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Statistics favor the pet-friendly landlord

The issue for Drs. Pamela Carlisle-Frank and Joshua Frank is pretty clear. "People should never have to choose between animals and a roof over their heads. No more woof-or-roof policies," they say.

The doctors — an economist and a psychologist — head an organization called FIREPAW which is responding to an ongoing challenge in the land of pet pals. Even though more than half of American households have pets, and Americans spend a mind-boggling \$43 billion on their pets each year, there's a chronic shortage of pet-friendly housing.

"Despite what might seem intuitive — for landlords to increase their profits by tapping this large market pool and cashing in on the opportunity to charge more rent and additional deposits to tenants with pets — the reality is that most

Phil
Arkow
Pet
Pals



landlords are adamantly opposed to permitting pets," they say.

To help pet-reluctant landlords and pet-loving tenants come to an accord, FIREPAW conducted a national survey of renters and landlords. The results of the study were quite surprising.

The survey found that for most landlords, offering pet-friendly rentals is not only economically viable, but can actually increase profits. The rent premium for units allowing pets is usually between 20 and 30 percent, or an average of \$222 more per month.

There were other significant benefits to allowing pet-owning tenants. These renters stayed an average of 46 months compared to 18 months for those in properties prohibiting animals. The vacancy rate in pet-friendly apartments averaged 10 percent compared to 14 percent for other housing. Advertising costs averaged only \$15 per unit rather than \$32. And the average time to rent out a pet-friendly unit was 19 days compared to 29 days for a no-pets apartment.

While most landlords feared the damage that pets can cause, these fears turned out to be unfounded. One-half of the landlords surveyed said they had never experienced any damage, and the worst damage reported averaged \$430 — far less than the average pet deposit. The average damage caused by pets was \$362, compared to \$323 for tenants without pets.

And the damage caused by children was far more expensive.

Though insurance premiums for pet-friendly housing averaged \$150 more per year, that cost was less than the premium collected in just one month's rent. The annual net benefit per unit allowing pets was calculated at \$2,731.

To help present their case to prospective landlords, the Franks suggest that tenants provide pet resumes, training certificates, health certificates, and proof of sterilization and licensing to demonstrate their responsibility.

FIREPAW has prepared companion animal rental kits for tenants and for landlords, including screening and assessment tools. They customize the kits for New Jersey residents.

The kits are free, though the Franks ask a \$2 donation to cover postage and printing. You can or-

der them from FIREPAW, 228 Main St. #436, Williamstown, MA 01267, or at www.firepaw.org.

Keeping pets is a responsibility, not a right. With a little common sense and courtesy, "love me — love my pet" can become the watchword of landlord-tenant relationships.

The Oasis, an animal sanctuary in Williamstown, is holding a holiday fund-raiser with hopes of buying a farm for a permanent facility. If you'd like to assist with their capital campaign, call (856) 262-1222.

Pet Pals appears on alternate Saturdays. Phil Arkow of Stratford is an author and lecturer on relationships between pets and their owners and founder of the National Animal Control Association. Reach him by writing Pet Pals, Features Department, Courier-Post, P.O. Box 5300, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08034 or Arkowpets@snip.net or fax to (856) 627-2252.