

Property guide for pet minding

Key features of pet minding properties

There are **two key property criteria** to consider when selecting a pet minder if your pet is going to live at the minder's home: **security** and **safety**.

Each pet minding situation needs to be individually assessed, and both the pet owner and pet minder must assume shared responsibility for the security and safety of the pet being minded.

Pet security while being minded is of paramount importance. Animals that escape are at high risk of being injured or permanently lost.

- **Pet behaviour unpredictable:** Although pet owners know their pets well and should have a good idea about how to securely contain their animal, they cannot always predict how their animal will react in an unfamiliar environment and in their absence. When animals are placed in a new environment, they are often nervous and eager to return home. Pets that would not normally attempt to leave their familiar home, despite poor fences or other available escape routes, can transform into creative escape artists when first placed in an unfamiliar environment. For this reason, a pet minding premises must be equally or more secure than the pet's own home. If there is any possibility for escape, then the property is unsuitable.
- **Security needs differ:** Different animals have different security needs; a property that is perfectly secure for one pet may not be for another. For example, a Chihuahua may not need high fences, but it will be important that gaps under the fence/gate or between the palings are too small for the animal to squeeze through. Those small gaps will not be important for containing a Great Dane, but the height of the fence/gate at its lowest point will be of concern.
- **Personal circumstances:** A pet minder's personal circumstances may also influence security; although a dog may be perfectly secure in the yard, forgetful children or neighbours who access the yard may fail to close the gate properly. Similarly, a cat may be perfectly secure indoors until the children run through its room and leave the door ajar, or fail to close the door properly after stopping in to give it a cuddle.

Therefore, the security of a pet minding property depends on many things: the type of animal being minded, the age, size, and temperament of the animal being minded, and the circumstances of the pet minder (family/friends/existing pets). **To ensure pet security both of the following are important:**

- **Pet owners must inspect the property** of a potential minder to be confident that it will safely contain their pet (remember, even pet minders who come highly recommended may not necessarily meet the security needs of every pet).
- **Pet minders must ensure that their property is escape-proof** by installing adequate equipment, such as child-proof latches and double gate systems, and by taking other necessary precautions to mitigate risk, as dictated by their particular circumstances.



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Pet safety while being minded is another important consideration.

- Untidy, chaotic homes can be hazardous for inquisitive pets in unfamiliar surroundings. Pet minders and pet owners alike should be vigilant about ensuring/demanding cleanliness and tidiness. These are personal qualities that provide an important clue to the level of care that will be offered to a pet. Pet minders are conducting a business at home, and it is reasonable to expect similar standards for cleanliness and tidiness that would be applied to any other commercial business property.



- Inadequate ventilation and overheating can also pose a safety issue for animals that are locked inside a room or house (as all felines should be, as well as some puppies). If the premises is not screened and windows and doors must be locked to ensure the animal's security, it is important that the area is adequately ventilated—for example, by air conditioning—to prevent heat stress.



- Unsecured bodies of water—including pools, dams, and unemptied bath tubs—can present a drowning hazard for pets. It is important to ensure that access to such areas are blocked off at all times.



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RSPCA Qld's property guide for cats and kittens

Cats and kittens must be kept inside at all times, in either the whole house or one area of the house. Window and door openings to the cat's area must be securely blocked at all times. Cats should only be able to access the outdoors in situations where there is a properly constructed cat enclosure with its entry/exit point in the cat's fully secured inside room.



Cats and kittens do not need the run of the whole house, and in fact, many timid felines would *hate* that. For many cats and kittens, a whole room to themselves—with a view, a scratching post to stretch out on, and the carer's undivided attention at least twice a day—would be the perfect holiday experience.

The following considerations are not exhaustive; they aim to highlight issues with safety and security that are commonly encountered, and thereby assist with the identification of further potential hazards.

Both the pet minder and pet owner should objectively appraise the designated cat minding area. Together, they are more likely to identify all potential escape routes and hazards and find acceptable solutions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SECURITY

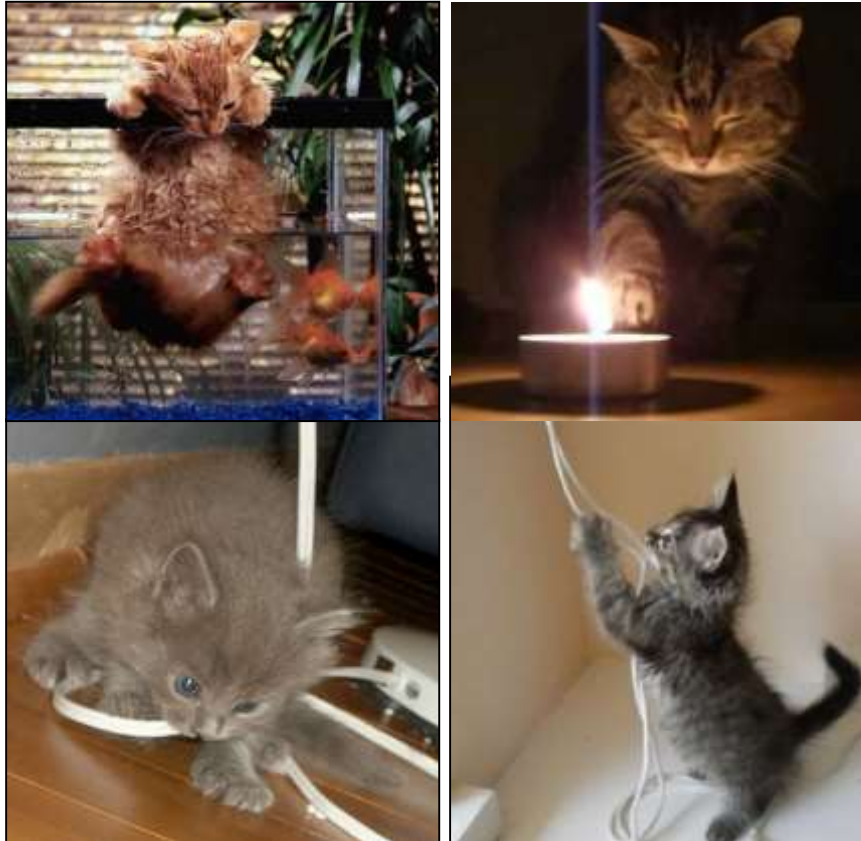
- Are screens used to create a barrier? If so, screens must be in a good state of repair.
- Are security bars used to create a barrier? If so, the spaces between the bars must be small enough that a cat or kitten cannot squeeze through or become trapped.
- Are latches on the windows/doors secure? Could the cat/kitten potentially wiggle them open?
- Are there high, relatively inaccessible windows that remain open but may be accessed by a cat via furniture, such as bookshelves?
- Are there certain doors that must remain closed to keep the cat/kitten secure? Will children or other family members remember and reliably stick to these rules?



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THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SAFETY

- Are there normal household items that may become a hazard for playful pets, particularly if they are bored? Electrical cords, candles, curtain cords, and fish tanks are obvious hazards. Bath tubs left full of water and open toilet bowls can also become a potential drowning hazard, particularly for very young cats.



- If the house is relying on doors and windows to be closed to keep the cat/kitten secure, will the room be too hot/stuffy in summer?



It's worth remembering: just because the resident cat has never tried to sit on the lid of the fish tank, choke themselves on the curtain cords or squeeze through the small hole in the window screen, it doesn't mean that these things will not create problems for other cats.

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RSPCA Qld's property guide for dogs and puppies

Dogs and puppies need a safe and secure area of yard with adequate shelter that allows them to escape the sun in hot weather and stay protected during the fiercest storm. For many dogs and puppies, a well-protected yard—with a water bowl, somewhere comfortable and protected to sleep, some toys, and exercise every day—would be the perfect holiday experience. Ideally, the dog would get to spend some family time indoors as well as fun time outdoors every day.

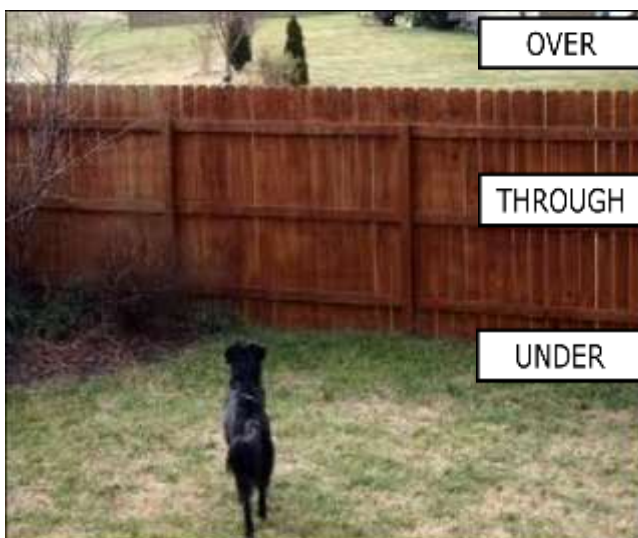


The following considerations are not exhaustive; they aim to highlight issues with safety and security that are commonly encountered, and thereby assist with the identification of further potential hazards.

Both the pet minder and pet owner should objectively appraise the designated dog minding area. Together, they are more likely to identify all potential escape routes and hazards and find acceptable solutions.

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SECURITY

- Is the fence poorly constructed or poorly maintained, or inappropriate for containing dogs (such as an electric containment system)?
- Is the fence high enough and low enough to prevent the dog from escaping over or under? Remember to consider the gate as well as the fence height; the height at the lowest point determines whether or not an animal can jump out.



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- Does the slope of the land or adjacent furniture make the fence less secure (facilitating escape either over or under the fence)?



- Are there gaps or holes in the fence that may allow an animal to squeeze through? Dogs can be very determined to squeeze through gaps between palings and spaces in wire mesh. Pay particular attention to gaps under fences.



- Do the gates have latches that are easy to use and can effectively keep the gates closed?



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THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SAFETY

- Are there unfenced water features, such as a pool, fish pond or dam? Many pool fences won't exclude a small dog or puppy, and they can drown if they accidentally fall in and are unable to get out.
- Do cars back out through the dog containment area? If so, how will the dog be kept safe from the moving vehicle?
- Are there other potential hazards in the yard, such as macadamia nuts, palm tree seeds, poisonous plants, or garden rocks?
- Is there adequate shade and shelter to protect the animal from the full force of the sun throughout the day and/or to escape adverse weather during thunderstorms? Remember, shade areas move throughout the day. It is important that shade is available ALL day long.
- Are there potential hazards indoors, such as electrical cords and curtain cords?
- If a dog or puppy is to be kept indoors, is there adequate ventilation in the secured area on hot days?

It's worth remembering: just because the resident dog has never tried to eat the garden rocks, use the BBQ to launch over the fence, or squeeze past a broken fence paling, it doesn't mean that these things will not happen with other dogs.

