness and waste management**
 - » Immediate cleanup of waste and maintenance of hygienic conditions
- **Property care**
 - » Prevention of damage to floors, doors, landscaping, and fixtures
- **Compliance requirements**
 - » Adherence to municipal bylaws (licensing, leash laws, etc.)
- **Consequences of non-compliance**
 - » Clear, enforceable steps if expectations are not met

Clear agreements prevent misunderstandings and provide a fair, enforceable framework for addressing issues if they arise.

2.2 Deposits, Fees & Pet Insurance

Financial tools can provide reassurance for landlords while supporting responsible pet ownership. However, these approaches should be structured in a way that does not create unnecessary barriers for tenants or limit access to housing.

Considerations for landlords:

Rather than relying on ongoing or non-refundable pet fees, consider alternative approaches that focus on accountability rather than upfront cost barriers.

Damage Agreements:

- Establish a clear, written agreement outlining tenant responsibility for pet-related damage
- Define what constitutes damage and how it will be assessed
- Agree in advance on how costs will be addressed if damage occurs

This approach reduces upfront financial burden on tenants, encourages transparency and shared understanding while focusing on actual outcomes rather than assumed risk.

2.3 Veterinary Care & Vaccination Requirements

Requiring proof of basic veterinary care helps ensure the health and safety of all tenants, pets and the property.

Recommended requirements:

- Up to date vaccinations
- Spay/neuter status (where species appropriate)
- Proof of licensing (as required by local bylaws)
- Regular veterinary care

Healthy, well-cared for pets are significantly less likely to cause issues related to behaviour, hygiene, or safety.

Responsible Pet Ownership & Regular Veterinary Care

Responsible pet ownership goes beyond daily feeding and exercise; it includes proactive, ongoing veterinary care that supports both animal welfare and successful tenancy outcomes. Regular veterinary visits are one of the most effective ways to prevent behavioural, medical, and environmental issues that can otherwise lead to housing concerns.

Why veterinary care matters

Routine veterinary care helps ensure pets are:

- Healthy and free from untreated medical conditions
- Up to date on vaccinations and preventative care
- Properly supported through life-stage or health status changes (ageing, stress, medical recovery)
- Less likely to develop pain-related or stress-related behaviours

Link to tenancy stability

Many common pet-related housing concerns can be traced back to unmanaged health or stress issues, including:

- Increased vocalization or behavioural changes
- Inappropriate elimination or hygiene issues
- Restlessness or anxiety-related behaviours
- Sudden changes in temperament or activity

Regular veterinary care helps identify and address these issues early, often preventing escalation into tenancy concerns.

Benefits for landlords and tenants

When pets receive consistent veterinary care:

- Behaviour is more predictable and manageable
- Risk of property-related issues is reduced
- Tenants are better supported in maintaining stable routines
- Overall tenancy stability improves

Supporting responsible care

Landlords can encourage responsible pet ownership by:

- Including basic care expectations in pet agreements
- Encouraging proof of veterinary care where appropriate
- Sharing access to affordable care options and community resources
- Referring tenants to Calgary Humane Society's wellness and support programs when needed

Regular veterinary care is a cornerstone of responsible pet ownership. By supporting preventative health and early intervention, landlords and tenants can work together to reduce preventable issues, improve animal welfare, and strengthen long-term housing stability.

2.4 Behaviour & Training Expectations

Setting clear behavioural expectations is one of the most effective ways to prevent challenges.

Expectations may include:

- Pets must be non-aggressive and safe around people and other animals
- Pets should be house-trained or litter-trained
- Tenants are responsible for addressing:
 - » Excessive noise
 - » Destructive behaviour
 - » Signs of stress or neglect
- Encouragement of:
 - » Basic obedience training
 - » Routine exercise and enrichment

Focus on behaviour, not breed. Behaviour-based policies are more effective, equitable, and enforceable than breed restrictions.



Positive Reinforcement-Based Training

Positive reinforcement-based training is a humane, evidence-based approach that focuses on rewarding desired behaviours rather than punishing unwanted ones. It is widely recognized by animal behaviour professionals as the most effective and ethical method of training companion animals, and it plays an important role in supporting successful pet-inclusive housing.

Positive reinforcement training teaches pets what *to do* by rewarding behaviours that are desirable. Rewards may include:

- Treats or food rewards
- Praise and attention
- Play or access to preferred activities
- Environmental rewards (e.g., going outside, social interaction)
-

Over time, pets learn to repeat behaviours that result in positive outcomes.

Why it matters in rental housing

In a tenancy context, training is directly linked to reducing common concerns such as:

- Excessive barking or vocalization
- Chewing, scratching, or destructive behaviour
- Reactivity toward visitors or neighbours
- Stress-related behaviours in new environments

Positive reinforcement helps pets adjust more successfully to rental living by building confidence, reducing anxiety, and encouraging predictable behaviour.

Benefits for landlords and tenants

When positive reinforcement training is used consistently:

- Behaviour concerns are reduced before they escalate
- Pets adapt more easily to new environments
- Tenants are more equipped to manage challenges early
- Overall tenancy stability improves

This approach supports a proactive rather than reactive model of pet management.

Positive reinforcement does **not** rely on punishment, intimidation, or aversive methods. These approaches can increase fear, stress, and behavioural issues, often making concerns worse over time.

Landlords can encourage positive reinforcement by:

- Referring tenants to trusted training resources
- Encouraging early intervention when behaviours first appear
- Sharing Calgary Humane Society behaviour support options
- Supporting routine-based and enrichment-focused solutions

Calgary Humane Society also offers free behaviour resources and consultations to help tenants apply positive reinforcement strategies effectively in real-world situations.

Positive reinforcement training is one of the most effective tools for preventing and resolving common pet-related concerns in rental housing. By focusing on rewarding good behaviour rather than punishing unwanted behaviour, it supports calmer pets, more confident owners, and more stable tenancies.

2.5 Clear Tenant Responsibilities

Clarity is key to preventing conflict and ensuring accountability.

Tenants should be responsible for:

- Maintaining cleanliness inside and outside the unit
- Preventing and addressing damage caused by their pet
- Ensuring pets do not disturb neighbours
- Complying with all building rules and municipal bylaws
- Supervising pets at all times

When expectations are clearly defined upfront, tenants are more likely to meet them and landlords are better equipped to address concerns if they arise.

2.6 Preventing Damage & Reducing Risk

Most pet-related concerns can be prevented with simple, proactive measures.

Practical Strategies:

- Encourage use of:
 - » Scratch posts (for cats)
 - » Appropriate chew toys (for dogs)
- Recommend:
 - » Regular grooming to reduce shedding and odors
 - » Nail trimming to prevent floor damage
- Consider:
 - » Pet-friendly flooring in high-turnover units
 - » Protective coverings in vulnerable areas
- Conduct:
 - » Regular inspections as permitted by tenancy laws

Local research shows that landlords who allow pets often report fewer overall issues than those who prohibit them, demonstrating that proactive management is more effective than restriction.



Why Animal Enrichment Matters

A well-adjusted pet is one of the strongest predictors of a successful tenancy. Many common pet-related concerns in rental housing such as noise, minor damage, or restlessness, are not caused by “bad behaviour,” but by unmet needs for physical, mental, and environmental stimulation. Animal enrichment simply means providing pets with appropriate outlets for their natural behaviours, energy, and curiosity in a safe and structured way.

What is enrichment?

Enrichment includes any activity or environment that supports a pet’s wellbeing and helps prevent boredom or stress, such as:

- Regular exercise and outdoor time
- Interactive toys and puzzle feeders
- Scratching posts, chew toys, or climbing structures
- Training and learning activities
- Predictable daily routines

Why it matters in rental housing

When pets are under-stimulated, they are more likely to develop behaviours that can impact a tenancy, including:

- Barking or vocalization due to boredom or anxiety
- Scratching, chewing, or destructive behaviours
- Restlessness when left alone

Providing appropriate enrichment helps reduce these behaviours and supports a calmer, more settled household.

How landlords benefit

Encouraging enrichment is not about placing responsibility on landlords, but about supporting successful tenancies. When pets are well cared for:

- Behaviour issues are less likely to occur
- Tenant complaints are reduced
- Property wear is minimized
- Tenancy stability improves

Supporting tenants

Simple encouragement can make a significant difference. Landlords may wish to:

- Share basic enrichment expectations in pet agreements
- Encourage routine and preventative care
- Direct tenants to free resources from Calgary Humane Society

Enrichment is one of the most effective and preventative tools in pet-inclusive housing. When pets’ physical and mental needs are met, they are more likely to thrive in rental environments, supporting better outcomes for tenants, landlords, and animals alike.

For free behaviour resources including enrichment strategies, contact Calgary Humane Society’s Behaviour Helpline at 403-723-6019.

Section 3: Tenant Screening & Support Tools

Selecting the right tenant-pet combination is one of the most effective ways to ensure successful, long-term tenancies in pet-inclusive housing. This section provides practical tools to help landlords confidently assess applications, set clear expectations, and support responsible pet ownership from the outset.

Rather than excluding pet owners, these tools are designed to better understand each tenant's preparedness, responsibility, and suitability, helping reduce risk while maintaining fair access to housing.

3.1 Pet Resume Template

A pet resume provides landlords with a clear snapshot of the animal and the owner's level of responsibility. It helps shift decision-making from assumption to evidence-based assessment.

A strong pet resume may include:

- Pet name, age, species, breed, and size
- Veterinary clinic and care history
- Vaccination and spay/neuter status
- Training history (obedience, house training, etc.)
- Behaviour traits (e.g., social, calm, active, shy)
- Exercise and enrichment routine
- Photos of the pet in home environments
- References from previous landlords, trainers, or veterinarians

Pet resumes help landlords understand the animal beyond assumptions and provide reassurance about care, behaviour, and responsibility.

3.2 Tenant Reference Checklist (Pet-Focused)

In addition to standard tenant references, pet-specific references can provide valuable insight into how the tenant manages pet ownership in a rental setting.

Recommended reference questions:

- Did the tenant's pet cause any property issues?
- Was the tenant responsive to any concerns that arose?
- Did the tenant comply with pet-related lease requirements?
- Was the pet generally well-behaved and appropriately managed?
- Would you rent to this tenant with a pet again? Why or why not?

Where possible, prioritize references from previous landlords or property managers who have direct experience with the tenant's pet.

3.3 Screening Questions for Pet-Owning Applicants

Consistent screening questions help ensure fairness and clarity across all applicants.

Suggested questions include:

- What type of pet do you have, and how long have you had them?
- How would you describe your pet's behaviour in a home environment?

- How do you manage your pet when you are not at home?
- What training or routines does your pet follow?
- Have you rented with your pet before? If so, were there any concerns raised?
- How do you address barking, scratching, or other behavioural issues?

These questions focus on responsibility and management, not breed or assumptions.



3.4 Supporting Responsible Tenancies

Successful pet-inclusive housing is built on partnership between landlords and tenants. Screening is only one part of a broader support system.

Landlords are encouraged to:

- Set clear expectations early (using the Pet Agreement in Appendix A)
- Encourage transparency from tenants about their pet's needs and behaviour
- Identify potential challenges early and address them collaboratively
- Recognize that most issues can be prevented through communication and structure

3.5 First-Time Pet-Friendly Tenants

Many tenants with pets are highly motivated to maintain stable housing due to limited availability of pet-friendly rentals.

For first-time pet-friendly tenants, consider:

- Reviewing expectations in detail before move-in
- Providing clear written guidelines for pet behaviour and care
- Encouraging open communication if issues arise

Tenants with pets are often highly invested in maintaining a positive rental relationship due to the difficulty of securing pet-friendly housing elsewhere.

Effective screening is not about exclusion, but about reducing risk through clear information and shared understanding. When used alongside strong agreements and well-defined expectations, these tools enable landlords to make informed and fair decisions, reduce uncertainty around pet ownership, build confidence in allowing pets within their properties, and ultimately support greater long-term tenancy stability.

Pets in Rental Housing

Despite common concerns, much of what is assumed about renting to pet owners is not supported by evidence. Local research and landlord experience show that many of these beliefs are outdated or inaccurate, and that pet-inclusive housing can be successfully managed with the right structure and supports.

Myth: Pets cause more property damage

Reality: Landlords who prohibit pets often report higher rates of property damage and turnover challenges than those who allow pets. Damage is not caused by pets themselves, but by lack of structure, unclear expectations, or limited tenant support.

Myth: Pets increase noise and neighbour complaints

Reality: Noise issues are typically linked to boredom, anxiety, or lack of routine, not simply the presence of a pet. With appropriate enrichment, supervision, and early communication, noise concerns are manageable and often preventable.

Myth: Pet owners are higher-risk tenants

Reality: Evidence shows that pet owners are often highly responsible tenants, as they are caring not only for themselves but for an animal as well. Many landlords report strong tenancy relationships and good property care from pet-owning tenants.

Myth: Pet-friendly housing reduces profitability

Reality: Pet-friendly units often experience higher demand, reduced vacancy periods, and longer tenancy durations. In a tight rental market, allowing pets can provide a significant competitive advantage and may even increase overall rental stability.

Myth: Restricting pets is the safest way to avoid issues

Reality: Blanket restrictions do not eliminate risk, they often shift it elsewhere, including higher vacancy rates and reduced tenant pools. Structured pet policies, clear expectations, and proactive communication are more effective risk management tools.



Section 4: Property-Type Guidance & Implementation Strategies

Pet-inclusive housing is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different housing types come with different operational realities, tenant demographics, and governance structures. This section provides tailored guidance to help landlords and property managers implement pet-friendly policies in a way that is practical, scalable, and appropriate for their property type.

4.1 Low-Density Housing (Single-Family Homes, Duplexes, Basement Suites)

Low-density housing typically offers the greatest flexibility for pet inclusion and represents a significant opportunity to expand pet-friendly rental options in Calgary.

Key Considerations

- Greater physical space for pets and outdoor access
- Typically fewer shared walls or neighbour impact concerns
- Often individually managed (less administrative complexity)

Recommended Approach

- Allow pets with clear behavioural and care expectations
- Use structured pet agreements to set consistent rules
- Encourage tenant transparency through pet resumes
- Conduct reasonable property inspections where permitted

Low-density landlords are well positioned to lead in pet-inclusive housing by adopting clear, consistent policies that prioritize responsible ownership over restriction.

4.2 Medium-Density Housing (Townhomes, Row Housing, Small Multi-Unit Buildings)

Medium-density housing requires a balance between flexibility and shared living considerations.

Key Considerations

- Shared walls and proximity between units
- Increased importance of noise and behaviour management
- Shared outdoor or common spaces

Recommended Approach

- Establish clear noise and behaviour expectations
- Define pet supervision and containment requirements
- Ensure consistency in enforcement across all units

Focus on predictability and consistency, ensuring all tenants understand expectations equally to prevent conflict between units.

4.3 High-Density Housing (Apartments, Condominiums)

High-density housing presents the greatest challenges but also the highest impact opportunity due to tenant demand and limited pet-friendly supply.

Key Considerations

- Shared hallways, elevators, and common areas
- Condominium bylaws or board restrictions
- Higher tenant turnover potential
- Increased visibility of pet-related concerns

Recommended Approach

- Work within condo bylaws while advocating for policy review where possible
- Use strong screening and onboarding processes for pet tenants
- Clearly define use of shared spaces (leash requirements, waste management)
- Consider phased or pilot-based pet-friendly implementation
- Consider configuration within the building. Design pet-friendly layouts that prioritize suitability and livability, such as locating dog-friendly units on the ground floor while accommodating small-pet units on upper levels.

Start with structured, limited adoption (e.g., designated pet-friendly units) and evaluate outcomes before expanding policy.

4.4 Navigating Condo Boards & Bylaws

For condominium properties, pet policies are often governed at the board level rather than the individual landlord level.

Recommended Actions

- Review existing bylaws carefully before advertising pet-friendly units
- Engage early with condo boards regarding pet policy flexibility
- Present data on tenant demand and housing impacts where appropriate
- Encourage standardized, behaviour-based policies rather than blanket bans

Many condo restrictions are based on perception rather than evidence. Data-informed discussions can support more balanced decision-making over time.

4.5 Property Management Companies

Property managers play a key role in operationalizing pet-friendly housing policies across multiple units or buildings.

Recommended Actions

- Standardize pet screening and approval processes
- Ensure consistent use of pet agreements and documentation
- Train staff on pet behaviour basics and conflict resolution
- Establish clear escalation pathways for pet-related concerns

Consistency is critical. Pet policies should be applied uniformly across all units to ensure fairness and reduce disputes.

4.6 Shared and Vulnerable Housing Environments

Some housing environments require additional sensitivity, such as supportive housing, transitional housing, or shared living arrangements.

Key Considerations

- Resident vulnerability and wellbeing
- Shared responsibility for communal spaces
- Potential therapeutic benefits of companion animals
- Risk of conflict in shared environments

Recommended Approach

- Carefully assess suitability on a case-by-case basis
- Use structured agreements with clear behavioural expectations
- Prioritize calm, stable, and well-supported animals where possible
- Work collaboratively with support staff or service providers

Balance risk management with the recognized mental health and stability benefits of companion animals, where appropriate.

Regardless of housing type, successful pet-inclusive housing is built on clear, consistent policies, transparent expectations established from the outset, structured agreements and documentation, fair and consistent application of rules, and open communication between landlords and tenants. Ultimately, the success of pet-friendly housing is less about the type of property itself and more about the clarity, structure, and consistency of the management practices in place.

What We Can Learn from Other Housing Systems in Canada

Across Canada, pet-friendly housing is shaped more by policy structure and management tools than by the presence or absence of pets themselves. While approaches vary by province, consistent patterns emerge that support the effectiveness of structured, pet-inclusive housing.

Ontario: Behaviour-Based Housing Model

Ontario is often viewed as one of the more flexible tenancy environments for pet ownership.

- “No-pet” clauses are generally not enforceable once a tenancy begins
- Pets are typically allowed unless they cause specific, documented issues (e.g., noise, damage, safety concerns)
- Focus is placed on behaviour and impact rather than exclusion

Pets are generally permitted, with housing rules focused on managing behaviour rather than restricting ownership.

British Columbia: Structured Allowance + Strong Toolkits

British Columbia has more restrictive tenancy rules but is a leader in practical pet-inclusive housing tools and guidance.

- Landlords can set pet restrictions at the start of tenancy
- Pet damage deposits are regulated (typically up to half a month’s rent)
- Strong emphasis on structured tools such as:
 - » Pet agreements and addendums
 - » Pet resumes and reference checks
 - » Condition reports and documentation systems
 - » Landlord education resources (e.g., BC SPCA toolkit)

Even in more restrictive systems, structured tools significantly increase landlord confidence and pet-friendly housing adoption.

National Trend: Supply-Demand Imbalance

Across Canadian cities, a consistent pattern is emerging:

- Over 61% of households own pets
- In many urban rental markets, only a small portion of units allow pets
- A significant number of tenants report housing barriers due to pet ownership

The challenge is not lack of demand; it is a mismatch between housing supply and pet-inclusive policy.

What This Means for Landlords

Across jurisdictions, success in pet-inclusive housing is not determined by restriction, but by structure.

The most effective approaches consistently include:

- Clear pet agreements and expectations
- Behaviour-based policies instead of exclusion-based rules
- Documentation (condition reports, screening tools)
- Early communication and proactive management
- Access to support resources when issues arise

While laws and policies differ across provinces, the evidence is consistent:

Pet-inclusive housing is most successful when it is structured, transparent, and behaviour-focused, not when it relies on blanket restrictions.



Section 5: Communications & Relationship Building

Clear, proactive communication is one of the most important factors in the success of pet-inclusive housing. When expectations are well understood and relationships are built on trust, many potential issues can be prevented before they arise. This section provides practical tools to support respectful, transparent communication between landlords and tenants, helping to create stable, positive, and long-term rental relationships.

5.1 Communication Templates for Landlord–Tenant Discussions

Having clear, consistent language helps ensure that conversations about pets are constructive and fair.

Common communication moments include:

- Approving a pet application
- Clarifying pet-related expectations before move-in
- Addressing a concern or complaint
- Following up on property inspections
- Confirming resolution of an issue

Best Practice Approach

- Keep communication factual and respectful
- Focus on behaviour and outcomes, not assumptions
- Reference the pet agreement where applicable
- Provide clear next steps when concerns are raised

Most pet-related issues are resolved more effectively through early, clear communication than through formal escalation.

5.2 Setting Expectations Early

Successful pet-inclusive housing begins before the tenancy starts.

Landlords are encouraged to clearly communicate:

- Whether pets are permitted and under what conditions
- Behaviour expectations and property care requirements
- Processes for reporting or addressing concerns
- Any documentation required (e.g., pet agreement, insurance, resumes)

Consistency at the start of the tenancy reduces misunderstandings later and helps build a strong landlord–tenant relationship from day one.

5.3 Responding to Concerns

When issues arise, the goal should be resolution, not escalation.

Recommended approach:

- Raise concerns promptly and clearly
- Reference agreed-upon expectations in the lease or pet agreement
- Provide tenants with an opportunity to respond and address the issue

- Collaborate on reasonable solutions where appropriate

Examples of addressable concerns:

- Excessive noise
- Property damage
- Unattended pets for extended periods
- Cleanliness or waste management issues
- Abandonment or neglect (enforceable under the Animal Protection Act)

Common pet-related concerns are often manageable when addressed early with clear communication, practical solutions, and access to appropriate support resources. Noise, such as barking or whining, is typically linked to boredom, anxiety, or environmental triggers rather than intentional disruption. This can often be improved through increased physical and mental enrichment, reduced visual triggers, consistent routines, or the use of background noise to help minimize disturbances. In these situations, a friendly, early conversation is usually most effective, as tenants may not always be aware of the issue. Calgary Humane Society can also support tenants and landlords through free online behaviour resources, a free behaviour helpline, and access to free behaviour consultations for tenants to help identify and address underlying causes.

Similarly, minor property damage such as scratching, chewing, or general wear is often related to unmet enrichment needs, training gaps, or environmental stress. These issues can be addressed by encouraging appropriate outlets such as scratching posts or chew toys, suggesting protective measures, and reinforcing supervision and training routines. Landlords should refer back to the pet agreement and focus on collaborative resolution rather than blame, while also encouraging tenants to access CHS behaviour support if needed.

Concerns related to odours or cleanliness are most often caused by inconsistent litter maintenance, cleaning routines, or grooming practices. These can typically be resolved through simple adjustments such as increased cleaning frequency, proper waste disposal, and improved hygiene routines. Framing these conversations as a shared responsibility for maintaining the property helps keep communication constructive and solution-focused.

Neighbour concerns may arise due to noise, misunderstandings, or isolated incidents and should be addressed with neutrality, clarity, and a focus on root causes. Reinforcing supervision, routine, and responsible pet management is often effective. In cases where pets are left unattended for extended periods, behavioural or welfare concerns may develop; these can often be mitigated by encouraging additional support such as pet sitters, dog walkers, or daycare, as well as reinforcing appropriate supervision expectations.

If a welfare concern arises such as signs of neglect, distress, or unsafe living conditions, Calgary Humane Society's Protection and Investigation team can be contacted for support and assessment to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the animal.

Across all scenarios, early, non-punitive communication is key. Briefly flagging concerns and inviting tenants to collaborate on solutions helps prevent escalation and supports stable, long-term tenancies. CHS resources, including free online tools, behaviour consultations, and direct support services are available to help both landlords and tenants proactively address issues before they become tenancy risks.



Calgary Humane Society Animal Protection & Investigations Team

Calgary Humane Society's Animal Protection Program plays a critical role in safeguarding animal welfare in our community. Operating since 1922, the program is responsible for investigating reports of animal cruelty, neglect, and abandonment within the City of Calgary, ensuring animals are protected when they are most vulnerable.

Animal Protection Officers respond to concerns where there are reasonable grounds to believe an animal is in distress. Under Alberta's Animal Protection Act, distress can include inadequate food, water, shelter, veterinary care, space, or exposure to injury, illness, or unsafe conditions. Officers also investigate cases of abandonment, including animals left without care or those left behind after tenancy has ended.

When a report is made, CHS reviews each case and determines whether there are reasonable and probable grounds to investigate. Officers may attend properties, gather evidence, and take action when animals are found in distress. In serious or urgent situations, particularly where there is immediate risk of harm, law enforcement may also be involved to ensure rapid response and intervention.

The Animal Protection Program is also structured around prevention and education, working to reduce repeat concerns through community awareness and responsible pet ownership education. This includes helping individuals and communities understand their legal and ethical responsibilities under provincial legislation and supporting long-term improvements in animal welfare standards.

When to Contact Calgary Humane Society Animal Protection

You should contact CHS if you have reasonable grounds to believe an animal is experiencing:

- Neglect (lack of food, water, shelter, or care)
- Physical harm or abuse
- Unsafe or unsanitary living conditions
- Abandonment or being left without care

Reports can be made directly to Calgary Humane Society, and anonymous reporting is accepted, although providing contact information may assist officers in further investigation.

Animal Protection is not only reactive; it is part of a broader system that supports responsible animal care and prevents long-term harm. In housing contexts, early reporting and collaboration can help ensure that welfare concerns are addressed before they escalate, supporting both tenant stability and animal wellbeing.

For landlords, this means:

- Knowing when and how to escalate genuine welfare concerns
- Understanding that CHS can investigate and intervene when needed
- Recognizing that early communication often prevents serious outcomes
- Supporting tenants in accessing resources before issues become critical

If you have first-hand reasonable grounds to believe animal abuse, neglect or abandonment has occurred, please contact Calgary Humane Society at (403) 205-4455 or by submitting an online report at www.calgaryhumane.ca

5.4 Building Long-Term Tenant Relationships

Strong landlord-tenant relationships contribute directly to tenancy stability and property care.

Pet-inclusive housing can support:

- Longer tenancy duration
- Increased tenant satisfaction and stability
- Reduced turnover and vacancy periods
- More positive landlord-tenant interactions

Tenants with pets are often highly motivated to maintain stable housing due to the limited availability of pet-friendly options, making relationship-building especially valuable.

The most successful pet-friendly rental environments are those where communication is regular rather than reactive, clear rather than ambiguous, and collaborative rather than adversarial. By establishing open lines of communication early, landlords can help prevent misunderstandings, reduce risk, and create a more stable and positive rental environment for all parties involved.



Section 6: Evidence, Insights & Real-World Success

Trust in pet-inclusive housing grows when experience is supported by evidence. This section brings together data, real-world outcomes, and lived experiences from Calgary landlords to demonstrate that pet-friendly housing is not only feasible, but often beneficial when managed with clear expectations and structured tools.

6.1 Data-Driven Insights

Local research conducted by Calgary Humane Society in partnership with the Haskayne School of Business highlights important trends in landlord experiences and perceptions of pet ownership in rental housing.

Key findings show that:

- Landlords who prohibit pets report higher rates of perceived property damage and turnover challenges
- Landlords who allow pets often report comparable or fewer operational issues
- Exposure to pet-owning tenants is strongly associated with more positive landlord attitudes over time
- Most landlords are open to pets when provided with clear tools and risk-management supports

The primary barrier to pet-inclusive housing is not actual risk, but perception and lack of structured systems to manage it.

A consistent theme in local findings is the difference between expected and actual outcomes. While concerns such as damage, noise, and maintenance are commonly cited, data suggests these issues are often:

- Overestimated before experience with pet-owning tenants
- Comparable or lower in practice when clear expectations are in place
- More effectively managed through structure than restriction

Experience, not assumption, is the strongest driver of landlord confidence in pet-friendly housing.

6.2 Real-World Landlord Experiences

Landlords who have implemented pet-inclusive policies frequently report outcomes that challenge initial concerns, including:

- Stable, long-term tenancies with pet owners
- Strong tenant responsibility and care for the property
- Positive relationships built through clear expectations
- Reduced vacancy due to increased tenant demand

These experiences reinforce that pet-friendly housing can be successfully managed with the right tools in place.

When supported by structured agreements and clear communication, pet-inclusive housing benefits both landlords and tenants.

For landlords, pet-inclusive housing can provide a larger applicant pool, reduced vacancy periods, stronger tenant retention, and more predictable, structured risk management. For tenants, it offers increased housing stability, a reduced likelihood of being forced to surrender their pets, and improved overall wellbeing and family stability. Pet-friendly housing supports both housing stability and animal welfare outcomes.

Successful pet-inclusive landlords consistently apply several key principles, including establishing clear expecta-

tions before tenancy begins, applying policies consistently across all tenants, using structured agreements and documentation, maintaining open communication when issues arise, and remaining willing to adjust practices based on experience and outcomes. Ultimately, success is not determined by eliminating risk, but by managing it effectively. As more landlords adopt pet-friendly practices, the narrative continues to shift from one of concern to one of confidence. Evidence increasingly shows that pet-friendly housing is viable across multiple property types, that risks can be effectively managed through structure and communication, and that positive experiences reinforce continued participation. Each successful pet-friendly tenancy contributes to a broader shift toward more inclusive housing systems.



Section 7: Advocacy & Systems Change Tools

Pet-friendly housing is not only an operational practice but also a systems-level opportunity that requires collaboration across landlords, property managers, housing providers, municipalities, and community organizations. Landlords are uniquely positioned to contribute to systems change, as every pet-friendly unit increases housing access for tenants who might otherwise face instability or be forced to surrender a pet, while also reducing pressure on animal welfare systems and supporting more efficient use of rental housing stock. Despite this opportunity, systemic barriers remain, including restrictive building policies, condominium bylaws that limit or prohibit pets, perceptions of increased risk without supporting evidence, and a lack of standardized tools to support pet-inclusive housing management. Addressing these barriers requires evidence-based approaches, structured agreements, and practical risk management strategies that build confidence among decision-makers.



Engaging property managers and condominium boards is an important part of this process, and conversations are most effective when supported by data on tenant demand, demonstrated risk management practices, and examples of successful pet-friendly implementation. Policy evolution is further strengthened through documented case studies, reduced turnover data, and real-world examples that show how structured approaches lead to positive outcomes. Collaboration with community partners, including Calgary Humane Society, provides additional support through behaviour expertise, tenant resources, and guidance for complex situations, ensuring landlords are not navigating these changes alone. Advocacy in this context is often achieved through everyday operational decisions, such as expanding pet-friendly units, sharing successful experiences within professional networks, and encouraging peers to adopt structured policies. Over time, these incremental changes contribute to a more inclusive housing system that better supports families, strengthens housing stability, and reduces preventable pet surrender.

Section 8: Resources & Support from Calgary Humane Society

Calgary Humane Society (CHS) provides a wide range of community-based services designed to support both people and pets, with a shared goal of keeping families together and reducing preventable pet surrender. These supports are available to pet owners and, in many cases, can also assist landlords and housing providers in managing pet-related challenges in rental environments. Services include behavioural support and training guidance through the Pets & Renters Program, which offers practical, preventative support for issues such as noise, adjustment to new housing, and general behaviour concerns. CHS also provides broader Behaviour Support Services, including consultations and educational resources to help address challenges early before they escalate into tenancy issues. Financial and practical supports are also available through the CHS Pet Food Bank, which helps families experiencing hardship by providing essential food and supplies for companion animals, ensuring that financial barriers do not lead to surrender. In times of crisis, CHS offers temporary care options through Emergency Boarding services, as well as the Pet Safekeeping Program, which provides confidential, short-term housing for pets when individuals are experiencing sudden emergencies such as flood or fire, or fleeing unsafe situations such as domestic violence. Additional supports include Rosco's Keep Them Home Program, which assists with urgent veterinary needs in eligible cases, as well as Wellness Clinics that provide accessible preventative veterinary care such as vaccinations and spay/neuter services. CHS also supports older adults through its Seniors Program, helping ensure continued pet companionship through targeted assistance and resources. Lost and found services help reunite displaced animals with their owners, while surrender prevention services focus on exploring alternatives and providing support before intake becomes necessary. Compassionate cremation and end-of-life services are also available to support families through difficult transitions with dignity and care.

CHS Community Services – Overview of Supports

- Pets & Renters Program (behaviour and tenancy support)
- Behaviour Support Services (training and consultations)
- Pet Food Bank (food and supply assistance)
- Emergency Boarding Program (temporary crisis care)
- Pet Safekeeping Program (confidential safe housing)
- Rosco's Keep Them Home Program (urgent veterinary support)
- Wellness Clinics (accessible veterinary care)
- Seniors Program (support for older pet owners)
- Lost & Found Services (pet reunification)
- Surrender Prevention Supports (alternatives to intake)
- Cremation & End-of-Life Services

Calgary Humane Society Community Services:

403-205-4455 Ext. 6027 or community.services@calgaryhumane.ca

Together, these services reflect CHS's broader commitment to supporting the human-animal bond at every stage of life and housing stability. Landlords and tenants are encouraged to engage with these resources early, as they are most effective when used proactively to prevent crises, reduce housing disruption, and support long-term pet retention.





**Calgary
Humane
Society**

Protect Animals.

Support People.

Create a More Humane World.