

CAMPUS PET POLICY

Pets are prohibited from *all* buildings on campus, an exception being service animals accompanying disabled persons:

1. From food service areas, by regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
2. From academic and administrative buildings (including the Campus Center), by the Faculty Senate approval of a motion made by the University Health Council in December 1975.
3. From residence halls and apartments (living units), by long-standing order of the Board of Trustees.

Animals in residence halls have become a paramount environmental health problem on this campus in recent years. Many students fail to realize that the keeping of pets in group living arrangements may present health problems very different from those encountered in the home. The influence of these animals on the comfort and health of other residents should be a matter of concern to all students, and should be considered above the personal satisfaction of keeping a pet.

Three of the health problems which may be encountered follow:

First, many persons are known to be allergic to animal hair, scurf, or urine; the cat seems to be a special problem in this regard. Some persons with an intense allergy need only to enter a room where animals have been kept in the past to have an acute attack.

Second are diseases. Those transmitted between animals and humans are called zoonoses and approximately 100 of these are known. A few representative ones are:

Salmonellosis Probably the most important public health -- animal health problem, it is transmitted to humans either directly from animals or indirectly through contaminated products of animal origin -- found in most warm-blooded and many cold-blooded vertebrates; food-producing animals frequently infected, and companion pets (dogs, cats) and other household pets (turtles, birds) have also been found to be carriers of these bacteria. The overall problem of salmonellae and pets is unknown, but authorities think that it is substantial. Acute gastroenteritis is most common human involvement, with anorexia (lack of appetite) and looseness of bowels often persisting for several days.

Leptospirosis Many veterinarians consider this a serious problem among pet (dog) and farm animals -- human illness varies from inapparent to very serious, with liver and kidney damage -- can be mis-diagnosed as other illnesses -- agent shed in urine of infected animal, with transmission by direct contact or through a vehicle -- canine illness varies considerably; chronic dog infection may remain unobserved by owner, while dog may continue excreting organism, maybe as long as 3 to 5 years.

Cat Scratch Fever This is a mysterious illness caused by scratching, biting, licking, etc. Many times cats, especially kittens, have inapparent infection and show no evidence of

illness. This disease may cause prolonged disability; it is more serious than "mono," for which it may be mistaken. There is no known effective treatment.

Toxoplasmosis This protozoan disease, originally associated with undercooked or raw meat, is now associated with the dog and cat. The cat has been specifically implicated because of a peculiarity in its digestive system which lets the agent begin a unique sexual cycle, and which results in an oocyst being eliminated in feces. The oocyst can be considered pollen-like and can easily become air-borne, with transmission possible by inhalation or ingestion. It appears that the agent may be responsible for many congenital malformations, with damage occurring during the final six months of pregnancy.

Psittacosis This disorder is related to sick or seemingly healthy birds. Household birds, especially parakeets and parrots have been the most frequent sources of the agent. Dogs and cats may also harbor the organism. Transmission is usually by inhalation of dust from dried droppings and feathers in an enclosed environment. The organism may be excreted from feces for long periods after recovery of the animal from clinical disease. Human disease may be severe (lung involvement), but is often mild.

Animal pets carry many other parasites (various worms) and vectors (fleas and ticks) which could cause disease. Because of their intimate association with humans, the dog and cat are probably more important as reservoirs than other animal pets.

Third, pet animals have been known to bite or scratch persons, even those known to them. Young dogs are more likely to bite than older ones. The bites and scratches can result in serious, painful injuries, which can also be contaminated by microorganisms; tetanus, rabies, pasteurellosis, and cat-scratch fever have occurred.

Many persons are deathly afraid of pet animals, especially the dog, and when they enter a residence hall it should be their right not to have to encounter a dog in the foyer, lounge areas, or a corridor. Also, in this country there is a growing preference for owning larger dogs, with bites being more severe as a consequence.

In the same regard, the free-roaming dog and resultant dog packs have been a problem at times in North Village and the Southwest area. Several persons have been bitten in North Village and the Southwest area. Several persons have been bitten in North Village, and parents have expressed great concern for their children's safety. Also, piles of feces on North Village lawns have brought complaints from parents.

Responsibility of caring for pets has been a main source of difficulty in residence halls and has alienated the custodial staff. Everyone enjoys feeding a pet, but there are few volunteers when it comes to cleaning up waste matter. It is also impossible to arrange group responsibility in this area of concern, especially if the animal is sick, overly messy, ill-tempered, or otherwise difficult.

Odor and noise from pets can become a problem. These conditions generally are inoffensive to the owner, but may be of considerate annoyance to neighbors.

Furnishings in residence halls can become damaged by feces and urine; this damage sometimes is very difficult to correct, and leaves an unpleasant odor. Puppies by chewing and cats by clawing can cause damage which is difficult and expensive to repair.

Food to feed the pet would have to be kept in the owner's room. If not stored satisfactorily, it could draw insect pests or rodents.

It is not kind to keep pets in the confines of a residence hall room or confused in group living circumstances.

Abandonment of pets, especially cats, can become a problem. (Kittens are cute and cuddly, but cats can become a messy nuisance.) This usually occurs just before long vacation periods or at the end of a semester, and it should not be the responsibility of staff to cope with this problem.

In the crowded confines of University housing, facilities for the satisfactory housing of pets are really not available, and it is much more difficult to control pets so they do not become nuisances, expose persons to potential health hazards, or cause insanitary conditions.