

PET LIMIT LAWS

Frequently Asked Questions About Limit Laws

What are limit laws? —

Pet limit laws are legal restriction on the right to keep animals. Provisions vary widely from complete absence of any restriction to an absolute limit of one animal.

Who is affected by limit laws?—

Any person who wishes to keep animals can be affected by limit laws.

Why are limit laws enacted?—

Proponents of pet limit laws argue that these ordinances are necessary to stop animal neglect and abuse caused by people who take in more animals than they can adequately care for. Others claim that pet limits are necessary to ensure sanitary conditions, or to maintain safe and pleasant neighborhoods.

What's wrong with limit laws? —

There is little in the way of evidence, or common sense, to support them. Pet limit laws:

- Are unnecessary to protect the well-being of people and animals
- are arbitrary and intrusive
- penalize responsible, caring pet owners
- force many caregivers to stop providing care to homeless animals
- put the lives of even well-cared for animals at risk
- fail to prevent irresponsible pet owners from acquiring or abusing animals
- reduce numbers of available homes for shelter animals

What are the myths associated with limit laws?

- Limit laws prevent “overpopulation.” This is a controversial and pejorative term generally arising from an imbalance between animals in shelters and public demand for this source of animals. If anything, limit laws contribute to this imbalance rather than prevent it.
- Limit laws prevent “nuisances. Unsanitary conditions, excessive noise, and interference with property are all unlawful in virtually every community- regardless of whether pets inhabit the premises or not.
- Limit laws prevent “cruelty.” There is virtually no correlation between number of animals owned and the kindness of an owner.
- Limit laws prevent “hoarding.” Hoarding has been identified as one manifestation of psychiatric disorder involving obsessive-compulsive behavior and is unlikely to be prevented by laws.

POLICY ARGUMENTS against limit laws generally are set out in the landmark paper authored by Nathan Winograd while at the San Francisco SPCA in 2000. ["Pet Limit Laws: Closing the Door to Loving Homes"](#)