

PET RULE REFORMS:

A Landlord's Guide to the 2025 Changes



As you may be aware, the Government's new pet rules take effect from 1st December 2025, changing how pets are approved and how pet-related damage is managed in rental properties. These changes aim to make renting more accessible for responsible pet owners, while also giving landlords clearer pathways to recover costs if pets cause damage. The key shift is that landlords can no longer simply say "no pets" by default and decisions now need to be based on reasonable grounds. Pet bonds can be taken to help protect your investment. The goal is to balance fairness, flexibility, and protection and our role is to guide you through that confidently.

When do the new rules start?

1st December 2025. Until then, you cannot charge a pet bond. From 1st Dec, the new pet-consent rules, pet bonds and pet-damage liability apply.

Can I charge an extra bond for pets?

Yes. You may require a pet bond up to two weeks' rent, in addition to the general bond (which is still capped at four weeks). Only one pet bond can be held at a time. Pet bonds must be lodged with Tenancy Services, and can be topped up if rent increases and refunded when the pet leaves.

Do tenants still need my consent to keep a pet?

Yes. Tenants must have your written consent, unless the tenancy agreement already allows pets. You may set reasonable conditions (e.g., professional carpet clean at end of tenancy; no pets in certain areas), and you may decline on reasonable grounds.

What counts as "reasonable grounds" to say no?

You can only decline a pet request if there are reasonable grounds. Examples may include the property being unsuitable for the

type of pet (e.g., no fencing for a dog), body corporate rules prohibiting pets, or the tenant refusing reasonable pet conditions (such as professional carpet cleaning). You must reply in writing within 21 days, otherwise the request is automatically approved. Further detailed guidance from Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is expected closer to the start date, and we will update owners as this becomes clearer.

Can I limit the type or number of pets?

Yes. Consent can include reasonable conditions such as "one small dog only" or "indoor cats only" or "no puppies under X months." The key is that conditions must be clear, written, and reasonable to enforce. We'll help you word these correctly to avoid future disputes.

What if the tenant secretly gets a pet without asking?

This is still a breach of the tenancy agreement. We follow the standard breach process, which can include notices and Tribunal action if required. The new law does not give tenants the right to acquire pets without consent.

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Does the pet bond apply per pet?

No. One pet bond total, regardless of the number of pets. However, you can limit the number of pets via the consent conditions.

Who pays if a pet causes damage?

Tenants are liable for the full cost of pet damage that's beyond fair wear and tear. The Tribunal can apply the general bond and/or the pet bond toward any amount owed. Your ordinary landlord insurance should still be reviewed to ensure alignment and we can provide information on landlords insurance.

What if my tenant already has a (lawful) pet before 1st Dec 2025?

The tenant does not need to re-seek consent for that existing pet. You cannot charge a new pet bond or add new pet conditions for that existing pet. If the tenant seeks consent for a new pet after 1st Dec, the new rules (including pet bond/conditions) apply.

How do pet bonds work in practice?

From 1st Dec, the MBIE bond system will enable lodgements, top-ups (if rent increases), and refunds for pet bonds, for both new tenancies and existing tenancies when a new pet is approved. We manage this process for our owners.

Are disability assist dogs included?

No. Disability assist dogs are excluded from pet-consent and pet-bond requirements. Permission is not needed and a pet bond cannot be charged.

Do I have to charge a pet bond?

No — the pet bond is optional. As the landlord, you can decide whether to require one when granting pet consent. Many landlords will choose to charge the

pet bond for added protection, particularly for properties with new carpets, upgraded interiors, or higher maintenance risk. Others may choose not to charge it in order to keep their listing more competitive in the rental market. We will discuss your preference with you case-by-case.

Could this create competition between properties — where some landlords require a pet bond and others don't?

Yes, that's likely. Just as rent levels and pet conditions vary now, we may see some landlords use the absence of a pet bond as an incentive to attract tenants more quickly, while others prioritise added protection and choose to charge it. There is no "one right approach" here. The market will settle over time as both landlords and tenants understand how pet bonds affect affordability and property care. We'll monitor the local market closely and advise you on what's working, so your property remains competitive and protected.

Do I need to change my tenancy agreement now?

Not until the tenant requests a pet or a new tenancy starts after 1st December. We will update your documents automatically as needed — no action required from you.



What should I do now as an owner?

- Set your policy: Decide if you will allow pets case-by-case, and what reasonable conditions you want (e.g., number/type of pets, de-fleaing, end-of-tenancy carpet clean).
- Insurance check: Confirm your policy covers pet damage and matches the new liability settings. (Best practice recommended alongside the new rules.)

How will Watson Integrity manage this for me?

A: We'll: (1) handle pet requests and consent letters, (2) set and lodge pet bonds correctly, (3) record clear pet conditions, (4) complete robust entry/exit reports (360° photos where available) to evidence any damage, and (5) act promptly on any breaches or damage claims through the correct process. (Process aligned to Tenancy Services guidance.)

Quick facts for landlords

- Start date: 1st Dec 2025. No pet bonds before this date.
- Pet bond: up to 2 weeks' rent, on top of general bond; one at a time; lodge/top-up/refund via Tenancy Services.
- Consent & conditions: written consent required; may impose reasonable conditions; can only refuse on reasonable grounds.
- Damage: tenant fully liable for pet damage beyond fair wear & tear; Tribunal may apply general and/or pet bond to arrears/damage.
- Existing lawful pets (pre-1 Dec): no re-consent; no new pet bond/conditions for that pet.

Like any law change, there are pros and cons. On the positive side, landlords now have access to a specific pet bond, clearer liability rules for pet damage, and better transparency around expectations. At the same time, the requirement to consider pet requests case-by-case will mean slightly more admin and documentation, and in some cases, firmer conversations about suitability and house condition. The good news is: you don't have to manage any of this alone. We'll handle pet requests, set appropriate conditions, lodge pet bonds correctly, and ensure your tenancy agreements and insurance settings are aligned. If you have questions about how this applies to your specific property, just get in touch — we're here to help you navigate the changes with confidence and clarity.

**267 Broadway Avenue
Palmerston North 4414
06 353 1925**



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