Knight Frank lettings manager Sophie Woolfenden speaks to LAUREN ROMANO about the increasing demand for pet-friendly rental properties in Notting Hill and Holland Park.

Today’s viewing isn’t anything out of the ordinary for this particular neck of the woods. At a newly refurbished apartment in Ladbroke Grove, Sophie Woolfenden is showing around prospect clients. Bree the Basset Fauve de Bretagne and her canine sidekicks Frankie the Lurcher–Collie cross, and Rolo, an energetic 18-month-old Working Cocker Spaniel are nosing about the flat’s nooks and crannies.

The split-level apartment actually belongs to Frankie’s owner and is being offered as a pet-friendly let. “We’ve seen a huge rise in the number of tenants looking for landlords who welcome their cats and dogs,” Sophie, lettings manager of Knight Frank’s Notting Hill office, explains, dishing out doggy treats in an attempt to tempt her furry viewers into posing for a photo, as the photographer snaps away, muttering something about never working with animals or children. “Getting pets over here is so much easier these days,” she continues. “I was involved with a short let on Lansdowne Road and the tenants bought their dog along with them all the way from America.”

Brits have long been renowned as a nation of dog-lovers and the statistics do nothing to contest that reputation. Sophie and her team have noticed that approximately a third of all tenants in the Notting Hill and Holland Park area are searching for a pet-friendly pad. To meet the rising demand, Sophie decided to collaborate with the Dogs Trust’s Lets with Pets scheme and joined the Letting Agency Supporter Scheme which provides owners, landlords and perspective tenants with helpful tips for searching and securing homes with their pets in tow. “We ask all our landlords if they are open to animals,” she explains. “And we had the Knight Frank website adapted, so we now have a paw print next to pet-friendly properties which makes them easy to identify.”

While some landlords are more amenable towards pets, Sophie admits that others are not as easily swayed. “If people have got pets of their own then they tend to be more sympathetic,” she says. “But if not, they tend to worry that dogs are going to chew things and cats will sharpen their claws on the carpet.” She suggests that the solution is to get a reference from a previous landlord so you can move quickly as we head to the busier summer market. “We have really good stock levels at the moment,” she says, adding, “get a reference for your pet.”

As the viewing draws to a close, the dogs seem suitably impressed with this particular pet-friendly property, but Sophie stresses that maximising your chances of securing a pad for you and your pets is necessary in the competitive local market. “In some of the porter apartment blocks pets even have to be interviewed to see if they are well-behaved.”

Don’t leave your house hunting until the last minute

Begin searching at least 6–8 weeks before you need to move out of your current home.

Write a CV for your pet

Provide your prospective landlord with as much information about your pet as you can. Include the contact details of your veterinary practice and someone who can care for your pet in an emergency. You could also include details of your pet’s last vaccinations and any flea and worming treatments they have had.

Get a reference for your pet

By providing a reference from your previous landlord, you can show that your pet is well-behaved and has caused no problems at your previous property.

Introduce your pet to your landlord

Meeting your pet in advance may put your landlord’s mind at ease. You could invite your landlord to your current home so they can see that your pet has caused no problems there.

Get written permission

If your landlord has given you permission to keep a pet in the property, make sure you get it in writing. You should ask for a clause to be added to the tenancy agreement and make sure that any ‘no pets’ clauses are removed. This will prevent problems from arising in future.

“Paws for Thought”

Sophie Woolfenden with the pets