



YOU'RE MOVING – WHAT ABOUT YOUR PET?

(information from the MSPCA, U.S. Humane Society, Tufts Veterinary School and Best Friends)

So it's time to move. Your top requirement should be a pet friendly place. What's that you say – you're not taking your pet? Please reconsider. Your pet is a member of your family. Your furry buddy has given you affection, companionship and devotion.

You can move just about any place in the world with your pets. More and more places allow them, because a lot of potential tenants have pets. With the large rental inventory, landlords are becoming increasingly flexible about discussing pets with potential tenants. This is your golden opportunity to emphasize that you are a responsible pet owner, and responsible pet owners are responsible tenants. Even if your pet has never caused damage in your home, offer to sign a contract or give a deposit to pay for whatever damage your pet may cause. You can even get pet insurance to cover any damage your pet may cause. If your potential landlord is concerned that you may be hospitalized leaving the pet alone for an unknown amount of time, make arrangements ahead of time for a family member, friend or neighbor to care for your pet if you are incapacitated.

CATS: Explain how rental-friendly a cat is as opposed to a dog. A cat is quiet. It doesn't bark or clatter across floors with long nails, disturbing other tenants. You keep your cat indoors and clean its litter box daily. You cut its claws regularly and provide scratching posts for it to use instead of curtains and walls. Your cat is neutered or spayed. It doesn't spray or attract unneutered males that will spray outside the rental. You also take it to a veterinarian regularly to maintain its vaccines.

DOGS: Current vaccines and spaying/neutering is equally important for dogs. Training is crucial. A dog should at least know 'sit,' 'stay' and 'come,' so that you can control its behavior. If your dog has passed a Good Canine Citizen course – awesome – that is nationally recognized by many landlords, towns and insurance companies as proof of a responsible owner and dog. If your dog barks when left alone in the home, arrange for it not to be alone by placing it in doggie day care or finding someone to take care of your dog when you're not home.

MOVING DAY

Be careful of pets when you move. Every so often you'll hear of a cat or dog that was accidentally transported across country in a moving van. Pets know something big is happening when they see moving boxes. Reassure your pet that everything's okay. Keep their feeding and exercise schedule consistent.

On moving day before exterior doors are wide open to load the moving van, confine your pet to one room in your old home with clothes that you've worn recently. Your scent will reassure your pet that all is well. Do the same when you arrive at your new home. Don't let your pet out of that room until you've finished unpacking. Instead spend quality time in the room with your pet – reading, cuddling, playing and doing other activities it enjoys.

Explore your new neighborhood with your dog on a leash for quite a while, even if the dog is completely obedient and didn't need a leash at your old home. Loose dogs – and cats as well – have been known to travel hundreds of miles to return to their old home. An ounce of prevention will save you weeks of heartbreak.

FINDING A NEW HOME FOR YOUR PET

If after an exhaustive search, you have not found a place that will allow your pet, invest the time and effort to find it a good new home. The best solution would be for your pet to go from sleeping on your couch to sleeping on a couch in the new owner's home without going into a shelter. Contact everyone you can think of through phone calls, emails or social media – check with family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances at your church, health club or any organization where you're a member. Be cautious about placing an ad online or as a poster.

Surrendering your pet to an animal shelter should be your last resort not your first. We're proud of the work WARL does along with other shelters and rescue groups in providing housing, care and medical treatment for homeless animals. The reality inside a shelter is that it's difficult to find homes for cute, young, healthy animals.

An older pet that has only known your company will likely spend weeks in the adoption area where it will become increasingly stressed and very likely ill from the stress.

If you decide to surrender your pet to a shelter, allow plenty of time for the surrender process. Call and arrange a time to surrender your pet, do not just bring it to the shelter the day you are moving. WARL is a limited intake shelter that only takes in animals when there is an open cage. We will not euthanize animals to make room for another animal. We need time for animals to move through our system, which empties a cage to take in another animal that needs help.

Please, be realistic about your pet. If you have a pet that you can't handle without getting hurt or one that is frail and very ill or quite old, euthanasia may be the most humane resolution for your pet. At least your pet will

have the familiar comfort of your presence at the end of its life, rather than dying alone, in confusion and fear, in the hectic environment of a shelter or an unfamiliar home.

There is one thing you should never do when you're moving – abandon your pet. That is against the law in Massachusetts whether you abandon the animal outside or inside your former home. You are responsible for your pet's life, not your former landlord or a Good Samaritan who might find your pet.

If despite the advice in this handout and suggestions from other sources, you have not found a place for your pet on moving day – take your pet with you to your new home and start the re-homing process there. Don't leave your pet behind. Your pet depends on you to take care of it. Its life is in your hands.

