

Making the Case for Pet-Inclusive Policies

We know that advocating for pet-inclusive policies that meet residents' needs is not always easy, so we've put together some common concerns – with answers – to help property managers advocate for dropping breed and weight restrictions.

Don't breed restrictions prevent dangerous pets from living on the property?

Actually, [research](#) shows that a dog's breed is not a predictor of its personality. Diet, environment, health, training, breeding, genetics, management, and socialization all influence behavior. The bottom line is that no single breed owns any particular trait.

More importantly, when prospective residents encounter breed and weight restrictions, they are more likely to hide their pet or have their pet falsely declared an ESA, which makes it more difficult to hold all pet owners accountable to community guidelines.

How will we help keep residents and their pets safe without breed and weight restrictions?

By eliminating restrictions, properties give themselves the opportunity to assess each pet as an individual and create transparency with residents.

Properties can adopt a set of [pet personality questions](#) and a [pet agreement](#) to help establish a mutual understanding of the expectations for all residents with pets to create safety and a supportive environment for all.

Won't allowing all dog breeds affect our liability insurance?

It's likely that the property's [current liability policy](#) has no dog breed restrictions, but if it does, there are policies available through other companies that do not impose breed restrictions.

Also, dog-owning renters can choose renters policies with no breed restrictions from a number of [insurance companies](#). According to the [Insurance Information Institute](#), renters insurance policies typically cover dog bite liability legal expenses, up to the liability limits (typically \$100,000 to \$300,000). If the claim exceeds the limit, the dog owner is responsible for all damages above that amount.

What will other residents think if we eliminate breed and weight restrictions?

According to the [2024 Grace Hill NMHC Renter Preferences Survey Report](#), only 6% of respondents said they would only rent at a property that restricted breeds or weights. Additionally, only 7% of respondents said that pet-friendliness would make them less likely to live at a property. The majority of these respondents cited residents not cleaning up after their pets as the main concern, but with clear [community rules](#) in place and an adequate number of pet waste stations onsite, this concern can easily be addressed.

What are the benefits to the owner of becoming more pet inclusive?

There are multiple benefits of becoming more pet inclusive, many of which are measurable and all of which are meaningful:

- **Market opportunity.** When restrictions are lifted, more pet owners are eligible to consider your community as their next home. Considering that about two-thirds of households in the U.S. have a pet, yet most apartment communities don't come close to reflecting that percentage, being pet inclusive opens up the resident pool.
- **Pets are a resident priority.** Research shows that renters are more likely to compromise on budget and location than they are on their pet. These are motivated renters!
- **Residents with pets stay longer.** Research also demonstrates that residents with pets stay an average of 21% longer than non pet-owning residents. That translates to lower turnover costs and vacancy loss, which means higher NOI.
- **Pet-inclusive units are faster and easier to fill.** 83% of rental housing operators say that pet-inclusive vacancies fill faster, and 79% say they are easier to fill. That's a pretty overwhelming thumbs up for pets.
- **Minimize unauthorized pets.** Lifting restrictions and accepting more pets results in fewer renters feeling a need to hide or lie about the presence of their pets. This allows operators to know about and have a record of the pet in the unit, which also allows for greater accountability to the community guidelines for behavior.
- **Capitalize on demographic groups.** The Gen X and Millennial/Gen Z demographic groups comprise 79.5% of pet households and are also more likely to be renters (the median age of a renter in the U.S. is 39 according to Statista). This is a rental community's prime target group, and they love pets!
- **Love of pets is common ground.** Pets are widely considered family members and are the basis for common ground. 93% of rental housing operators agree that pets are important members of the family, yet 72% of renters say that apartment operators are not pet inclusive. The industry needs to better align policies so that renters with pets feel welcome.

For more information or to contact the PIHI team, please visit petsandhousing.org or email us at info@petsandhousing.org.