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Pet-friendly Pet Realty Network is barking up the right tree

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Are you trying to find a landlord who will not only welcome Fido with open paws, but understand the pooch's need to use the backyard as a potty? Are you someone whose home-buying priority isn't good schools but rather proximity to a dog park or 24-hour vet clinic? If you had your druthers, would you forgo a home with built-in bookshelves in favor of one with a built-in cat platform-climbing tree?

Moving, whether it be down the street or from coast-to-coast, is stressful. So call it a clever marketing tool or the answer to a pet-owner's prayers, but the [Pet Realty Network](#) is here to help. The brainchild of British-born Rhona Sutter, the Pet Realty Network charges real estate agents \$30 a year to showcase an unlimited number of pet-friendly properties. They can also upload their bios and photos. The fee for developers is \$50 a year. The site, free to visitors, provides a wealth of pet moving tips. Sutter is also a Realtor.

[Karen Numme](#), an agent with Keller-Williams in the trendy Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles, joined the network earlier this year. Numme is a doggie stage mom whose five-pound Yorkshire Terrier named Shumi just completed a national campaign for Target. Numme, who shares space on her business card with Shumi, says the Pet Realty Network has been a tremendous resource for her thus far.

"I'm a pet person and know quite a bit, but they have information on the site that has helped me to help my clients. It's great!," she said. There are links to local pet sitters, pet boarding facilities, dog walkers, and other pet-friendly businesses.

Sutter, who started the site almost three years ago, said it has more than 200 members now. Based in Naples, Florida, she said she plans on launching a sister site in the next few weeks that focuses exclusively on pet-friendly rental units. She also runs [pethealthalert.com](#), created after a series of hurricanes underscored the need for emergency pet information.

The Pet Realty Network also runs an online store with pet gifts suitable as closing presents from agents to home buyers -- things like a "this belongs to me" blanket personalized with a pet's name, that sells for about \$30 or a Mutt Pack Traveler, a see-through traveling case that retails for about \$40. Other items include leash holders and T-

shirts with horse, dog and cat themes.

So, clever marketing or a real service? Probably a little of both, but I'd give the lady high marks for an easy-to-use and cleverly written web site, dedicated to Kash, the Golden Retriever who is listed as the former Director of Barketing.

Estimates are that more than 10 million families moved with pets last year, Sutter said, and focusing on buyers with pets just helps agents distinguish themselves from the rest of the pack, so to speak. I'll raise a paw to that one.