

Discussion notes: Pets

Most co-ops allow members to have pets. Pets improve the quality of life for many people, and this is something co-ops generally support. It's part of creating a healthy community.

But uncontrolled pets can also be a source of conflict in co-op communities. When pet problems come up it is often said: "the problem isn't the animal, it's the owner". So a pet policy needs to make the responsibilities of pet owners clear.

Before you get into the specifics of your co-op's pet policy, your members may want to have a broader discussion of the value, as well as the difficulties, animals can bring to your community. You can use these points below to guide your discussion.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of permitting certain types of pets:
 - to individual members?
 - to the co-op as a whole?
2. What types of policies or regulations will maximize the benefits of allowing pets and minimize the disadvantages?
3. How will the policy balance the rights of members and the needs of the co-op with regard to keeping pets?
4. Some members may believe large dogs are frightening to small children and may cause more wear and tear on units. Others may argue that there is no need to limit size because a dog's behaviour, not its size, is the source of these problems.