



Media Kit: Pet Inclusive Housing

On average, over 500 animals annually are abandoned or surrendered to Calgary Humane Society due to housing insecurity.

The Problem

Access to pet-friendly housing is one of the most significant and preventable drivers of pet surrender in Calgary. Each year, an average of 250 animals are surrendered to Calgary Humane Society (CHS) due to housing-related barriers, not because they are unloved or uncared for, but because their owners cannot find stable housing that allows pets.

As Calgary continues to experience a housing shortage and rising rental costs, the gap between pet ownership and available pet-inclusive housing continues to grow. While more than 61% of Canadian households own pets, only a small percentage of rental properties in Calgary allow them. Many renters report being denied housing because of a pet, while others remain in unsafe or unstable living situations out of fear of losing their companion animal.

The impact is especially significant for vulnerable populations, including low-income families, seniors, newcomers, and individuals experiencing crisis or housing insecurity. These barriers contribute not only to preventable pet surrender, but also to emotional distress, housing instability, and increased strain on animal welfare organizations and community support systems.

Research conducted by the Haskayne School of Business in partnership with Calgary Humane Society identified an important insight: most landlords are not opposed to pets themselves; they are concerned about risk. Concerns around property damage, noise, and liability often stem from lack of structure, inconsistent policies, or limited access to support resources rather than negative experiences with pet-owning tenants.

At the same time, research and landlord experience demonstrate that pet-friendly housing can be successfully managed through clear expectations, communication, and practical tools.

The Solution

In response, Calgary Humane Society and the City of Calgary are launching a city-wide Pet-Inclusive Housing Initiative focused on prevention, education, and collaboration.

The initiative aims to reduce housing-related pet surrender by increasing access to pet-friendly housing and providing landlords and tenants with the tools, resources, and support needed to create successful, stable tenancies.

Key components of the initiative include:

- A Pet-Inclusive Housing Resource Hub
- Landlord and tenant toolkits
- Practical pet agreements and screening resources



- Behaviour support and educational materials
- Emergency boarding and crisis support services
- Public awareness and community engagement campaigns
- Collaboration with landlords, housing providers, and social service organizations
- Advocacy for more pet-inclusive housing practices and policies

The initiative is grounded in a simple belief:

Pets are family, and housing should reflect that.

Rather than focusing on exclusion or restriction, the campaign promotes structured, behaviour-based approaches that support responsible pet ownership while helping landlords manage risk confidently and effectively.

At its core, the initiative is about keeping people and pets together, reducing preventable shelter intake, and building a more compassionate and inclusive housing system for Calgary.

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Campaign Statistics Sources:

- About 53 per cent of Calgary households have pets, according to a 2020 Leger survey conducted for the City of Calgary as part of the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review.
- Fewer than 10 per cent of lower-cost rental listings in Calgary allow pets, based on a Rentfaster.ca snapshot taken May 20, 2026, using listings priced at \$1,600 or less (based on The City of Calgary's definition of affordable).

Calgary Humane Society Contacts

Spokesperson for Pet Inclusive Housing

Carrie Fritz – Executive Director

Professional Bio:

Carrie Fritz was appointed Executive Director of Calgary Humane Society in 2014. Carrie is a CGA-CPA, who was drawn to a career in animal welfare and the not-for-profit sector from the start.

Carrie attended the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University, obtaining her accounting designation in 1996. She worked at a public accounting firm focusing on Audit and Assurance.

After returning to Calgary from a five-year contract in Boca Raton, Florida, Carrie was delighted to accept the position of Controller at Calgary Humane Society in 2007.



Since taking on the role of Executive Director, Carrie has focused on building a professional, highly skilled team to further all aspects of animal welfare.

Growing up in a family of teachers, she understands the importance of education and uses this to develop her team, so they can be successful in inspiring the community to take on the challenges of animal welfare and be responsible pet owners.

Media Calls

Anna-Lee Fitzsimmons – Director of Public Relations

(403) 723-6009

Email: anna-lee.fitzsimmons@calgaryhumane.ca

Program Inquiries

Sally Johnston – Director of Community Services

(403) 205-4455 Ex. 6561

Email: sally.johnston@calgaryhumane.ca

Donor Calls

Kaleigh Goehringer – Director of Fund Development and Philanthropy

(403) 723-6002

Email: kaleigh.goehringer@calgaryhumane.ca

Online Comments

Marissa Hansen – Manager of Communications

(403) 205-4455 Ext. 6535

Email: marissa.hansen@calgaryhumane.ca

Statistics from Haskayne Research Documents

Pet owners face significantly higher housing exclusion than non-owners

Tenant Analysis

- 58.2% of dog owners report that finding pet-friendly housing is “extremely difficult.”
- 72.7% of renters with non-traditional pets (rabbits, birds, reptiles, etc.) report “extremely difficult.”



- By contrast, only 26.2% of non-pet owners who *want* a pet report extreme difficulty.

More than half of pet-owning renters have been denied housing because of their pet

Tenant Analysis – Pet discrimination

- Among renters who have ever been denied housing for pet-related reasons,
 - 54.1% are dog owners, compared to 31.7% among those never denied.

Apartments—the largest rental category—are overwhelmingly closed to pets

Landlord Analysis – Housing type × pet acceptance

- Only ~4–5% of apartment-building landlords report allowing pets at all.
- 0% reported fully open, all-pet policies.
- 36.8% of condo landlords prohibit pets outright, often due to bylaws rather than tenant risk.

The “supply gap” is structural, not behavioural

Landlord Analysis – Experience vs outcomes

- Landlords who prohibit pets report higher rates of damage and turnover challenges (73.7%) than landlords who allow pets (45–57%).
- Pet-friendly landlords are 2–5× more likely to report *no challenges at all*.

Housing pressure is directly linked to pet surrender risk

Non-Profit Organizations Analysis

- Over two-thirds of agencies serving pet-owning clients report pets are “often” or “very often” cited as a housing barrier.
- Agencies that work frequently with pet owners report near-universal exposure to clients considering pet surrender due to housing rules.

How many Calgarians have pets?

The most reliable City of Calgary data shows:

- Just over 50% of Calgary households own a pet
 - 27% dogs



- 15% cats
- 11% both dogs and cats

*This is from the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw Review in March 2020

How many rentals are pet-friendly?

There is no single official municipal count, but all available signals point to a much smaller share:

- The landlord survey shows:
 - Apartments (the dominant rental form): ~4–5% allow pets (Landlord Analysis)
- Major listing platforms (RentFaster, Zumper, Rentals.ca) display pet-friendly filters, but even combined, pet-friendly listings represent a minority subset of total active rental listings at any time.
 - These platforms list *hundreds* of pet-friendly units in Calgary, while total active rentals number several thousand citywide

Without having a firm, confirmed statistic, responsible framing for the campaign:

- **While over half of Calgary households have pets, only a small fraction of rental housing (especially apartments) explicitly allows them, creating a systemic supply gap.**

Impact Stories Related to Pet Inclusive Housing

Duke & Rosie

When Duke and Rosie first arrived at Calgary Humane Society's Emergency Boarding Program, it wasn't because they were unloved. Their owner walked through the doors carrying the unbearable weight of a mental health crisis, terrified they could no longer provide stability for the two dogs who had become their family. Staff recognized immediately that this was not a simple surrender; it was a person in crisis trying desperately to do the right thing while holding on to the only consistent source of comfort they had left.

For more than 90 days, Duke and Rosie waited. Their owner moved in and out of hospital care, fighting to regain stability while searching endlessly for affordable, safe housing that would allow both a tiny Chihuahua and a Doberman. Time after time, doors closed. Rentals were too expensive. Others refused large breeds. Many simply would not allow two dogs.



In the end, the surrender had nothing to do with love, commitment, or care. It came down to housing. A person who desperately wanted to keep their dogs was forced to say goodbye because affordable, pet-friendly housing simply did not exist for them.

Pickles & Walter

Pickles and Walter entered Emergency Boarding after their owner's life was suddenly turned upside down. In the chaos that followed, one thing became painfully clear: finding housing that accepted two large dogs was nearly impossible.

Their owner exhausted every available option. Support agencies stepped in. Multiple agencies became involved. Shelter programs worked tirelessly to advocate on their behalf. Yet every application seemed to end the same way. Hope disappeared the moment landlords learned there were two large breed dogs involved.

With nowhere left to turn in Calgary, the owner was forced to relocate to another city in search of support and opportunity, while Pickles and Walter remained behind in boarding care. Every extra day apart weighs heavily on both the dogs and the person trying desperately to reunite with them.

Their story is not one of neglect or irresponsibility. It is the story of someone doing everything right, asking for help, and still being unable to overcome the barriers created by a lack of affordable, pet-friendly housing.

Poncho

Poncho was more than just a dog- he was an emotional lifeline for the children in his family. When the family received an eviction notice for having a dog in a no-pets rental unit, everything changed overnight.

The fear inside the home was immediate. The family faced an impossible choice: lose their housing, or lose the dog their children depended on for comfort and stability. There were serious concerns about the emotional impact on the youth, including fears they might take drastic measures simply to avoid losing Poncho.

Calgary Humane Society admitted Poncho into Emergency Boarding, where he was quickly placed into a foster home while the family searched for another place to live. Days turned into weeks as they navigated a rental market with very few affordable pet-friendly options.

Then, finally, they found housing willing to accept Poncho. The family was reunited, and one small dog returned home to the children who loved him. It was a rare success story.



And a reminder that even then, the outcome may have been different if Poncho had been a larger breed dog.

Chunk

Chunk was deeply loved. His owner worked hard to ensure he received proper veterinary care and support through Calgary Humane Society’s Community Services programs, including wellness care. He was neutered, well-behaved, and caused no damage or disruption in the home.

But none of that mattered when housing policies entered the picture.

The owner’s rental agreement only allowed one pet. Faced with the threat of eviction, they were told they had to surrender or rehome Chunk immediately. The devastating reality was that this was not about the dog’s behaviour, health, or care—it was simply about an arbitrary housing restriction.

Heartbroken, the owner described the experience as something that “forces people that care for and love [their] animals to chose which one to give up.”

For families already struggling to maintain stable housing, these policies create impossible decisions. People are not surrendering beloved pets because they want to. They are surrendering them because the housing system leaves them no other choice.

Calgary Humane Society Animal Intake Statistics

Intake Reason	2022	2023	2024	2025	Avg.
Access to Care	24%	15%	18%	15%	18%
Too Many Animals	17%	12%	19%	20%	17%
Access to Housing	9%	15%	16%	16%	14%
Death/Health of Family	7%	22%	11%	9%	12%
EB/PSK	9%	7%	10%	10%	9%
Abandoned	12%	9%	8%	8%	9%
Behaviour	4%	3%	4%	5%	4%



Intake Reason	2022	2023	2024	2025	Avg.
Allergies	6%	4%	4%	6%	5%
Changes to Lifestyle	6%	7%	4%	6%	6%
“Mismatch”	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Home Set Up	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Animal-Centric Reasons	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aggression & Behaviour Issues	65	67	73	76
Allergies	90	97	74	90
Lifestyle Changes / Unrealistic Expectations	98	149	68	102
Destructive / Training / Time Concerns	104	118	85	86
Inadequate Yard / Housing Setup	1	9	7	12
Total	358	440	307	366
% of Owner Surrenders	22%	20%	18%	23%

Human-Centric Reasons	2022	2023	2024	2025
Abandoned*	201	192	142	126
Too Many Animals / Unplanned Litters	269	268	329	321
Access to Care / Financial Pressures	393	329	303	236
Death / Health of Family	106	474	187	152
Access to Appropriate Housing	153	336	267	256
Emergency Boarding & Pet Safekeeping	147	163	173	153



Human-Centric Reasons	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total	1,269	1,762	1,401	1,244
% of Owner Surrenders	78%	80%	82%	77%

Frequently Asked Questions & Media Responses

Why is Calgary Humane Society involved in housing?

Calgary Humane Society is seeing a growing number of animals surrendered due to housing-related barriers. Many families are forced to give up beloved pets not because of neglect or lack of commitment, but because they cannot find stable housing that allows animals. Addressing pet-inclusive housing is a preventative approach that helps keep people and pets together while reducing pressure on animal shelters and community support systems.

What is pet-inclusive housing?

Pet-inclusive housing refers to rental or housing environments that allow pets while using clear, structured policies to support successful tenancies. It does not mean “no rules.” Instead, it focuses on reasonable expectations, communication, and risk management practices that support both landlords and tenants.

Is this initiative asking landlords to accept all pets without restrictions?

No. The initiative encourages landlords to move away from blanket restrictions and toward structured, behaviour-based policies. Landlords can still establish reasonable expectations, agreements, and management practices that protect their property and support successful tenancy outcomes.

Are pets really a major factor in housing instability?

Yes. Research conducted with the Haskayne School of Business and frontline data from Calgary Humane Society show that housing barriers are a significant contributor to pet surrender and housing instability. Community organizations also report that pets are frequently cited as barriers to accessing shelter, rental housing, and supportive housing services.

Don't pets cause more damage and complaints?

Research suggests that concerns about pets are often overestimated. In fact, landlords who prohibit pets reported higher rates of property damage and cleaning or turnover challenges than landlords who allow pets. Clear agreements, communication, and structured expectations are stronger predictors of successful tenancy than pet restrictions alone.

Why focus on landlords?



Most landlords are not opposed to pets themselves—they are concerned about risk, liability, and uncertainty. This initiative aims to provide practical tools, resources, and support that help landlords confidently manage pet-inclusive housing in a structured and consistent way.

What supports are available for landlords?

The initiative provides landlords with:

- Pet agreements and lease addendums
- Screening and reference templates
- Behaviour and conflict-resolution resources
- Educational materials and myth-busting information
- Guidance on communication and implementation
- Access to Calgary Humane Society support resources

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What supports are available for tenants?

Tenants can access:

- Pet resume templates
- Guidance for renting with pets
- Responsible pet ownership resources
- Behaviour support and training information
- Free behaviour consultations and helpline support through CHS
- Emergency boarding and crisis support programs where applicable

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Does pet-friendly housing benefit landlords?

Yes. Research and landlord experience suggest that pet-friendly housing can:

- Expand the applicant pool
- Reduce vacancy periods
- Improve tenant retention
- Support longer-term tenancy stability
- Create a competitive advantage in tight rental markets

Does this initiative involve changing legislation?



At this stage, the initiative is focused on education, awareness, collaboration, and practical tools. It also seeks to encourage broader conversations around pet-inclusive housing practices and future housing policy considerations.

What is Calgary Humane Society hoping to achieve?

The goal is to reduce preventable pet surrender by increasing access to stable, pet-inclusive housing. By supporting landlords, tenants, and housing partners with practical resources and education, Calgary Humane Society hopes to build a more compassionate and inclusive housing system where fewer families are forced to choose between housing and their pets.

How can landlords or organizations get involved?

Landlords, housing providers, developers, social service agencies, and community organizations can:

- Access the landlord toolkit and resource hub
- Explore pet-inclusive policy options
- Partner with Calgary Humane Society
- Participate in education and awareness efforts
- Help expand housing opportunities for people with pets

Will Calgary Humane Society advocate for policy change related to pet-inclusive housing?

Yes. Calgary Humane Society recognizes that long-term, sustainable change will require collaboration across multiple sectors, including government. As part of this initiative, Calgary Humane Society will work toward municipal and provincial policy change through its government relations strategy. This includes engaging policymakers, housing stakeholders, and community partners to encourage more pet-inclusive approaches in rental, affordable, and supportive housing development. The goal is to reduce preventable pet surrender, improve housing stability, and ensure more families can remain together with their pets.