

## **A Checklist for Landlords: in search of a responsible pet owner**

The following is a list of questions for property owners to use when interviewing prospective tenants with pets. These questions are intended as a starting point to help property owners get to know a tenant and his or her commitment to providing responsible pet care.

We recommend property owners ask prospective tenants to bring their pets to the interview. State your expected interview time in advance so that the owner can prepare their dog. A well-groomed, exercised pet is one of the best signs of a responsible pet owner. You can make the pet more comfortable by using an open room for the interview, and by providing a spot for the dog to remain while you discuss the questions below. A nearby water bowl will start your interview off on the right foot.

### **For all pet owners:**

- What type of pet(s) do you have?
- How long have you had them?
- Do you have a letter of other documentation from your veterinarian stating that each pet is in good health and is up-to-date on all of his/her vaccinations?
- Have there been any complaints about your pet at your current address? If so, was noise the issue? Aggression? Allergies? Was the complaint resolved to everyone's satisfaction?
- May I contact your current landlord to discuss your pet further?
- May I visit you and your pet(s) at your current address to see how you are getting along?
- Would you object to my checking in on the pet after you move in?
- Are you willing to provide contact numbers, and the name of a kennel for your pet, and in the event of emergency?
- Are you willing to sign a pet agreement?
- Are you willing to submit a receipt as proof of annual professional carpet cleaning?
- Are you willing to provide a copy of your insurance policy for your file?
- Who will care for your pet(s) when you go away on vacation or business?
- Are you a member of Citizen Canine or other pet owner advocacy association?

### **For cat owners:**

- Has your cat been spayed or neutered?
- Does your cat use the litter box you provide?
- Do you have a scratch post or a perch for your cat?
- Do you keep your cat inside?
- Does your cat wear a collar and identification tag?
- Does your cat have any medical or behavioral problems? If so, what treatment/ training is he or she receiving?

- How does your cat get along with other animals? What about with people?
- Is your cat crate trained?

**For dog owners:**

- Has your dog been spayed or neutered?
- Is your dog housebroken?
- Have you and your dog completed a dog obedience class?
- How and how often do you exercise your dog?
- Do you keep your dog on leash when you go for walks?
- Is your dog licensed in this Municipality?
- Do you have microchip identification? Is the contact information current?
- Do you make a point of immediately cleaning up after your dog?
- How much time does your dog spend alone each day?
- Does your dog stay inside when it is alone?
- Is your dog inside during the night?
- Does your dog have any medical or behavioral problems? If so, what treatment/ training are you using to manage the concern?
- How does your dog get along with other animals? What about with people?
- Is your dog crate trained?

While dog owners will work to create a good impression, it's important to put the impression into perspective. Here are a few items to watch for during your interview with the prospective tenant.

A responsible pet owner may bring along a few treats to bridge your introduction to their dog. Ask the dog to "sit" or "shake a paw" as most dog owners expect their dog to "work" for attention or a food reward. If the dog seems unsure, watch how the pet owner responds; give the dog time to come to you. The dog may want to move about as movement helps to reduce stress, or nonchalantly scratch to calm its perception of the environment. Watch the dog and take note if the dog looks toward its owner. Responsible dog owners will "check in" with their pet through your interview and will work to alleviate their own stress by monitoring their own breathing or by petting their dog. Take note of the owner's subtle hand commands, and quiet voice commands. These are respectful dog owner responses. If the interview seems too long for the pet, the responsible dog owner will remove their dog rather than remain distracted at the expense of your time.

By watching this exchange, you will gain important information about the dog owner's general attitude and respect toward community, commitment and consideration. Responsible pet owners are responsible people that make for great tenants.