



Pet Ownership Consultation Document

December 2011

Introduction

Our policy on pet ownership says: **'We recognise the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring where residents have the facilities and lifestyle to look after them. However controls must be in place to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours.'**

This leaflet provides useful information whether you are a new resident, an established resident thinking about getting a pet, or you have had a pet for some time. It will also be helpful for residents who are having problems with a neighbour's pet.

These are the areas covered in this leaflet:

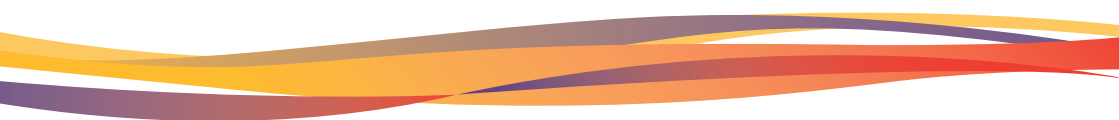
- Our policy on giving permission
- General advice on responsible pet ownership
- How to apply to keep a pet
- The law and pet ownership
- What your tenancy agreement says about pets
- What we consider as nuisance behaviour by a pet
- What to do if you are having problems with a neighbour's pet
- What action we can take concerning nuisance pets
- What action to take in the case of cruelty or neglect
- Useful contacts for advice and assistance

Responsible pet ownership

Before deciding to keep a pet you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

Does the pet fit your lifestyle and the family circumstances?

Are you out a lot of the time, do you have young children in the household?



Is your accommodation suitable? Do you have easy access to garden areas, do you live near a busy road, is a flat suitable for the type of pet you are proposing to keep?

How much is it going to cost? Some items you can budget for, for example the initial cost of the pet, equipment and ongoing costs such as food and bedding. What about unexpected costs such as vet bills?

Are you going to insure, and/or microchip your pet? We actively encourage this, but both have cost implications.


What will happen to the pet if you are away from your home, for example on holiday or due to unexpected ill health?

Health issues - is there a local vet who can care for your pet? This is particularly important if you have a more unusual or exotic pet. Are regular vaccinations required?

Population control – if you are planning to keep a cat we will ask that it is neutered and we would recommend this for dogs and other pets as well.

Is your choice of pet likely to cause a nuisance to your neighbours? Most of us want to live harmoniously with our neighbours – is it worth having a chat with them before you make the final decision?

Often it is not the type of pet that will cause a nuisance to neighbours but the way you plan to care for it and control it. How committed are you? Dogs cannot be allowed to roam freely on communal areas; they must be walked on a lead. Dogs cannot be left barking in the house or garden all day causing a noise



problem. You need to think through these issues before taking on an animal and think about what you will do if problems occur.

The more thought you can give this now, the better. It is very difficult to have to re-house a pet once you have become emotionally attached to it.

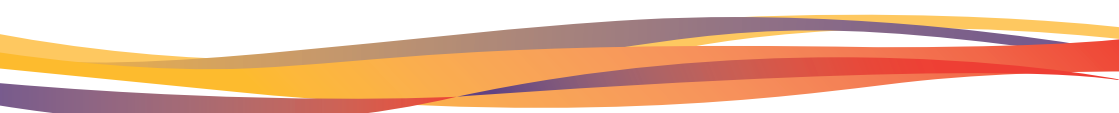
Our policy on giving permission for pets

We will consider permission in most cases. However, certain types of pets are not permitted, these are:

- Farm animals – for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, ducks
- Pigeons or any other bird kept in an aviary
- Animals which should be licensed under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – a list of animals requiring a license under the Act can be obtained from the website of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at www.defra.gov.uk, or we can send you the details
- Dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, such as Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentina, Fila Brazeliero. Up to date information can be obtained from the DEFRA website at www.defra.gov.uk, or we can send you the details

Or where:

- There is an ongoing problem with pet ownership in the household, or there has been a problem in the past



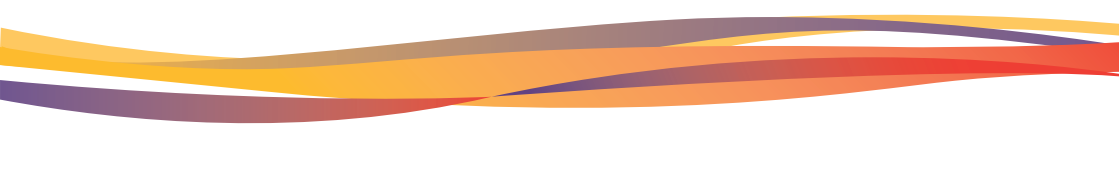
Permission for Assistance Dogs, such as guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people or dogs for disabled people will normally always be granted.

Permission will not normally be granted:

- For a dog or a cat if you already have either 2 dogs or 2 cats, or a dog and a cat
- A dog or a cat if you live in a flat, particularly if you do not have direct access to a garden or open space. Permission will only be granted if you are able to demonstrate responsible pet ownership and avoid potential nuisance to other residents as a result of the design and layout of your home
- If permission is granted to keep a pet in a flat, this will be strictly limited to one small/medium sized dog or one cat
- A cat that has not been neutered
- For rats, mice, gerbils, and hamsters if the number is unmanageable and unsuitable for the environment in which they live and the accommodation provided
- For rabbits and guinea pigs if they are intended to be kept inside the home

Applying to keep a pet

We do not expect you to apply for permission to keep a goldfish. However you do need to seek permission for all types of pets, including cats, dogs, caged animals such as hamsters, rats, guinea pigs, and rabbits, birds, reptiles, insects and aquariums. If you are in doubt, please ask.



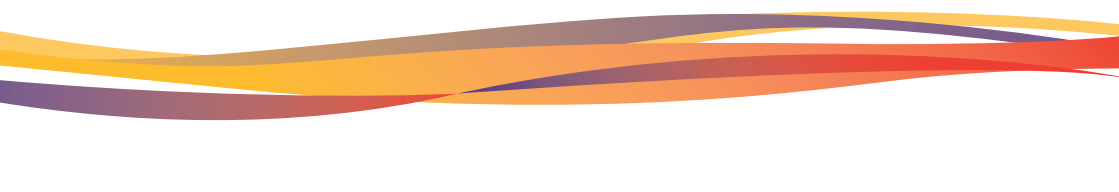
You will be expected to complete a pet application form. This asks for lots of information on the type of pet and how you will care for it (please ask us if you need help to complete this form). In completing this form you will agree:

- To be responsible for the pet
- To ensure it does not cause a nuisance to neighbours

Making an application

In all circumstances you should seek permission to keep pets by completing our comprehensive application form.

So that we can judge each request on its individual merits we will take into account the following when reviewing a completed application form:

- Your accommodation and the facilities available to you
 - Whether you have access to a garden or an open space nearby
 - How many pets you currently have, and in the case of a dog, the breed, size and temperament
 - How often you will leave the pet alone and what arrangements have been made when you are away from your home
 - Whether you have someone to care for your pet in an emergency i.e. hospital admission and ill health
 - Whether the pet may cause a nuisance or risk to anyone in the immediate locality
 - Whether you can demonstrate that the dog will get enough exercise with good access to a suitable open space
 - For cats, whether or not you will provide a cat litter tray to minimise fouling of communal areas and neighbouring gardens
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- Your ability to pay for vet care, vaccinations and, in the case of a dog, be able to attend dog training, if we receive complaints from neighbours about the dog's behaviour e.g. responding to excessive barking, scratching/chewing or isolation when left unattended
- If you are seeking permission to keep reptiles and spiders you will need to demonstrate that you have the adequate knowledge to meet the care and welfare needs of the animal, including the provision of a suitable environment
- Whether we need to consider any unique or exceptional circumstances detailed in the application

A home visit will be carried out as part of our assessment and we will let you have our decision in writing within 28 days of receiving your completed application.

If you have been selected for one of our empty homes an application form should be completed as part of the introductory interview and a decision will be made prior to completing the tenancy contract paperwork.

Pets and the law

There are many laws concerning the keeping of animals. Some are specific to certain exotic species, some are concerned with dogs, others relate to animals generally. Here are some of the most common laws. For more advice and information please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Legal Advice Centre.



Animal Health and Welfare Act 2006

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 introduced a duty of care on any person keeping an animal to ensure that they look after it properly. This includes:

- A proper diet (food and water)
- Protection from pain, suffering, injury or disease
- The ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- A suitable environment to live with, or apart, from other animals

Persons found guilty of cruelty or neglect may be imprisoned and/or fined. They may also be banned from keeping an animal for life. The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 makes abandoning an animal an offence.

Animals Act 1971

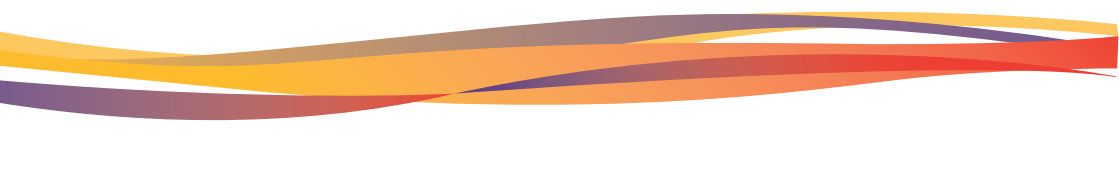
If a dog worries livestock then it may be shot and the owner could face criminal prosecution. It is the duty of owners to ensure that animals do not stray onto the road and cause injury or damage. The Road Traffic Act 1988 makes it an offence to have a dog without a lead on certain designated roads.

Dogs Act 1871

Courts can order a dangerous dog to be destroyed or order the owner to keep it under proper control.

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

This demands that owners of 4 specific breeds of dogs comply with certain legal requirements. In addition any dog dangerously out of control in a public space may be destroyed. Owners face the possibility of a 6 month prison sentence or a maximum £5000 fine.



Control of Dogs Order 1992

Every dog, while in a public place, must wear a collar displaying the owner's name and address.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

This gives the local authority the power to seize a stray dog and to hold it for 7 days. After 7 days the dog can be found another home, sold or destroyed.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environmental Act 2005

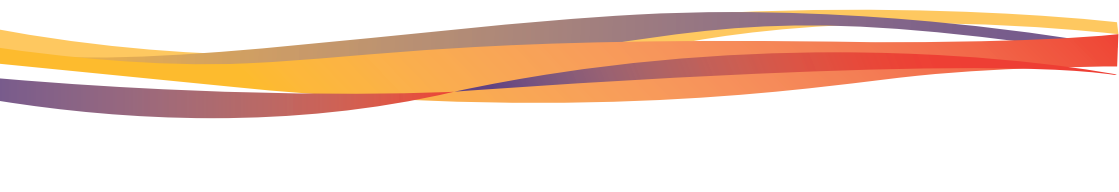
This Act allows the local authority to designate public areas where dogs must be kept on leads or excluded. It also gives the local authority powers to enforce dog fouling bylaws on public land. It is no defence for the owner to say they were unaware of the dog's actions and the owner may be prosecuted or fined.

What our policy says about pets

We have listed below the main points of our pet policy:

- Residents must not keep a pet without our prior written consent
- Residents must have arrangements in place for pets to be cared for, in the event of an emergency i.e. hospital admission/ill health
- Pets must not cause nuisance to neighbours, staff and visitors. This includes noise nuisance and animals which are allowed to stray



- Pets must not cause damage to the property or communal areas and residents may be charged for any damage caused to our property
 - Residents cannot run a business from their home, this includes breeding animals for sale or boarding kennels
 - Residents must pay for any additional fencing, hedges, or other form of restriction that is required to keep their pet safe, under control, and unable to access anyone else's property – our permission is required for carrying out such work
 - Residents must meet the care and welfare needs of their pet. In the case of dogs and cats this includes worming and regular flea treatment in accordance with veterinary guidelines
 - Dogs should wear a collar displaying the owner's name and address while in a public place
 - Dogs should be exercised on a lead on communal areas of the estate or scheme, and should be kept under control at all times
 - Dogs should not be chained or tethered on any of our land
 - Dogs should not be left alone or unattended overnight or for long periods of time
 - Residents will be encouraged to have their dog permanently identified by microchip
 - All cats need a litter tray (at least one per cat) and should be encouraged to use it to minimise the problems of cats fouling in other people's gardens
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- Animal waste/cat litter trays must not be left in communal walkways
- Cats should not roam around communal areas. Where the resident does not have their own access to a garden or open space permission will only be given for a house cat. To stop the cat from scratching furniture or the property, a suitable facility, such as a scratching post should be provided. Cats that are only kept indoors need mental and physical stimulation
- Caged birds should be able to outstretch their wings in all directions and with adequate perching space

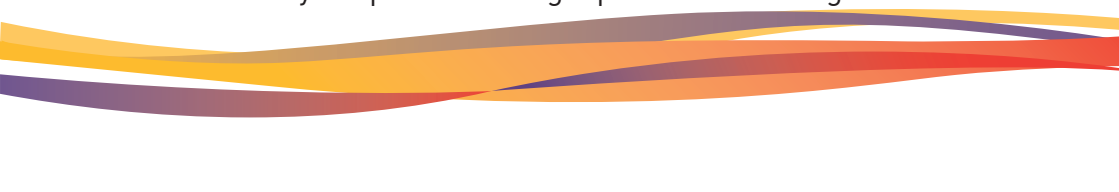
We may withdraw consent if a nuisance is caused or if it is considered that the number of animals should be restricted.

What constitutes nuisance behaviour by a pet?

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

- Roaming and unattended animals
- Fouling external communal areas and this not being cleared immediately, (this does not apply to cats fouling external communal garden areas)
- Fouling internal areas i.e. hallways, corridors and common rooms
- Excessive noise
- Over-population of animals within a household
- Unpleasant odours from pets
- Aggressive animals

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 excessively, 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 a neighbour's pet

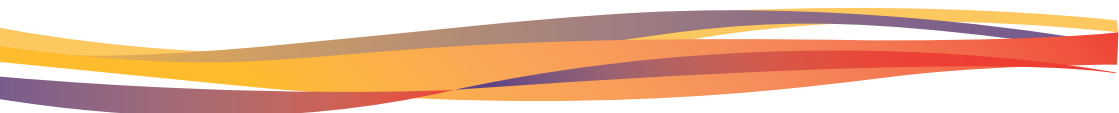
If you feel you can, then approach the owner and see if you can sort out the matter informally. Here are some tips:

- 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 contact us for help.

What action can we take concerning nuisance pets?

In the majority of cases we aim to resolve the situation informally after hearing both sides of the story. If this does not work then



there are a number of more formal approaches we can take. This includes:

- Arranging for a professional mediator to become involved
- If the issue affects a number of residents we may be able to work with you to set up an 'estate agreement'. This is basically a set of rules developed by residents which describes what is acceptable behaviour for their area. Responsible pet ownership could form part of this agreement
- Making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) – this is a formal contract signed by the person causing the problem, the Association, and in some cases a third party such as the police
- We may withdraw permission for the animal
- Restricting the number of animals
- Involving statutory organisations such as the police or the local authority
- Involving voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA
- Serving an injunction to oblige the owner to start or stop undertaking certain actions or to remove the animal
- Seeking to end a tenancy due to a breach of the tenancy contract

What action to take in the case of cruelty or neglect

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 0870 5555 999. The RSPCA will ask you a series of questions, they promise to keep your details confidential.



Useful contacts for advice and assistance

RSPCA

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

More information can be obtained from:

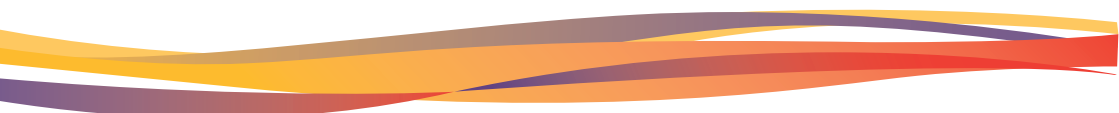
Phone (national for general information) **0870 3335 999**
24 hour National Cruelty and Advice Line **0870 5555 999**
Website: **www.rspca.org.uk**

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.

More information can be obtained from:

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.

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.

More Information can be obtained from:

PDSA

Head Office

Whitechapel Way

Priorslee

Telford

Shropshire

TF2 9PQ

Phone: **01952 290 999**

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



Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)

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**

www.any-uk-vet.co.uk

The above website holds details of vets across the UK.

Longhurst & Havelok Homes is committed to equality and diversity and recognises diversity in all areas of our work. We seek to treat people with respect and deliver services that meet individual need.

This leaflet is also available in:



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Customer Service Centre

0800 111 4013

servicecentre@longhurst-group.org.uk

www.landh.org.uk