

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
of the  
**UNIVERSITY HEALTH COUNCIL**  
concerning  
**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON PET ANIMALS**

Presented at the  
424<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate  
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University of Massachusetts at Amherst

University Policy  
On Pet Animals

Summary

Policy:

Pet animals are prohibited from all buildings at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, except for guide dogs accompanying blind, hearing-impaired, or other handicapped persons. The policy includes, but is not restricted to, Food Service areas, academic and administrative buildings, and all residence halls and apartments under the jurisdiction of Housing Services. In addition, dogs or other pet animals are not allowed to run loose or unrestrained on the lands of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The owner, keeper or handler shall hold the dog or other animal on a leash or otherwise maintain immediate physical control of the animal when crossing University property. The ultimate responsibility for enforcement of the Pet Policy will rest with the Department of Public Safety.

Current Practice:

The current practice regarding pet animals on campus is that they are prohibited from all buildings, with the exception of guide dogs accompanying blind, hearing-impaired, or other handicapped persons.

1. From food service area, by regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 105 CMR 590.000: State Sanitary Code Chapter X – Minimum Standards for Food Establishments.
2. From academic and administrative buildings (including the Campus Center) by the Faculty Senate approval of a motion made by the University Health Council, December 1975 (Sen. Doc. No. 76-003 and Motion No. 01-76).
3. From residence halls and apartments (living units), by current leases between the tenants and Housing Services.

Although the current practices seem adequate, they do not really address the enforcement of the above policies, when violations occur.

Background

With over sixty million pets (dogs and cats) sharing living quarters with families in the U.S., recent articles in the literature have indicated pet animal problems which can adversely affect public health. There has been an observed increase in pets on campus in recent years with resultant health and safety problems. Observations during the spring of 1985 indicated an increase in unrestrained (running loose) dogs on campus; there was a considerable increase in reported dog bites in the University community. It would seem desirable for the University to issue a general policy statement on this subject for use by the Amherst Campus.

**Definition:**

Pet animals would include such ordinary pets as dogs and cats; also, rodents, birds (such as parakeets, pigeons, parrots), turtles, snakes, and “exotic” wild animals. Fish in tanks or bowls would not be considered “pets” under this policy.

**The Problems:**

The problems created by pets can be classified into three main categories: health, sanitation, and nuisances.

**A. Health Problems**

1. **Allergy.** 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 reaction.
2. **Diseases (Infections).** Those transmitted between animals and humans are called zoonoses and approximately 100 of these are known. A few representative ones are:
  - a. **Salmonellosis.** Probably the most important public health-animal health problem. It can be transmitted to humans either directly from animals or indirectly through contaminated products of animal origin. Companion pets (dogs, cats) and other household pets (turtles, birds) have been found to be carriers of these bacteria. Acute gastroenteritis is a most common human involvement.
  - b. **Leptospirosis.** Many veterinarians consider this bacterial disease a serious problem among pet dogs. The agent is shed in the urine of the infected animal with transmission by direct contact or through a vehicle. Human illness varies from unapparent to very serious, with liver and kidney damage and it can be misdiagnosed as other illnesses.
  - c. **Cat-Scratch Fever.** This is a mysterious illness caused by scratching, biting, licking, etc. Many times cats, especially kittens, show no evidence of disease. There may be varying degrees and patterns of fever, with lymph nodes in the area of the scratch or bite being affected.
  - d. **Toxoplasmosis.** This protozoan disease is associated with the dog and cat, with the cat being specifically implicated. The illness can be acquired by contact with feces (in litter pans and soil) from infected cats. The organism can become airborne, with transmission possible by inhalation or ingestion. It appears that the agent may be responsible for congenital malformations, with damage occurring during the final six months of pregnancy.
  - e. **Pets may carry parasites (various worms) and vectors (fleas and ticks) which could cause disease.**

3. **Bites.** Pets 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 selected scratches can result in serious, painful injuries, which can also be contaminated by microorganisms; tetanus, rabies, pasteurellosis, and cat-scratch fever have occurred.
4. **Excrement.** Feces may contain microorganisms and worms which can cause human disease. The nematode larvae of Toxocara canis and Toxocara cati have been found to be common in soil samples and present a potential problem to children, especially preschoolers.

**B. Sanitation Problems.**

1. In residence halls, owners of pets would keep food to feed them. If not stored satisfactorily, it can draw insect pests or rodents.
2. In any building where a pet would be kept, excreta may be deposited and found in hallways and lounges or on rugs and/or furniture and would contaminate trash receptacles. Most people do not want to clean up after some else's pet. Custodians resent having to cope with this problem. Improper disposal of excreta leads to health, odor, and nuisance problems.

**C. Nuisance Problems.**

1. **Excrement.** If pets are allowed to roam on the outside, fecal matter deposited on the ground becomes a problem, from the possibility of becoming a breeding place for flies in warm weather, to bringing complaints from parents in housing areas when their children step in the piles of feces on the lawns. Urine can also damage plantings.
2. **Noise.** High-pitch yapping and loud barking can be nerve-racking and stressful to many persons. Dogs confined to swelling or rooming units or tied up outside a University building can be very noisy and annoying to the University community.
3. **Odor.** Odors from pets can become a problem. They may be inoffensive to the owner but be of considerable annoyance to neighbors.
4. **Running in Packs.** The physical danger from free-roaming dogs has been a problem from time to time on this campus. Parents in housing complexes have expressed concern for their children's safety and marauding packs have mutilated animals at Tillson Farm.
5. **Accidents.** Free-roaming pets have caused traffic accidents by running in front of motor vehicles. Bicyclists and motorcyclists can also be a target of frustrated canines.

6. **Furnishings.** 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.
7. **Abandonment.** Abandonment of pets, especially cats, can become a problem. This has usually occurred 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.

#### **DETAILED POLICY STATEMENT**

**A. Pets are prohibited from food establishments.**

Managers of food establishments will be responsible for seeing that pets are kept out of these facilities. In extraordinary cases where customer cooperation becomes difficult, the Department of Public Safety may be requested to assist in enforcing the public health regulation. Also, Environmental Health and Safety may be asked to provide assistance by explaining the public health law to the violator.

**B. Pets are prohibited from academic and administrative buildings.**

Complaints by occupants of academic and administrative buildings regarding pets causing a nuisance may be made to Environmental Health and Safety for investigation. Appropriate action to abate a problem will be taken by notifying the offending person and the department head, chairman, or manager that the current pet policy prohibits pets from all campus buildings. When a pet is brought into a classroom, the person bringing it in shall be asked by the instructor to remove it. If requests for pet removal are ignored, the Department of Public Safety may be asked to intervene.

**C. Pets are prohibited from residence halls and apartment complexes.**

Housing Services staff shall be responsible for controlling pets in these areas. Conference Services staff shall be responsible for controlling pets where conferences are housed. In unusual circumstances, Environmental Health and Safety may be asked to get involved in enforcement proceedings. The Department of Public Safety may be asked to intervene if requests for pet removal are ignored.

**D. No person shall allow a pet dog of which he/she is owner or keeper to enter any building on campus.**

The pet dog shall not enter upon open University property unless the animal is held firmly on a leash or under the full control of its owner, handler or keeper. No animal will be allowed to be unleashed in violation of an order of the Animal Officer. No pet shall be allowed to enter any building on campus.

**E. Leash Regulations.** The purpose of these regulations is to control dogs which run loose or are otherwise unrestrained on the lands of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The following regulations for the control of such dogs are hereby adopted and are to be administered and enforced by the Chancellor of the Amherst campus or his designee.

1. The owner, keeper or handler shall hold the dog or other pet firmly on a leash or otherwise maintain the immediate physical control of the dog or other pet.
2. The owner, keeper or handler shall not allow the dog or other pet to do damage to either the body or property of any person or to any property under the care, custody or control of the University.
3. The owner, keeper or handler shall not allow the dog or other pet to worry, kill, maim or otherwise injure fowl, livestock, horses or domesticated animals.
4. The owner, keeper or handler of the dog or other pet shall not allow the pet to create a nuisance by reason of vicious disposition, excessive noise or other disturbance. This would include the tying-up of a pet on University property for a period of time while the owner or handler is away from the pet on other "business."
5. The dog or other pet shall be licensed in compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth.
6. **UPON VIOLATION OF REGULATIONS:**

Any person may complain to the Department of Public Safety of the University at Amherst about any dog or other pet involved in a violation of the preceding regulations. Upon receipt of a complaint, an officer from the Department will investigate and may cause to be seized any pet found by him/her to be the subject of a violation of these regulations. The pet will thereupon be transferred to the animal pound in the Town of Amherst. Upon impoundment, or as soon as possible thereafter, the Department of Public Safety will attempt to notify the owner or keeper, if ascertainable from some device on the pet, of such impoundment and of the owner's or keeper's right to redeem the pet from the pound upon payment of any required charges to the Town of Amherst pound keeper.

**G. Arrangements with Town of Amherst.** The Department of Public Safety shall make special arrangements with the Town of Amherst for their pet officer to come on campus to enforce the leash law at the request of and on behalf of the University to restrain dogs and other pets whose activities were in violation of University pet policies.

**Enforcement:**

The public health, sanitation, and nuisance problems can be controlled by proper pet restraint and enforcement of campus policy on pet animals. The ultimate responsibility for enforcement of the pet policy will rest with the Department of Public Safety.

**Telephone Numbers :**

**Department of Public Safety: 545-2124**

**Environmental Health and Safety: 545-2682**

**MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed University Policy on Pet Animals, as  
49-88 described in Sen. Doc. No. 88-053.**