

## Challenging Pet Peeves

HAVING PETS CAN MAKE FINDING a new home difficult, as many landlords forbid animals in their buildings. Yet according to FIREPAW, Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to improving animal welfare through research and education, this decision frequently arises from several misleading preconceptions that can have far-reaching effects on tenants because, FIREPAW President Dr. Pamela Frank said, companion animals are often considered to be members of the family.

In a recent FIREPAW survey, landlords cited damage bills as the driving cause of restrictive pet rules. However, FIREPAW's research found that converting a building to a pet-friendly environ-

ment can actually result in a net profit.

FIREPAW found that children cause at least as much damage and disturbance as the average pet. Still, restricting the occupancy of tenants with toddlers to those willing to pay additional "baby fees" would be an unacceptable practice. Pet deposits are common, however, and they usually more than compensate for pet damages.

The initial rental cost in buildings where pets are permitted tends to be greater by 20 to 30 percent. On average, twice as many people apply for vacated apartments in pet-friendly buildings as those who apply for pet-free living areas. Landlords who allow pets fill their rentals more quickly and retain their tenants for a significantly longer period of time, states FIREPAW's research. This leads to less spending on advertising as well as less money lost to vacated rooms.

In response to their survey results, FIREPAW started the Companion Animal Renters Program [CARP] to communicate these advantages to landlords, as well as teach interviewing techniques for new applicants and suggest various pet policies.

"There are good drivers and bad drivers, good employees and bad employees . . ." Frank explained, adding that FIREPAW attempts to "reframe the way that [landlords] think so that they come to see that there are no problem animals; there are good tenants and bad tenants, or tenants who need to be educated in order to coexist in an apartment situation."

CARP teaches ways in which transformation of pet-free buildings to pet-friendly buildings can be economically sound, and seeks to alleviate tenants' animal-related concerns so that pets can retain their position as humans' best friends.

For more information on FIREPAW and CARP, visit [www.firepaw.org](http://www.firepaw.org) or call 462-6939.

—Ariel Colletti

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