



Image: Matt Roberts

Pet owners driven to desperate measures

It can take up to seven times longer for pet owners to rent a home. That's why Dogs Trust is campaigning for a change in attitude from agents and landlords.

Our Lets with Pets survey, launched in Wag last summer (and huge thanks to all who took part), reveals that of the 5,695 pet owners asked, 1 in 3 was unable to find a suitable home. According to FindaProperty.com's Rental Index for 2011, non-pet owners take an average of 50 days to find a home; but for over half of pet owners, this increases to anything from two months to a whole year.

This comes as no surprise to Lorraine Hershon, whose family struggled so much to find a home in Southport before moving to Northumberland, that they ended up buying a caravan and living in it for three months.

"It was a nightmare: my husband, son and I plus three dogs living in a caravan! At least it was over the summer so it wasn't too cold. Finding suitable properties is still a huge problem for most pet owners."

Our 18 rehoming centres reported a 56% rise in the number of people handing in dogs due to housing problems over the last five years. We are concerned that more people might be forced to face this agonising decision, or might even have their dog put to sleep out of desperation.

"We're urging letting agents and landlords to take a 'Pets Considered' approach"

Dogs Trust's outreach projects manager, Clare Kivlehan, runs the Lets with Pets campaign. She urges letting agents to keep an open mind about pet owners:

"We have signed up over 145 lettings agencies across the UK as campaign supporters, but our research shows that the majority are still not giving pet owners the chance they deserve. We're urging agents and landlords to take a 'Pets Considered' approach, rather than rejecting all pets."

The campaign also aims to make it easy for owners to search on property websites rather than having to make special enquires, and we're eager to hear from any agencies keen to back the campaign. So if you have property to let, do consider accepting pets so that together we can maintain our reputation as a nation of pet lovers.

Call 020 7837 0006 or visit: www.letswithpets.org.uk