

Pet Deposit & Fees Guide for Landlords

General information for long-term rentals · Not legal advice · State and local laws vary

Three different charges

Pet deposit	A refundable amount held against pet damage beyond normal wear and tear. In many states it counts toward the total security deposit limit.
Pet fee	A one-time, non-refundable charge. Some states and cities don't allow non-refundable fees or require all deposits to be refundable.
Pet rent	A monthly charge added to rent. Some places regulate it, so check local rules.

Good practices

- **Put it in writing.** Use a pet addendum that lists each pet, the deposit, fees, pet rent, and rules on waste, noise and leashes.
- **Be clear and up front.** Publish breed and weight limits, the number of pets allowed and every charge in the listing. Clear policies attract renters who fit.
- **Apply your policy consistently** to every applicant with a pet.
- **Document condition.** Take dated photos at move-in and move-out to support any deductions.
- **Return deposits on time.** Follow your state's deadline and itemize any deductions in writing.
- **Consider asking for renter's insurance with pet liability** where your state allows it.
- **Ask for a pet résumé:** vaccinations, spay/neuter status, training and past landlord references.

Assistance animals are not pets

Under the federal Fair Housing Act, service and assistance animals (including emotional support animals) are not pets. Pet deposits, pet fees, pet rent, and breed or weight limits generally can't be applied to them, though a tenant can still be responsible for actual damage. Federal guidance changed in 2025 and state laws vary. See our assistance animals guide at petfriendlypad.com/assistance-animals.

State and local laws vary

Deposit caps, rules on non-refundable fees, return deadlines and pet rent rules differ by state and city. Check your state and local landlord-tenant law, or ask a local attorney, before you set your policy.

General information, not legal advice. This guide is for general education only and isn't a substitute for advice from a licensed attorney in your state.

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