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Warranties Offered to Help Pet–Owners Lease Properties

By dan the roommate man

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A pet–loving Internet entrepreneur has launched a new Web site that he hopes will help pet owners have an easier time renting apartments by providing them a warranty against property damage. The site is Leasewithpets.com.

Founder Keith Snow said he and his wife developed the company because they had a hard finding rental units that would welcome both them and their dogs.

"My wife and I have dogs," he said. "We had a lot of problems with landlords who did not accept us because of fear of pet damage." He believes apartment owners will be more willing to accept tenants with pets if they know they will be reimbursed for pet damage. Having a warranty insures that a property owner will be paid for pet damages without tenant litigation.

Snow says the new site will open in the Atlanta market this month and attempt to grow nationwide.

The company actually appears to be less of a dot.com company than it is a real estate service provider. A corporate statement said it would sell pet deposit warranties to apartment owners and managers, as well as to pet owners who lease housing.

"These warranties will protect a landlord from potential pet damage for up to \$5,000 per unit," said Snow. "They can function in addition to or as a replacement for a standard pet deposit, which generally only covers minor damage."

Also, the company says pet owners can use a temporary warranty, which is free, to try to convince unwilling landlords to accept their pets – along with themselves – as tenants.

The pet deposit warranties will cover soiled, chewed and destroyed carpets, linoleum, woodwork, drapes and doors for units that house cats and dogs that are one year old or older.

The cost for one pet is \$200 per year plus a one time partially refundable deposit of \$275.

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Properties that already require pet deposits can benefit from leasewithpets.com as well. These apartments can be further protected with pet warranties, without charging tenants twice. The properties can simply pay for the pet warranties with already collected funds.

Snow says that according to Humane Society figures, there are 6.5 million animals living in shelters because their owners were not allowed to keep them in rented properties. He hopes that leasewithpets.com will "change pet acceptance in apartment communities."

Leasewithpets.com plans to work with animal shelters nationwide to help provide viable accommodations for pets in lieu of homelessness. The company also plans to begin fund–raising for pet protection with various humane societies.

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Not all apartment leases are created equal

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Before signing any lease:

- * Take a walk through the unit that you are renting to make sure it is in good repair.
- * Be sure to read the lease completely. All leases are not the same.

What should be included in your lease:

- * All verbal promises should be reduced to writing within the lease.
- * Are there provisions for a job transfer within the lease?
- * How and when do you give notice to move? Must you give notice even when the lease expires and you wish to move? Can you go month to month at the expiration of you lease?
- * How long does the landlord have to return your security deposit once you have moved.
- * Who is responsible for the repairs to the apartment? If you move into an apartment complex, there are usually maintenance people to take care of all needed repairs. On the other hand if you are renting from a private landlord, you may be responsible for part or all of the repairs.
- * Are late fees addressed in the lease?

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- * Who is responsible for the utilities?
- * What happens if you cause damage to the apartment?

If you want to make a change to the lease, cross out the clause in question. Then both you and the landlord must initial the change for it to be binding.

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