

From the Chamber of Doom, (er, I mean) From a Lawyer's Perspective
by Phil Kabler (a genuine, dyed-in-the-wool lawyer... *uh, oh*)

You, your pet, and your apartment

People love their pets. Oh, how they love their pets! Dogs, cats, fish, birds, ferrets, pot belly pigs, snakes, insects, and on and on. (*B-T-Dubs*, how does one tickle Snookems the scorpion under the chin? I'm just asking.)

Pets, though, are active critters. And they are not well known for cleaning up after themselves or knowing boundaries or limits. That's why humans train their pets, clean up after them, leash them, and generally do everything needed to take care of them. Because the pets can't do those things themselves.

If you live in an apartment, there are some important things to keep in mind about having pets.

Firstly, does your landlord allow pets? Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. If there is not a pet provision in your lease, it is safest to assume you can't just bring Cuddles "home". And don't forget the obvious. If the lease says "No pets allowed" ... *well, then*, no pets allowed. And don't even think about sneaking a pet in "under the radar". "No one will ever know," you think. *But...* the landlord always finds out; and that can cause a tenant all sorts of consequences under the lease, like fines, for example. Or eviction, for another example. Avoid the problem. Don't do what you've agreed not to do.

Secondly, if your landlord does allow pets, look at your lease to determine if the animal or breed you want to bring home is permitted. Some local laws prohibit certain kinds of animals in apartments. For instance, defined dangerous breeds. Sometimes the landlord has preferences against certain animals or breeds. Circus elephants, for example. (Too much straw left around the yard.)

Fish pose a special challenge. "Why, oh, why?" you bemoan. "Muffy just swims in circles, doesn't ask for much, and doesn't talk much." *Well*, Muffy isn't the problem. (Unless Muffy is a piranha or some other munchy type.) The fact that Muffy lives in a tank full of water, and the tank can leak all over the place, *is* the problem. The leak is worse if the tank is above the ground floor because, due to gravity (*thanks, Newton!*), the H₂O goes downward to the ceiling below, drip, splash, mess. So you might need to buy special insurance to protect the landlord. Also, if the tank is not properly maintained it can smell pretty... (*um*) ripe. And, if the landlord is paying for your utilities, the filter and lights around the cute pink coral and deep sea diver never ever ever stop running.

Finally, if you can have a pet, please clean up after Tiny (often the name for a 300 pound St. Bernard) when you walk him (*you know what I mean*; I don't have to draw a picture, *right?*). And, be sure to carefully follow all your landlord's move-out protocols when you, Snookems, Cuddles, Muffy, and Tiny depart. No fleas allowed as holdover tenants!

So, in conclusion: Observe the local laws. Follow the terms of your lease. And if you have a question, ask your landlord. It's OK to ask. Pets bite. Landlords don't.

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