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AAA



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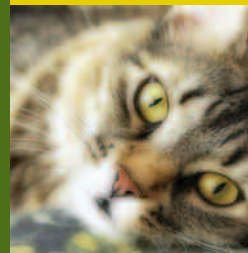
Merlin Housing Society

Building 2 | Riverside Court | Bowling Hill | Chipping Sodbury | South Gloucestershire BS37 6JX

[www.merlinhs.co.uk](http://www.merlinhs.co.uk)

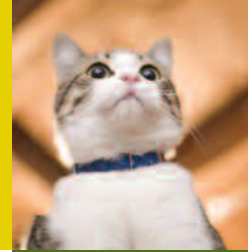
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# Pet Ownership Guide





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## Pet Ownership Guide

### Introduction

We recognise the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring. However, we need to have measures in place to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours.

This guide 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.

### Applying to keep a pet

You need to seek permission for most types of pets, including cats, dogs, rabbits, reptiles, insects and aquariums. You do not need permission for assistance dogs such as guidance and hearing dogs.

When you apply to keep a pet you will have to complete a pet agreement form. In this form you will provide details of the pet and agree:

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

You do not have to apply for permission to keep certain pets such as small birds, caged animals such as hamsters, mice or gerbils or a goldfish. However, if you live in a flat, and you intend to keep, for example, a large aquarium in

the property, you should call our freephone Repairs Line on 0800 953 0340 to get permission.

If you are unsure whether you need permission to keep your pet, please contact your area housing office.

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 - for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, ducks

- 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/wildlife-pets/wildlife/protect/documents/dwa-animallist.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife/protect/documents/dwa-animallist.pdf)
- Dogs of a type specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 - in 2006 the following types of dog were specified: pit bull terrier, dogo argentino, fila brasileiro and Japanese tosa. Up-to-date information can be obtained from the DEFRA website at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

In line with our tenancy agreement, we will not grant permission for a pet if you already have either a dog or a cat and you live in a flat or maisonette that does not have direct access to a private garden.

We may also not grant permission where there is an ongoing problem with pet ownership in the household or there has been a problem in the past.

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. To determine suitability we will apply guidance issued by Pathway and the Pets Advisory Committee.

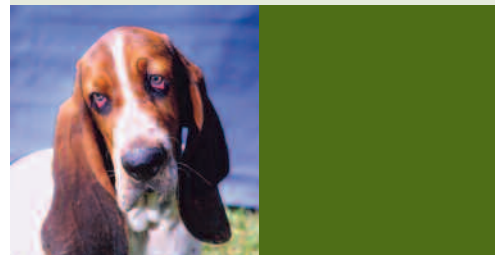
## Responsible pet ownership

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 our tenancy agreement says about pets**

You must not:

- keep any animal which is unsuitable such as wild, dangerous or poisonous 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
- 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, using dog bins if provided.

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 remove 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 and in owners' gardens and this not being cleared up immediately
- pets fouling in neighbours' gardens
- excessive noise, such as a dog barking all the time
- too many animals kept in a property
- unpleasant odours from pets
- aggressive animals
- attracting other animals and vermin by leaving food outside the property.



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.

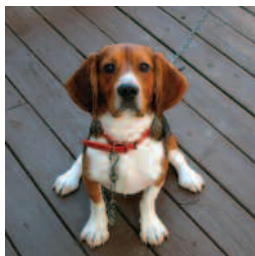


## What we can do about nuisance pets

In the vast majority of cases we will try to resolve the issue 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. These include:

- arranging for a professional mediator to become involved.
- withdrawing permission for the animal
- involving voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA
- involving statutory organisations such as the police or the local authority Environmental Health Department

- restricting the number of animals kept at a property if this is likely to resolve the problem
- making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract - this is a formal contract signed by the person causing the problem, ourselves and in some cases a third party such as the police
- obtaining an injunction to oblige the owner to stop them from doing certain things or to remove the animal
- taking other legal action.



## What to do if you suspect an animal is being neglected

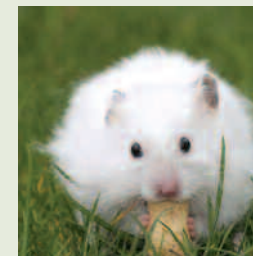
If you suspect that a neighbour is guilty of cruelty or neglect towards an animal then you should report this to the RSPCA. You should telephone the 24 hour National Cruelty and Advice Line on 0300 1234 999. The RSPCA will ask you a series of questions and it promises to keep your details confidential.

## 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.

### Protection of Animals Act 1911

People 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 its 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.

## **Dogs Act 1871 and the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991**

Courts can order a dangerous dog to be destroyed or order the owner to keep it under proper control. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 demands that owners of four specific breeds of dogs comply with certain legal requirements.

Whilst the first section of the Act deals with dangerous breeds, section 3 is of relevance to all dog owners. Any dog dangerously out of control in a public place may be destroyed and owners face the possibility of a six month prison sentence or a maximum £5,000 fine. An owner can also be charged if there are grounds to believe that the dog might cause an injury.

## **Road Traffic Act 1988**

The Act makes it an offence to have a dog without a lead on certain designated roads.

## **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 seven days. After seven days the dog can be found another home, sold or destroyed. The Act also makes it an offence to keep an animal in such a place or manner that could affect its health or causes a nuisance.

## **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005**

This Act allows the local authority to designate public areas where dogs are not allowed or where they must be kept on a lead. 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.

## **Animal Welfare Act 2006**

The Act places a duty of care on owners to ensure that a pet's basic welfare needs, such as adequate food and water, veterinary treatment and a suitable living environment are met. It is worth noting that the animal doesn't have to suffer for owners to be prosecuted. The Act increased the penalties for serious animal cruelty.



## 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

Phone: 0117 9724 567

Website:  
[www.rspca-bristol.org.uk](http://www.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](http://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](http://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: 03000 121212

Website: [www.cats.org.uk](http://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](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)

PDSA PetAid Hospital  
556 Bath Road  
Brislington  
Bristol  
BS4 3JZ

Phone: 0117 977 5911



## **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](mailto:info@bluecross.org.uk)

Website:  
[www.bluecross.org.uk](http://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](http://www.rcvs.org.uk)

### **Any UK vet**

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

Website: [www.any-uk-vet.co.uk](http://www.any-uk-vet.co.uk)

