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TAIL WAGGERS IN THE CITY

The Pet-Friendly Apartment Hunter's Guide

What to read, ask, and check before you tour with a pet

Licensed Real Estate Salesperson — eXp Realty
Brooklyn · Queens · The Bronx

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Finding a Home That Works for Both of You

Shalinthia Miles is a licensed NYC/NYS animal handler, an ASPCA rescue partner, and a certified Fear Free® trainer.

Apartment hunting with a pet in New York City means reading documents more carefully, asking different questions before a tour, and knowing what's actually negotiable versus what's a hard building rule. This guide walks through exactly that — in the order you'll actually need it, from the first listing you click on to the day you move in.

CHAPTER 1

Why “Pet-Friendly” on a Listing Doesn't Mean What You Think

A “pet-friendly” label on a listing almost never means “any pet, any size, no questions.” It usually just means pets are allowed at all — the real terms (which species, which breeds, what weight limit, how many, what fee) live in the lease or the building's house rules, not the listing description.

Treat “pet-friendly” as a starting point for questions, not an answer. The next three chapters walk through exactly what to check before you assume a listing will actually work for your pet.

CHAPTER 2

Reading Lease Pet Clauses Line by Line

A pet clause is usually short, but every line does real work. Read for: whether pets are permitted at all, whether that permission can be revoked later at the landlord's discretion, any breed or weight limit stated, any cap on number of pets, and whether a separate pet addendum or deposit agreement is referenced but not attached.

If a clause references a building's own house rules or an HDFC co-op's proprietary lease, ask for that document too — the lease and the house rules don't always say the same thing, and the stricter one usually governs.

When something is unclear or missing, ask the landlord or managing agent directly and get the answer in writing before you sign — a verbal “that should be fine” is not the same as a written term.

CHAPTER 3

Pet Deposits, Fees, and What's Negotiable

Buildings that allow pets often charge some combination of: a one-time pet deposit (sometimes refundable, sometimes not — confirm which), a monthly pet rent or fee, or both. New York State law limits what a landlord can collect as a security deposit in many cases — ask directly whether a "pet deposit" is being treated as part of that cap, or as a separate fee, since the answer affects what's actually refundable.

What's sometimes negotiable: whether a fee is one-time versus monthly, and whether it can be waived or reduced for a smaller or older pet. What's rarely negotiable: a hard breed or weight limit set by the building's insurance policy — that's usually not the landlord's call to waive even if they wanted to.

CHAPTER 4

Breed and Weight Restrictions: Where They Actually Come From

Breed and weight limits almost always originate with a building's property insurance policy, not the landlord's personal preference — insurers set the list, and the building has to comply to keep its coverage. That's worth knowing because it means asking to make an exception is usually asking the wrong person.

This guide doesn't rank breeds by risk, and neither should any conversation you have about touring a unit — a building's restriction list reflects its insurer's underwriting, not a real assessment of any individual animal's temperament. If a building's list rules out your pet, the honest move is to look elsewhere rather than try to work around it.

CHAPTER 5

Questions to Ask the Landlord or Board Before You Tour

Before you schedule a tour with a pet in mind, confirm in writing: Is this specific pet (species, breed if applicable, approximate weight) permitted? Is there a pet deposit or monthly fee, and what is it? Is there a cap on the number of pets per unit? For a co-op, does the board require a separate pet interview or approval step, and how long does that typically take?

Getting these answered before the tour — not after you've fallen for the unit — saves a genuinely wasted trip, which is common enough that it's worth the extra text or email up front.

CHAPTER 6

NYC Dog Licensing: What's Required, Simply Explained

NYC Health Code requires every dog over four months old living in the city to be licensed with the city. The general process involves proof of a current rabies vaccination and a license application through NYC Health — as a licensed NYC/NYS animal handler, this is something I can walk clients through directly.

This section is informational only, not legal or municipal advice — requirements and processes can change, so confirm current rules directly with NYC Health before relying on any specific timeline or requirement.

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Text PETHOME to 646-863-8071
for pet-friendly home hunting help, any time.

Working with an agent who actually screens for pet policy saves real time — I check breed/weight limits, deposits, and board requirements before you ever tour a unit with a pet. No outcome is guaranteed, but a wasted trip usually is, without that screen.

Legal Notices

This guide is provided for general educational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or municipal advice. Pet policies vary by building, lease, and co-op/condo house rules — always confirm current terms directly with the landlord, board, or property manager before relying on anything stated here.

NYC dog licensing information in this guide is general and informational only, not legal or municipal advice. Requirements can change — confirm current rules directly with NYC Health before relying on any timeline or requirement described here.

Nothing in this guide guarantees that any specific unit, building, or landlord will permit a pet, approve an application, or complete a transaction on any timeline. Breed and weight restrictions, where they exist, are set by individual buildings/insurers, not by Shalinthia Miles or eXp Realty, and are never characterized here as reflecting actual risk posed by any breed.

This guide does not address emotional-support or service-animal housing accommodations, which are governed by federal and state fair housing/disability law — for that, consult a housing attorney or disability-rights organization directly.

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