
Condo Smarts

Headline: The Legacy of Pets During COVID

Topic: Pets

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Written by: Tony Gioventu

Dear Tony: Our strata council is at a bit of a crossroads in bylaw enforcement. We are a 44 unit apartment building. The noise problems have risen dramatically in the past 3 months. If we enforce bylaws, we are likely enforcing a complaint against over half the residents. Council have decided that it is such a wide spread problem, we are going to measure all complaints on what seems to be a normal amount of noise and not disruption. The challenge we face is several residents on shift schedules who often sleep during the day when the noise is excessive. We understand bylaw enforcement is subjective to each situation, but are we allowed to ignore the day to day issues from pets and children we deem acceptable even though we have a number of complaints?

Karen W. Surrey

Dear Karen: Your situation is shared by all communities with families and working residents. Many owners and tenants adopted pets during COVID-19, took up musical instruments as hobbies, installed in suite exercise equipment, worked from home and actively engaged in on line meetings. While many of these options pose minimal disruptions, the increased occupancy and activity within homes has certainly increased noise levels in most buildings.

Pets have provided an amazing support network and companionship for residents, especially single occupants. Now that many of us are heading back to the workplace, our pets are being left alone for longer periods and their anxiety levels have increased. The result is increased vigilance and response when someone passes a doorway or other noises alert them. Many buildings have developed buddy systems that enable neighbours to take dogs out for a walk during the day. Owners have arranged daycare, or negotiated part time work and home schedules to reduce the impact.

Pet owners have a responsibility to everyone else in their building to reasonably comply with the bylaws, and noise and nuisance are one of those bylaws. Residents who work nights and sleep during the day are entitled to the same reasonable expectations of quiet use and enjoyment of their strata lot.

An information meeting of the owners and inventory of everyone's pets is a good starting place. Contact information for owners who have to leave their pets for the day is essential for a council member or property manager to respond quickly if a pet is in distress. To reduce anxiety and stress, there is nothing better than a good round of exercise and walk with our dogs in the morning before we leave. Crating may be helpful to prevent the dog from resting at the front door and interacting with a passersby. We cherish our pets as family, so every step we can take for their safety and the harmony of residents in our buildings is essential.