



POLICY TITLE: PETS IN HOUSING

Reviewed by: AWMG

Date: October 13, 2016

Approved by: Management Team

Date: October 13, 2016

Approved by: Board of Directors

Date: October 18, 2016

The Animal Rescue League of Boston believes that the lack of accessibility to affordable pet-friendly housing contributes to the surrender and/or abandonment of companion animals.

Financial burdens pose barriers to finding appropriate housing. Massachusetts law prohibits landlords from collecting funds beyond the first and last month's rent with a security deposit of up to one month's rent and costs for the purchase and installation of locks and keys. Under existing law, any additional deposit is prohibited. However, the housing market is tight, particularly in the Boston area and, therefore, landlords and others require "pet fees" and/or pet deposits. The need to find pet-friendly housing often causes tenants to accept additional costs without complaint.

Specific breed restrictions limit housing accessibility. Massachusetts law prohibits cities and towns from enforcing specific breed restrictions. However, the law does not prevent insurance companies, private housing owners, public housing authorities, landlords, property agents and property managers from imposing such restrictions. Additionally, there are often characteristics such as the number of animals, height, size, and weight, which limit availability. Those factors often act as de facto breed restrictions.

Families who wish to foster or adopt children from the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families cannot own certain breeds of dogs. Dogs of certain breeds can become homeless when families wish to foster or adopt a child, but have a dog that conflicts with this policy.

The Animal Rescue League of Boston believes that the best and most objective measure of pets in housing involves an individual assessment of the animal or animals in question. Additionally, the Animal Rescue League of Boston believes that imposition of deposits or fees should only be for situations where the pet and owner actually receive additional services; or where monies are held in case of actual damage and where, if the funds remain unused, the fees and deposits are refunded.

The Animal Rescue League of Boston understands that pet owners must be responsible, caring owners, thoughtful in their choice of housing, and considerate of others in any housing situation.

Therefore, the Animal Rescue League of Boston will:

1. Support establishment of services such as behavior training to prevent surrender or abandonment due to housing issues;
2. Support measures that both ease landlord concerns and financial burdens on pet owners by permitting refundable pet deposits held in interest-bearing accounts;
3. Support measures which explicitly prohibit fees and/or deposits unrelated to services actually received or repairs for actual damage;
4. Support education and legislation to develop more pet-friendly housing;
5. Encourage housing owners, managers and agents to remove breed, height and weight restrictions;
6. Encourage responsible pet ownership through spaying, neutering and vaccination.