

2026 SURVEY REPORT

# The State of Pets in Rental Housing



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# Executive Summary

It's an indisputable fact: Americans love pets. According to data from the American Pet Products Association, **71%** of U.S. households own a pet.

But that high percentage doesn't tell the full story. Research by the Pew Research Center found that **97%** of U.S. pet owners say their pets are part of their family to some extent. About 51% of pet owners go further and say their pet is as much a part of their family as a human member. According to new data gathered by PetScreening, only **43%** of renters report owning pets.

With our **2026 State of Pets in Rental Housing survey**, PetScreening set out to see how operators are appealing to pet owners, what benefits they see from welcoming pets, the challenges of managing onsite pet populations, and how they're managing risk.

All of this leads to another indisputable two-fold conclusion: today's rental housing operators have to create great living experiences for pet-owning residents. They also have to minimize pet- and animal-related risks and ensure compliance with applicable rules and regulations.

## Key Findings

- Pet ownership is rising across rental portfolios, with **81%** of operators reporting growth in pet ownership.
- **43%** of renters reported having pets, a figure notably lower than national pet ownership estimates, highlighting the value of clear pet policies and consistent screening practices in improving undisclosed pets.
- Most operators believe their properties are appealing to pet owners, with **68%** rating their properties a **4 or 5 out of 5** for pet friendliness.
- Operational challenges persist, with unauthorized pets and pet-related damage cited as leading issues.
- Despite these challenges, operators report clear benefits to allowing pets, including increased demand, higher resident satisfaction, and improved lease renewals.



The survey findings highlight the profound benefits that rental housing operators can experience by welcoming pets. But they also point to the challenges that having pets and assistance animals onsite can pose. Furthermore, they underscore the importance of having systems, processes and solutions in place to manage pet and animal populations and minimize risk.

# Respondent & Property Profile

The 2026 State of Pets in Rental Housing report was compiled in January 2026 through the survey responses of **673** property management and leasing professionals.

## Among the respondents:

- **20.40%** of survey respondents have a portfolio of less than 100 units
- **63.65%** have 100 to 500 units
- **7.82%** have 501 to 1,000 units
- **8.13%** have more than 1,000 units



## Property Types Managed:

- **46%** Conventional multifamily
- **54%** Single-family residential



# Pet Policy Management

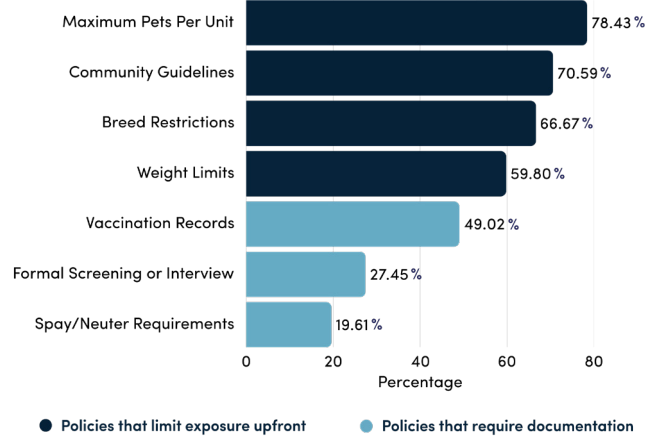
The following findings reflect responses from non-customers only and are intended to provide a view into broader industry practices outside the PetScreening customer base.

To understand how rental housing operators manage pets onsite, PetScreening asked respondents to detail specific pet policy components in place across their portfolios.

The most prevalent components are those that limit exposure to risk upfront. Maximum pets per unit (**78.43%**), community guidelines (**70.59%**), breed restrictions (**66.67%**), and weight limits (**59.80%**) are widely used. By contrast, policies that require documentation, screening, or ongoing enforcement are less common. Only **27.45%** of respondents report using a formal screening or interview process, fewer than half require rabies vaccination records (**49.02%**), and just **19.61%** enforce spay/neuter requirements.

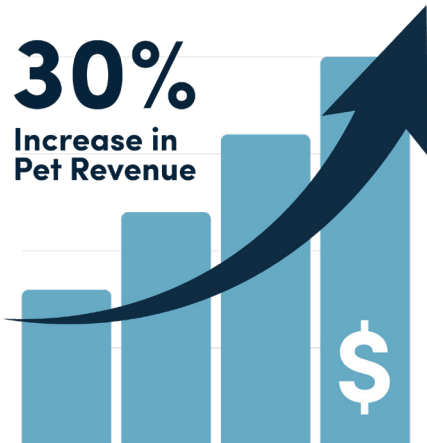
Most operators have implemented monetization strategies tied to pet ownership. Nearly seven in ten charge pet rent (**68.63%**), and about half collect a non-refundable pet deposit (**50.98%**). Refundable deposits are far less common, cited by **23.53%** of respondents.

## Pet Policy Components Adopted by Non-Customers

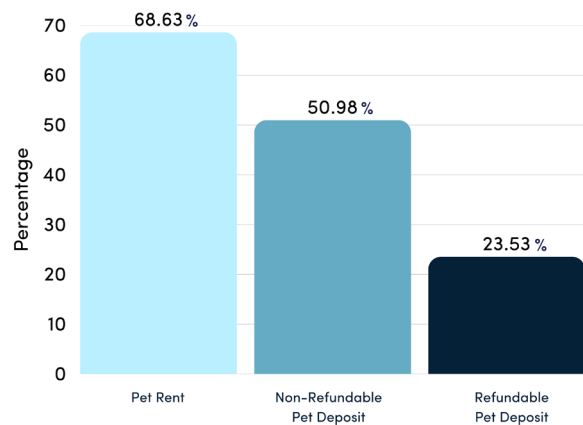


## For PetScreening Customers:

**30%**  
Increase in  
Pet Revenue



## Pet Monetization Strategies Adopted by Non-Customers



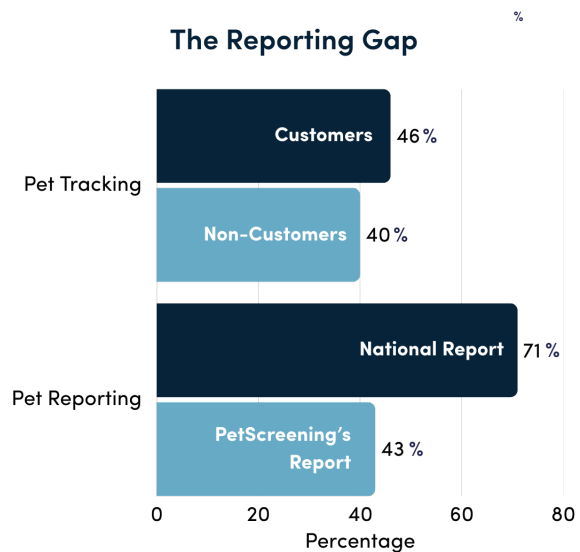
While these responses illustrate how pet policies are commonly structured across the industry, PetScreening customer data highlights the financial impact of pairing pet-friendly policies with formal tracking and screening tools. When asked, "After implementing PetScreening, what percentage has your pet revenue increased?" PetScreening customers reported a mean increase of **30.72%** in pet-related revenue. This contrast suggests that operators may be under-monetizing pet ownership due to limited visibility of pets on-site.

# The Pet Visibility Gap

The survey data shows striking consistency in pet prevalence among renters year over year. Respondents estimated that **43%** of residents have pets, nearly identical to the **44%** reported in the 2024 PetScreening State of Pets survey. While this stability may appear reassuring at first glance, it also highlights a limitation of reporting. When reported pet ownership remains flat YoY despite growth in the broader pet population, it raises a red flag about visibility and tracking accuracy at the property level.



Further analysis of our survey data underscores the importance of accurate pet tracking. Specifically, customers reported a significantly higher rate of pet ownership (**46% of residents**) compared to non-customers (**40% of residents**). This 6-percentage-point difference suggests that by implementing comprehensive pet management solutions, housing operators are able to better surface and track existing pets.



A significant difference between our findings and external data highlights a potential issue with pet reporting in rental housing. Specifically, the American Pet Products Association's 2025 report indicates that **71%** of U.S. households own at least one pet. This figure is nearly **30 percentage points higher** than the pet ownership rate reported by housing operators, suggesting that many pets in rentals may be unauthorized or underreported.

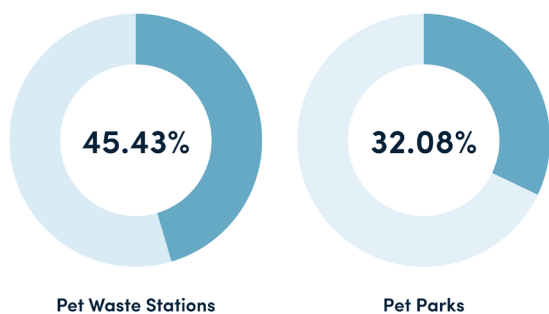
This gap between actual pet ownership and reported pet data may become a bigger issue as pets become more central to renters' lives. Without accurate tracking, housing operators may be underpricing pet-related fees and unknowingly exposing themselves to pet-related risks.

**It's unmistakable:** pets are more prevalent than ever and more important to renters than ever before. Implementing systems to accurately track pets empowers housing operators to align their policies, pricing and risk management with reality.

# Pet Amenities and Services

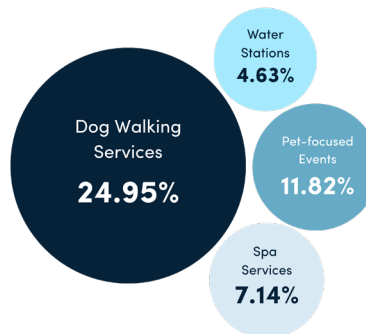
Pets are a key driver in renter decision-making. Apartments.com’s 2025 renter search data shows that more than half of renters using pet filters specifically search for dog-friendly communities, making pet-friendliness a core factor in listing visibility and leasing performance. The following findings from our State of Pets survey explore how housing operators are supporting pet-owning residents and where opportunities exist to better align with renter expectations.

## Pet-Related Amenities in Rental Housing



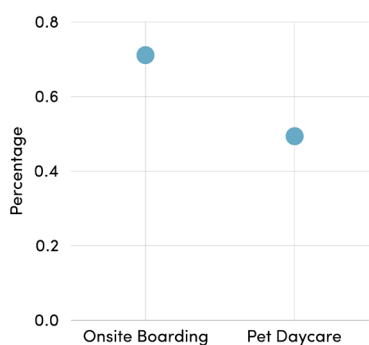
Survey results show that pet-related amenities in rental housing are still largely focused on operational management rather than experiential enrichment. The most common features—pet waste stations (45.43%) and pet parks (32.08%)—support cleanliness, damage mitigation, and shared outdoor use, but offer limited differentiation in competitive markets.

## Resident-Focused Pet Services



Amenities designed to enhance the pet-owning experience and foster community engagement are far less prevalent. Only 24.95% of respondents offer dog walking services, and just 11.82% host pet-focused events, suggesting that many operators have yet to tap into services that directly support convenience, connection, and lifestyle value for pet owners. Purpose-built enhancements such as grooming or spa services (7.14%) and pet water stations (4.63%) remain niche offerings rather than standard expectations.

## Specialized Pet Services



More operationally complex services are virtually absent from most rental portfolios. Onsite boarding (0.71%) and pet daycare (0.49%) are offered by fewer than 1% of respondents, indicating that operators either perceive these services as cost-prohibitive or lack scalable models to deliver them.

Across the industry, most operators provide baseline pet accommodations, but relatively few deliver amenities that create a meaningfully enriched pet experience. As renters evaluate housing through the lens of their pets’ quality of life, this gap represents a competitive opportunity.

Investing in high-impact, lower-complexity offerings such as pet events, local service partnerships, or upgraded outdoor amenities may strengthen resident satisfaction, encourage renewals, and differentiate properties in crowded markets without introducing excessive operational burden.

# Pet-Related Risk & Damage

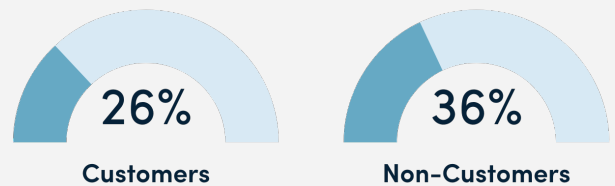
Welcoming pets onsite can increase demand and revenue, but it's not without certain risks. Survey respondents report that, on average, **31.47%** of units experience pet-related damage, with mean repair costs of **\$567** per affected unit. Fortunately, the average 1-month security deposit held by the property manager covers this damage but it does indicate that nearly one-third of units incur additional turnover expenses attributable to pets. This shines a light on the importance of proactive mid-lease inspections to emphasize responsible resident pet ownership while also mitigating any possible damages usually identified after a resident vacates the unit.

**\$567** per unit

Average cost of pet-related repairs

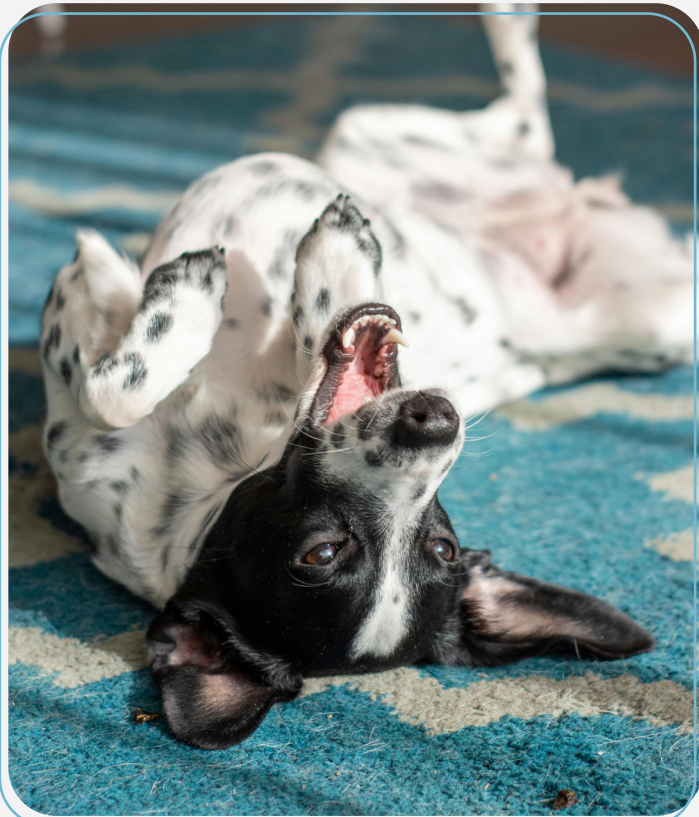


## Reported Damage by Customers vs. Non-Customers



Notably, there is a meaningful difference between customer and non-customer respondent groups. PetScreening customers report damage in **26%** of units, compared with **36%** of non-customers. This **10 percentage point gap** suggests that PetScreening customers may be better positioned to manage pet-related risk, potentially due to differences in pet policy enforcement and consistent screening practices.

PetScreening helps customers protect their assets by assessing pet-related risks early in the lease application process. Through careful screening of pets and owners, and by documenting pet-related damages upon move-out, customers can identify incoming pets with a history of property damage or other elevated risk factors. This allows customers to make informed decisions when approving pets on their property.



# Pet-Related Operational Challenges

Survey respondents ranked the most challenging pet-related issues faced by onsite teams. Having pets and assistance animals onsite can pose a wide array of challenges for onsite teams beyond the risk of property damage. The biggest challenges are:

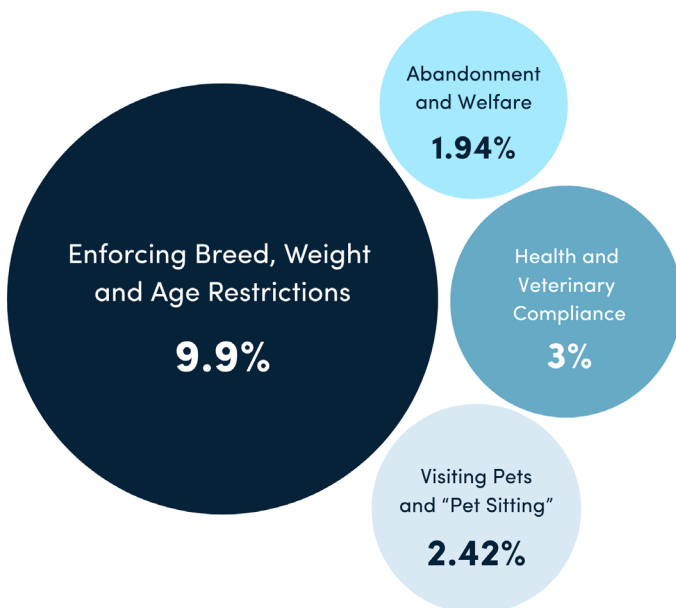
1. Unauthorized pets
2. Property damage
3. Screening assistance animal accommodation requests

Other challenges, in order, include pet waste, pets off-leash, bites or physical harm, pets in unauthorized community areas, and pet noise. While lower-ranked, each represents ongoing operational, safety, or resident experience considerations.

Ranked Pet-Related Challenges for Onsite Teams



## Other Pet-Related Concerns



Breaking the ranked challenges into categories reveals that administrative and compliance issues are as critical as physical or financial risks:

- **Administrative/compliance:**  
Unauthorized pets, assistance animal screening, pets in unauthorized areas
- **Physical/property risks:**  
Property damage, bites or physical harm
- **Community experience:**  
Pet waste, off-leash pets, noise

Digging further, 413 respondents provided short-form responses to detail their other top pet-related concerns.

A summary of their responses can be found on the next page of this report.

# Pet-Related Operational Challenges Continued

## Enforcing Breed, Weight, and Age Restrictions: 9.9%

Restrictions: 9.9%

This was the most frequent "other" category. Respondents struggle with enforcing policies around specific types of animals:

- **Insurance and liability:** Managing "restricted breeds" specifically due to property insurance requirements.
- **Breed misrepresentation:** Residents knowingly misrepresenting their pet's breed during the application process to bypass restrictions.
- **Puppy growth:** Issues with puppies being accepted under a weight limit but growing to exceed it later (e.g., "puppy is below our weight limit but at grown weight is too large").
- **Age limits:** Some properties prohibit puppies or kittens entirely (requiring pets to be at least 1 year old) to protect the property, which can be difficult to manage.

## Visiting Pets and "Pet Sitting": 2.42%

A major loophole in property management involves temporary animals:

- **Unapproved guests with pets:** Guests bringing pets to visit, and in some cases, those who violate policy weight limits or breed types.
- **Informal pet sitting:** Residents "pet sitting" for friends or family for short periods without notifying the office or going through screening.
- **Fostering:** Residents fostering animals without prior permission to manage.

## Health and Veterinary Compliance: 3%

Compliance: 3%

Ensuring that pets on the property are healthy and properly documented is a significant administrative burden:

- **Rabies vaccination tracking:** Ensuring residents formally acknowledge that their pet has a current rabies vaccination, tracking the expiration dates of vaccinations, and requiring proof of rabies vaccinations.
- **Spay/neuter:** Managing residents who do not comply with spay or neuter requirements.
- **Pests:** Managing issues like fleas and excessive shedding in units.

## Abandonment and Welfare: 1.94%

- **Abandoned pets:** Dealing with pets left behind after a resident moves out.
- **Separation anxiety:** While often leading to noise, separation anxiety was noted as a standalone behavioral issue affecting the well-being of the animal.
- **Unattended pets:** Pets being left alone for extended periods or left outside on "tie-downs" or chains.



This data underscores the value of leveraging technology and service providers, like PetScreening, to save time, streamline operations, enforce community policies, and maintain legal compliance.

### Operational Impact of Pet Policy Management Software:

1. Enforce pet policies and document all pets onsite.
2. Verify assistance animals while reducing manual oversight.

# Pet and Animal Population Management Practices

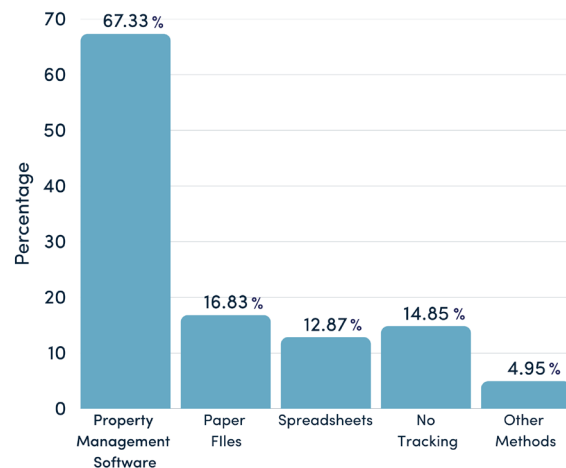
To successfully manage the pets and assistance animals living within a managed portfolio, property managers must have the right technology and processes in place. According to our survey, operators are using the following tools to oversee their pet and animal populations:

- Property management software – **67.33%**
- Paper files – **16.83%**
- Spreadsheets – **12.87%**
- No tracking – **14.85%**
- Other methods – **4.95%**

While most operators rely on software solutions, nearly one-third of operators use manual or ad hoc methods, highlighting a significant opportunity to reduce operational and compliance risks. Adopting a data-driven pet management system is not just a convenience, it is a compliance and risk mitigation strategy that delivers measurable operational impact.

**In 2025, PetScreening enabled operators to save approximately 1.3 million administrative and legal hours reviewing and verifying assistance animal accommodation requests, mitigating exposure to regulatory violations and potential litigation.**

**Methods Used to Track Pets and Assistance Animals**



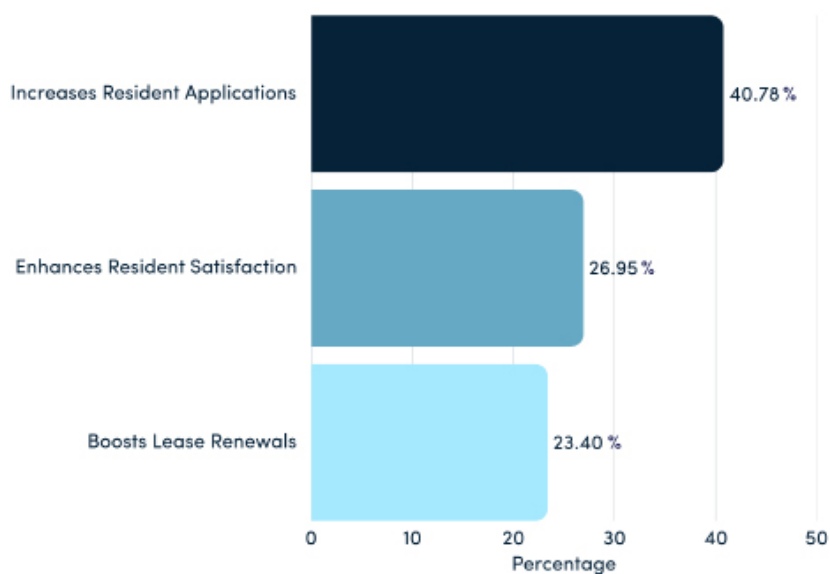
## Risk vs. Benefit: Pet Assistance Animal Management

| Metric / Risk Area                                 | Manual Tracking (Paper, Spreadsheets, None)                          | Software-Based Tracking                                       |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Compliance with HUD &amp; FHA</b>               | Inconsistent documentation → higher risk of violations               | Standardization process → full regulatory alignment           |
| <b>Unauthorized Animals</b>                        | Higher likelihood due to lack of centralized records                 | Real-time tracking and automated approvals                    |
| <b>Missed Pet Fees / Revenue Loss</b>              | Revenue leakage from unknown pets, misrepresented assistance animals | Automated pet fee tracking ensures capture                    |
| <b>Administrative Hours</b>                        | High manual effort, repetitive tasks                                 | Streamlined workflows, potential savings (1.3M hours in 2025) |
| <b>Operational Risk (Property Damage / Safety)</b> | Difficult to monitor, slower response to incidents                   | Alerts and audit trails reduce incidents                      |
| <b>Legal Exposure</b>                              | Increased risk of fines, complaints, or lawsuits                     | Reduced legal exposure through standardized documentation     |
| <b>Scalability</b>                                 | Limited; grows more complex with property size                       | Easily scalable across portfolios of any size                 |

# Business Benefits of Allowing Pets

Being pet-inclusive is a way to drive property performance and business results. According to survey respondents, allowing pets increases resident applications (**40.78%**), enhances renter satisfaction (**26.95%**), and boosts lease renewals (**23.40%**). These results show that pet-friendly policies do more than accommodate existing residents. By fostering a truly pet-inclusive environment, operators can tap into a broader market of potential renters, keep pet owners at their communities for an extended period, and differentiate themselves in a competitive rental market.

Impact of Being Pet-Inclusive



# Volume & Trends:

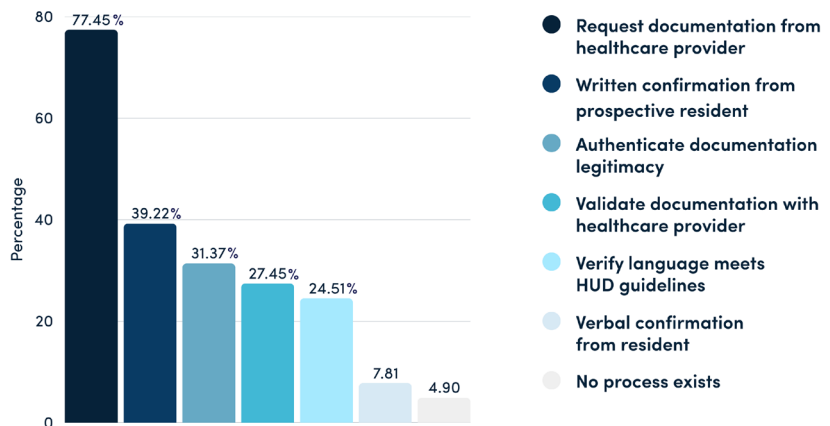
## Managing the Complexity of Assistance Animal Accommodations

Housing operators face a significant operational and compliance challenge when processing reasonable accommodation requests for assistance animals. Although properties are legally required to grant reasonable accommodations, the process is often complex, time-consuming, and carries high stakes. Errors in handling these requests can lead to Fair Housing violations, and there is also the risk of receiving requests made in bad faith (such as attempts to avoid pet fees or circumvent breed restrictions).

### Frequency and Prevalence

- Average requests per month (all respondents): **2.75**
- Non-customers: **5.99** ESA requests per 100 units in the last 12 months
- PetScreening Customers: **5.65** ESA requests per 100 units in the last 12 months
- Average resident prevalence: **16%** of residents have an assistance animal

### Methods Reported to Assess ESA Requests by Non-PetScreening Survey Respondents



1. Most operators rely on healthcare documentation. This indicates awareness of compliance obligations. **HOWEVER,**
2. Verification gaps exist. Fewer than one-third verify documentation with providers or check for HUD compliance, **AND**
3. Many operators lack a formal process, significantly increasing their risk of legal/operational exposure.

### PetScreening can help operators manage ESA requests efficiently by:

1. Streamlining compliance through standardized documentation collection and verification
2. Mitigating risk by flagging incomplete or potentially fake requests
3. Minimizing liability by providing operators with clear, auditable processes
4. Allowing onsite teams to focus on resident satisfaction by reducing their administrative workload



# Key Insights & Recommendations

This year's State of Pets in Rental Housing report has covered a lot of ground. Here are some of the major takeaways of the survey:

## Pet inclusivity improves a property's performance:

The benefits of allowing pets onsite include increased resident applications (mentioned by **40.78%** of respondents), increased resident satisfaction (**26.95%**), and increased lease renewals (**23.40%**).

These improvements should prompt operators to consider relaxing breed, weight and other restrictions as much as possible. By doing so, operators can effectively gain a larger renter pool and remain competitive with communities that are more pet-inclusive. Implementing technology that can screen individual pets and owners allows operators to reduce these restrictions.



## Pet inclusivity can still be challenging:

Respondents ranked unauthorized pets brought into the home as the most challenging pet-related issue. Property damage, screening assistance animal accommodation requests and pet waste were the other top-ranked challenges.

However, these challenges can be overcome when operators partner with the right solutions and pet-management experts. With the right technology and partner in place, operators can better assess the risk posed by individual pets and owners and make sure pet owners are complying with all community rules.

## Assistance animal accommodations continue to cause unnecessary stress:

Managing these requests is often complex, time-consuming, and stressful for associates. While improper denials can lead to Fair Housing violations, staff must also contend with requests that are not submitted in good faith, often involving fraudulent and deceptively convincing documentation as well as documentation obtained from unscrupulous internet-only ESA letter-mill companies.

**The bottom line:** by working with the right service provider, operators can loosen pet restrictions, allow more pets onsite and boost revenue while also managing risks and efficiently handling assistance animal accommodation requests.



# FidoAlert Highlights

Throughout this report, operators consistently point to the importance of delivering a positive, pet-inclusive resident experience while maintaining safety and accountability across their communities. One often-overlooked aspect of that experience is helping residents protect what they value most—their pets.

Lost pets are a common and emotionally charged reality for pet owners, and they can have ripple effects across rental communities. Providing residents with tools that help prevent loss, support quick reunification, and reduce strain on local shelters represents a meaningful way operators can extend pet-friendly policies beyond compliance and into care.



## Protecting Residents' Pets: A Key Pet-Owner Benefit

- **10 million** pets are lost or stolen annually.
- **One in three** pets will go missing in their lifetime.
- **9%** of lost pets are never reunited with their owner and euthanized.
- **Only 10%** of lost pets without a tag are reunited with their owners.
- **72 hours** is the average required hold time for U.S. animal shelters before euthanization.

However, as operators consider how they can best serve their pet-owning residents, it should be comforting to know they can offer a proven and free method for finding and reuniting lost pets with their owners.

## FidoAlert: A Proven Solution for Reuniting Lost Pets

FidoAlert, created by PetScreening Founder and CEO John Bradford, is an “Amber Alert for Pets”. As an incredibly unique and valuable benefit of using PetScreening, FidoAlert provides a free, proven method for locating lost pets quickly.

**Key features include:**

- **Network enrollment:** Any pet owner in the U.S. can self-register their pets through FidoAlert (or TabbyAlert for cats), entering up to 10 trusted emergency contacts.
- **Digital alerts:** If a pet goes missing, a lost pet alert is instantly sent via SMS and email to everyone in the network near the location of the lost pet.
- **Free customized tags:** Each registered pet receives a tag with the pet’s name, unique ID, and QR code, enabling anyone who finds the pet to instantly notify the owner even if they aren’t in the network.
- **Fast owner notification:** Once scanned, the system immediately alerts the pet owner and their emergency contacts with location information and contact details.

## In 2025 alone, FidoAlert:

- Reunited **12,000** lost pets with their owners.
- Sent **5.15 million** lost pet SMS text alerts.
- Gave away **35,000** free pet tags.
- Protected **over 2 million** pets registered in its network.

Since launching just a few years ago, FidoAlert has reunited over 61,000 lost pets with their owners. By connecting residents to the FidoAlert network, rental communities provide a tangible, high-value service that helps pet families stay together. This can improve satisfaction for residents, strengthen their emotional attachment to the community, and differentiate your property as truly pet-friendly.

# Conclusion

There's no way around it: To attract and retain the modern renter and optimize NOI, operators must provide residents and their pets with a first-class living experience.



When rental housing properties embrace pet-inclusivity, they can boost demand and drive revenue. Forward-thinking operators who reduce pet-related restrictions as much as possible and implement cutting-edge amenities and services can create considerable competitive advantages.



But as this report also shows, welcoming pets and assistance animals onsite presents an array of operational and risk-management challenges. The current labor market, where many communities are short-staffed or face frequent associate turnover, only exacerbates these challenges.



By partnering with the right technology providers and risk-management experts, operators can have the best of both worlds: they can welcome pets to boost property performance while knowing they're protecting their assets.

**Stated simply,**  
becoming pet-inclusive isn't something to do on a whim. It requires careful planning to create a framework that attracts residents and drives renter satisfaction while maximizing resident compliance and mitigating risk.

**Meet Silo!**

PetScreening's Chief Bark Officer





2026 SURVEY REPORT

# Thank You!

**CONTACT US**

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