

# Being a great pet owner



**Pets can bring joy, companionship, and a sense of home. They become part of the family and offer love and loyalty in return. But owning a pet also comes with responsibilities.**

Before you bring a pet into your home, it's important to understand what's involved and what's required under your tenancy.

## You'll need our consent first

We support tenants being able to keep pets, but you'll need to get our consent first—this will be part of your tenancy agreement. Getting consent helps us check that your home is suitable for the type of pet you'd like to keep and that it meets any local council bylaws or building rules.

Once you have consent, there are a few conditions to meet to be a responsible pet owner. Pets must be well cared for, safely contained, and not cause damage or nuisance. Their wellbeing is your responsibility.

If you're thinking about getting a pet, please contact your **Housing Support Manager on 0800 801 601**. They'll guide you through the process and help you understand what's needed.

## Pets take time and money

Having a pet is a commitment. They need feeding, exercising (especially dogs), and someone to care for them if you're away. These small things add up—so do the costs.

You'll need to budget for:

- Food
- Vet bills
- Microchipping
- Vaccinations
- Registration
- Desexing
- Worming and flea treatments

If you have a dog, you may also need:

- A leash and possibly a muzzle (especially around young children)
- A comfortable kennel if it's kept outside



## Think about adopting your pet from the SPCA

All animals adopted from the SPCA:

- Have been vet-checked and are in good health
- Have had their behaviour assessed to ensure they're suitable for adoption
- Are desexed, vaccinated, and ready for their new home

## Keeping your pet healthy and happy

It's good to do some research on how to keep your pet healthy and happy. For example, how much exercise your pet needs and what food they eat. Also its good to register your pet with a veterinarian. The veterinarian will be able to help you manage your pet's health and wellbeing by:

- offering pet care, such as regular examinations, vaccinations, and worm/flea control
- giving the right treatments for any illnesses and injuries your pet may suffer.

## Keeping children safe around your pets

Keep a close eye on children around pets at all times, particularly if the children are babies, toddlers or younger, school-aged children.



## Having a dog as a pet

Dogs make wonderful pets. They're loyal, they love human company and they like pats, cuddles and exercise. But they also have needs that are quite different from, say, a cat.

- **Dogs need space.** Whether your dog is big or little, it needs a secure outside area where it can walk or run about and, yes, do its business. If your dog lives outside make sure it has a dry, shaded shelter which protects it from the heat and cold.
- **Cleaning up after your dog.** Remember dog poo needs to be removed daily.
- **Dogs do need exercise.** Exercise is a must for any dog. Like us, it keeps them healthy and happy, which is also a very good reason for having a dog; getting out every day for a walk. So you'll need to get a good leash, perhaps even a muzzle if you have any concerns about your dog around children. And you should also think about dog training. Having a dog which comes when it's called (at the very least) makes it easier to let it off-leash in designated dog areas.
- **Keeping them cool.** Never leave your dog in a car on a hot or sunny day and even in cooler weather always make sure you leave a window open so they have fresh air.
- **Taking them for a ride.** If you take your dog in the back of a ute, or on an open deck/trailer make sure it's securely tied up and the lead is short enough so it can't fall off (it's legs should not be able to reach over the sides of the open deck or ute).
- **Dogs need registration and microchipping.** This is a legal requirement for all dogs. Your dog must be microchipped – that's a one-off cost (which if you've got your dog through the SPCA will already have been taken care of), but dog registration is an annual fee that you pay to the Council. If your dog is not registered, and is caught wandering, it will be taken to the pound. So registration is important. You can access information online about what it costs to register your dog by checking with your local council at: [localcouncils.govt.nz](http://localcouncils.govt.nz)
- **Dogs bark.** Barking dogs are one of the most common causes of complaint in our neighbourhoods. Dogs bark for many reasons; sometimes to alert you to something they think is a

threat (which is a good thing) but also when they're bored, lonely or suffering separation anxiety. If you have a dog and leave it at home while you go to work, it may bark which can upset your neighbours. You can train dogs not to bark but it does take time and effort.

- **Dogs should be desexed.** We require dogs to be desexed unless there's a good reason not to. If you adopt from the SPCA, desexing is usually already done.
- **Responsible dog owner status.** This recognises good and responsible dog owners and entitles them to a reduced annual dog registration fee. You can apply for responsible dog owner status at your local council, or on their website. To be given responsible dog owner status you must show a record of good and responsible dog ownership, payment of dog registration fees on time and a history of following relevant legal requirements.

## Safety around dogs

Like all of us, each dog has his/her own personality and things it likes and doesn't like. You will be aware of these but others may not. It's important to:

- keep a close eye on children around dogs at all times, particularly if the children are babies, toddlers or younger, school-aged children
- teach your own children how to play/pat/go near dogs in a safe, kind and gentle manner. Children are the most common victims of dog-related injuries. Children can put themselves at risk without thinking, or may not understand dog warning signs and behaviours
- if someone is afraid of dogs, don't try to force them to play with or pat your dog, even if you believe your dog is safe.



## Having a cat as a pet

Compared to dogs, cats are relatively easy to have as pets although they still need the care and attention that any pet should have. Also remember, if you live in a complex or multi-story building you need to check with your tenancy manager as there may be body corporate rules that do not allow pets such as cats.

- **Keep your cat healthy and happy.** It's important to keep your cat free from worms and fleas so regular vet check-
- **Get your cat microchipped.** It's a good idea to have your cat microchipped should your cat wander or go missing. For some councils it is now compulsory to have your cat microchipped.
- **Get your cat desexed.** We support responsible pet ownership, and desexing is a key part of that. Cats must be desexed unless there's a valid reason not to, this helps prevent unwanted litters and reduces pressure on rescue organisations.



## Safety around cats

Cats have distinct behaviours and personalities. Teach your children how to approach your cat and how to pat/play with them in a safe and gentle manner. Teach them the signs of when a cat does not want to be approached. A cat bite or scratch may not be as dangerous as a dog bite but they can still be nasty, particularly for a child.

Speaking of safety, of a different sort, cats are natural predators so if you have a garden with bird life, they will, by their very nature try and catch those birds. This is becoming an increasing issue and something to be aware of. Talk to the SPCA or your vet about ways that you might limit your cat's ability to catch birds.

## Lastly, enjoy your pet!

### Find out more

Talk to us on **0800 801 601**

Some handy websites for more information

**[spca.nz](http://spca.nz)**

**[nziam.org.nz](http://nziam.org.nz)**

**[localcouncils.govt.nz](http://localcouncils.govt.nz)**

If you have a hearing impairment, you can contact us using the NZ Relay Service on **[www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)**.

