

## PET OWNERSHIP GUIDELINES

The co-op recognises the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring but acknowledge that controls need to be in place to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and nuisance to neighbours.

This guidance offers advice to our members thinking about getting a pet, those who may already have a pet and residents who may have concerns about or problems with a neighbour's pet.

### Benefits and drawbacks of pet ownership

Animals that are well cared for and responsibly kept can be a positive addition to any community. Pet ownership can have positive effects on children and the elderly and can help to improve their owner's health.

There are downsides to pet ownership and irresponsibly owned pets can be the cause of misery and suffering to both the animals themselves and those who live around them.

Members are responsible to provide facilities for the proper care of their pets and that they do not cause a nuisance to others. In particular, keeping pets in flats can lead to problems, possibly with neighbours or more generally. Therefore, members in flats are particularly expected to comply with these guidelines.

The co-op wants to encourage responsible pet ownership so this guidance sets out things to think about before taking on a pet.

## The co-op's policy on keeping pets

The co-op is generally supportive of the wish of its members to keep pets providing they do so responsibly. However, we will only allow members to keep pets we consider are suitable and in such numbers as we think reasonable. There may also be certain properties where the co-op will not consider it appropriate for some pets to be kept.

The following pets generally are considered to be suitable:

- domestic cats and dogs
- small animals such as rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, mice, gerbils and domestic rats
- small birds such as canaries and budgerigars (if suitably caged)
- fish
- non-poisonous insects, spiders, snakes and reptiles if appropriately tanked and contained

You will not be given permission for a dog or cat in houses where the household already has 2 dogs or 2 cats or one of each. Neither will you be given permission where there is an ongoing or past problem with pet ownership.

## Seeking permission

We expect you to apply for permission to keep your pet. We have an application form that we expect you to complete that gives us details of the pet. You are not allowed to keep a pet until we have received your application and we have formally approved it.

By signing your application form, you are agreeing to the conditions set out in this guidance – that you agree to be responsible for your pet, to ensure that it does not cause a nuisance to others and to confirm that you understand that the co-op will take action against you which could, in extreme circumstances, result in the loss of your home if you break your tenancy agreement.

## Your agreement with BNCHA

By signing your application to keep a pet, you are agreeing the following (some of which may be additional to what you have already agreed in your tenancy agreement):

- you will not keep a pet without prior consent
- consent may be withdrawn if a nuisance is caused or it is considered that the number of animals should be restricted
- dogs should be exercised on a lead if on communal areas
- dogs will be microchipped – you may be able to get free assistance from the Dogs Trust to do this
- if your pet fouls any area, you will clear up and dispose of the mess appropriately and immediately
- your pet will not cause any nuisance to neighbours – including noise nuisance or allowing your pet to stray
- your pet will not cause damage to your home. If it does, you will be recharged for the cost of putting the damage right. Similarly, you will be charged if your pet damages communal areas.
- where appropriate, you will ensure that your pet is appropriately vaccinated, de-fleaed and wormed to reduce the risk of diseases and parasites spreading
- you will not operate an animal related business from your homes such as breeding animals for sale or running boarding kennels.

## Responsible pet ownership

Pet ownership comes with responsibilities and before deciding to get a pet there are a number of questions that you need to ask:

- will the pet fit in with your lifestyle? Are you out of the property a lot and does your pet suit your physical abilities and environment?
- is your accommodation suitable? Do you have easy access to open spaces or do you live near a busy road? If you live in a flat, is it suitable for the type of pet you would like to keep?

- how much is it going to cost? You need to factor in costs of initial purchase, food, equipment, bedding etc – as well as the additional costs of vets bills, regular vaccinations and medication
- what will happen to the pet if you are away from home, for example on holiday?
- if you are thinking of a dog, how will you exercise it? Dogs cannot be allowed to roam. They must be walked on a lead, and they cannot be left barking in the property or garden all day.
- you need to make sure you house the pet properly and securely and that you keep it in a manner that ensures its physical and psychological well being is such that it doesn't get stressed when left alone and cause a noise nuisance or become destructive.
- you need to make sure that your pet is properly trained, particularly in the case of dogs
- you need to think about insurance for your pet
- you need to think about limiting the number of pets you have and that you have taken advice about neutering

### **What to do if your neighbour's pet is causing a nuisance**

Some examples of behaviour that the co-op would treat as a nuisance include:

- excessive noise, such as barking, howling or crying
- roaming or unattended animals
- aggressive animals
- unpleasant odours from pets in communal areas or directly into your home
- too many animals being kept in one household
- pets fouling in communal areas or private gardens and not being cleared up immediately

Pet owners may be unaware that nuisance is being caused by their pet (such as noise) when they are out of their home, so it is a good idea, if you can, to make a friendly personal approach in the first instance to bring it to the pet owner's attention. However, do not do this if you feel at risk at all.

If you have tried an informal approach and haven't been successful, get in touch with the co-op.

### Action the co-op can take about nuisance pets

There are a number of formal actions that can be taken if the problem cannot be dealt with amicably and informally including:

- withdrawing permission for the pet to be kept or restricting the number of animals
- working with the Local Authority's Dog Warden Service
- drawing up an Acceptable Behaviour Contract – a formal agreement about responsible pet ownership that the tenant signs
- involving statutory organisations like the police or the local authority – who can issue Community Protection Notices
- involving the RSPCA
- in extreme cases serving an injunction to oblige the pet owner to start or stop doing certain actions or to remove the animal

### What you should do if you suspect cruelty or neglect

If you suspect that a neighbour is guilty of cruelty or neglect towards an animal, then you should report it to the RSPCA. They have a 24 hour National Cruelty and Advice Line on **0300 1234 999**. They will ask you questions about your concerns but they will keep your details confidential.

### Pets and the law

There are many laws concerning the keeping of animals. This section sets out a few of them:

**Animal Welfare Act 2006** – this places a duty of care on pet owners to provide for their animal's basic needs such as adequate food and water, veterinary treatment and a suitable living environment. The Act imposes penalties on those who inflict serious cruelty on animals and includes a new offence that means animals do not have to suffer for owners to be prosecuted under this Act.

**Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976** - WATMOS will not give permission to keep any pet registered under this Act, this includes certain types of venomous spider and snake.

**Control of Dogs Order 1992** – this requires every dog in public to wear a collar bearing the name and address of its owner inscribed on it – it is not sufficient for the dog to be microchipped or tattooed. The owner or responsible person may be prosecuted and fined if the dog is not wearing a collar when out in public.

**The Microchipping of Dogs (Regulations) 2014** – makes it obligatory for dog owners to have your dogs chipped. Dogs must be chipped and registered to an approved database by the time they are 8 weeks old. The government advises that the dog be healthy enough to be implanted (only a qualified vet can state that a dog is not healthy enough) and sufficient time is allowed for the database to process the registration in order to ensure that the dog is compliant with the regulations by the time they are 8 weeks old. The Dogs Trust may provide a free microchipping service, in some cases working with the local authority.

**Dangerous Dogs Act 1991** (as amended by Section 106 of the **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014**) – WATMOS will not give permission to keep any dog specified in this Act. Dog owners should also note that section 3 of this Act applies to all dogs and makes it a criminal offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public or a private place (including a tenant's home, front or back garden) and this includes where there is simply fear that an injury might occur. Dog owners need to make sure that any visitor can safely access your front door without encountering your dog. You also need to consider how your dog greets people. What may be

viewed as a dog being friendly by jumping up at visitors may be seen as threatening behaviour by a stranger.

**Environmental Protection Act 1990** – Section 70 states that it is an offence to keep any animal in place or manner that is prejudicial to health, causes a nuisance or emits noise from a building that causes a nuisance. Examples of such behaviour include excessive barking, a large number of dogs running loose or keeping an excessive number of cats.

### Useful contacts for advice or assistance

RSPCA	<a href="http://www.rspca.org.uk">www.rspca.org.uk</a>	0300 1234 555
The Dogs Trust	<a href="http://www.dogstrust.org.uk">www.dogstrust.org.uk</a>	0207 837 0006
Cats Protection	<a href="http://www.cats.org.uk">www.cats.org.uk</a>	03000 121212
PDSA	<a href="http://www.pdsa.org.uk">www.pdsa.org.uk</a>	01952 290999
Rabbit Welfare	<a href="http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk">www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk</a>	0870 046 5249
FBH (reptiles & amphibians)	<a href="http://www.f-b-h.co.uk">www.f-b-h.co.uk</a>	Email – enquiries@f-b-h.co.uk