

A Fair Deal for Pet Owners: Rebuilding Trust in Hotel Pet Fees

An industry diagnostic and call for collective action

Author: Guise Bule, CEO of Roch Dog

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Executive Summary

Across more than 2,000 hotels assessed in 56 countries, 1,738 charge a pet fee. The actual incremental cost of accommodating a dog in a hotel room is \$6 to \$25 per stay. Typical industry fees run \$75 to \$150. On the three largest US hotel chains, the pet fee represents between 27% and 31% of the base room rate. The gap between what a dog stay costs a hotel and what a guest is charged for it is a margin, not a rounding error.

This paper examines how hotel pet fees work in 2026, why the current model is failing consumers, regulators, and hotels at the same time, and what a workable reform could look like. It draws on the Roch Dog certified dataset of 888 currently ranked hotels, primary government regulatory sources, peer reviewed academic research, and published third party analysis. The Roch Dog assessment programme is scaling: the certified dataset will reach 5,000 hotels by the end of 2026, and the granularity of the analysis behind future papers will continue to improve as we acquire richer property level data from participating operators.

The regulatory environment has shifted decisively. On 12 May 2025, the United States Federal Trade Commission's Rule on Unfair or Deceptive Fees took effect. California, Virginia, Colorado, Oregon, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Massachusetts have complementary state statutes in force or imminent. Texas has secured six chain level settlements against major hospitality operators, including \$1.25 million from Hyatt on 30 December 2025. The United Kingdom's Renters' Rights Act prohibits pet related fees in residential tenancies outright. Australia's Unfair Trading Practices Bill follows the same logic. The disclosure practices that built the modern pet fee market are now in direct conflict with federal law in the United States and with converging consumer protection law across every major jurisdiction assessed.

The underlying data is as consequential as the regulation. 49% of ranked hotels score D or F against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard. 46.7% of ranked US hotels impose weight restrictions that exclude common family dogs. 13.6% require a separate damage deposit on top of a fee. Only 10 to 15% of hotels using the term "pet friendly" actually accept cats. These are not fringe outcomes. They are the current market equilibrium.

The paper closes with a proposal. Roch Dog invites the global hotel industry, booking platforms, consumer advocates, and regulators to participate in a voluntary Pet Fee Transparency Framework. A shared baseline for disclosure, proportionality, and fairness the industry can adopt on its own terms, before the terms are set for it.

The invitation is open.

SECTION 1

What Prior Roch Dog Research Established

Two prior Roch Dog whitepapers underpin this one. Neither is re proven here.

RDWP-PFA-01, *The Hidden Cost of Travelling With Your Dog*, documented that of 2,000 hotels assessed, 1,738 charge a pet fee. That is 87% of the market. The paper also documented, through a survey of 120 housekeepers and corroborating evidence from the US Pet Inclusive Housing Initiative and the Anthrozoös pet damage study, that the actual incremental cost of accommodating a dog in a hotel room runs from \$6 to \$25 per stay. Typical fees are \$75 to \$150. Some properties charge considerably more. The paper's central finding is the one this paper builds on. The modern hotel pet fee is not cost recovery.

It is revenue, collected under the pretence of operational necessity.

RDWP-03, *The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality*, established that 49% of hotels self describing as pet friendly score D or F against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard. Only 10 to 15% of hotels using the term actually accept cats. Chain average pet fees, per NerdWallet's 2025 analysis, range from \$60 at IHG to \$121.82 at Marriott. The InterContinental case study in that paper is worth remembering: thirty properties inside a single luxury brand, assessed under identical criteria, produced a 57 point scoring spread.

The two properties charging \$250 both scored F. The highest performing property charged \$100. Inside IHG's InterContinental portfolio, the fee a guest pays has no observable relationship to the experience a guest receives.

Both papers documented an industry whose fee practices had drifted into a position structurally vulnerable to regulatory challenge. That challenge has arrived. This paper takes the next step.

SECTION 2

Dataset and Methodology

Roch Dog has assessed over 2,000 hotels across 56 countries against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard (RDFS-02) since 2023. 888 hotels currently hold a ranked place in the live dataset (RDDF-01). The remainder were assessed but did not complete ranking, have since been removed, or are held in predecessor systems. The ratio, approximately 44% ranked of assessed, is consistent with the RDWP-03 methodology note that about half of assessed hotels met minimum evaluation requirements.

The framing claim throughout this paper is 2,000+ hotels assessed across 56 countries. All granular statistics are drawn from the 888 hotel ranked subset as it stands in April 2026. The US ranked subset is 330 hotels. The UK is 246. Canada is 134. Italy is 62. Thirty six other countries sit below them at smaller numbers, from Switzerland and Monaco through to Thailand, Kenya, and Argentina.

Each ranked hotel is evaluated against 31 weighted questions covering fee structure, deposit policy, weight and breed restrictions, shared space access, amenity provision, staff training signals, and cat acceptance. The sum of weighted answers produces an analytical score that maps to a letter grade A+ through F. The full framework and dataset methodology are published at rochstandard.com.

External sources are labelled inline and listed in Section 15.

SECTION 3

How Hotel Pet Fees Work in 2026

A fair deal starts with an honest description of the current one. Before we propose how the pet fee market should work, we have to describe how it actually works today. Some of what follows is uncomfortable reading for the industry. It should be.

3.1 The Three Fee Models

Every pet fee a hotel charges falls into one of three structural models, plus a fourth tiered or hybrid bucket that combines elements of the first three. Per RDWP-PFA-01, the 2,000 hotel global assessed dataset distributes across these models as follows.

- 34% charge per night - 32% charge a flat fee for the stay - 23% charge per pet, often stacking on top of either of the above - 11% use formats that do not fit cleanly into any category, including fees that reset after a number of nights, fees that vary by room type, and combinations of the above

Live Airtable data from the 888 hotel ranked subset, classified by text parsing the Q33 fee field in April 2026:

Classification	Count	Share
Free, none, or zero	143	16.1%
Per night signals	326	36.7%
Per stay signals	395	44.5%
Unclassified	24	2.7%

Per stay fees dominate the ranked subset. Per night fees concentrate in the United States, which is the single largest national market in the dataset and the market where pet fees have evolved most aggressively over the past two decades.

3.2 The \$150 Anchor

Among hotels that charge a fee, the modal US figure is \$150 per stay. Per RDWP-PFA-01, this figure appeared more than twice as often as any other amount in the original 2,000 hotel assessed dataset and was cited by 52 distinct properties. The second tier cluster sits at \$100, \$125, and \$200.

These are not calculations. They are conventions. The industry has settled around \$150 the way a rental car is always returned to the same aisle of the car park. No one decided. It just happened, and now it is very hard to unhappen.

3.3 What the Fees Buy

What does the fee actually purchase?

Per the RDWP-PFA-01 housekeeper survey of 120 housekeepers across hotels of varying quality and star rating, the actual incremental cost of accommodating a dog in a hotel room breaks down as follows.

Component	Cost per stay
Additional housekeeping labour (15-30 minutes HEPA vacuuming, lint rolling)	\$8-\$15
Enzyme cleaners and air neutralisers	\$2-\$5
Amortised wear on carpets and linens	~\$5
Total incremental cost	\$6-\$25

Against this, typical fees are \$75 to \$150 per stay, rising to \$250 or more at luxury properties and \$150 per night at several Las Vegas strip hotels. The gap is not a rounding error. It is a margin.

This has persisted for two decades because the fee is described to consumers as a cleaning or sanitation cost, and most guests take that description at face value. Housekeepers know better. Several in our 2025 survey told us their rooms were cleaned to the same standard regardless of who or what had stayed in them. Children, we were told repeatedly, produce more incremental cleaning work than any dog.

3.4 The Damage Argument Does Not Hold

The other argument hotels use to justify high pet fees is damage. The room might be damaged. The fee is a hedge. This argument sounds reasonable until you look at the data.

The 2021 Pet Inclusive Housing Initiative report, surveying large rental portfolios, found that 9% of pet owning renters reported any pet caused damage. Property managers surveyed in the same report estimated the figure at 28%. Industry perception runs at more than three times the reality. The average cost of pet damage when it occurred was \$210. The average cost of non pet damage in the same survey was \$223. A peer reviewed study in Anthrozoös found no statistically significant difference in overall damage between pet and non pet units. A UK survey by Propertymark of 673 property managers found that 85.3% had incurred

damage from pets, but 84.7% had incurred damage from adult human guests and 54.9% from children. The damage risk from dogs is statistically indistinguishable from the damage risk of hosting any guest at all, and meaningfully lower than the damage risk of hosting children.

The hospitality specific comparison is sharper still. Unauthorised smoking in a hotel room, a purely human violation, costs an average of \$1,100 per incident and requires two to four days of ozone treatment. A dog stay that goes wrong costs under \$50 in 39% of cases and under \$210 on average.

The \$150 per stay fee is not insurance. It is not cost recovery. It is price anchored revenue that happens to be labelled as a cleaning charge. If the industry were pricing against actual risk, the damage fee for a family with two children would be triple the pet fee. Nobody proposes that. The reason nobody proposes it is that the fee was never really about damage.

3.5 Weight Restrictions and Structural Exclusion

154 of the 330 ranked US hotels (46.7%) impose weight restrictions on dogs. Globally the figure is 39.4%. The numbers understate what this means.

A 50 lb weight cap is the most common in the ranked US subset. It excludes Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, and Border Collies. These are not exotic breeds. They are four of the ten most commonly owned dog breeds in the United States. A 25 lb cap, which appears at 26 hotels, excludes effectively every mid sized and large family dog. If your dog is a Beagle you might be fine. A Cocker Spaniel and you are not.

Weight restrictions correlate inversely with dog friendliness scores in our ranked dataset. The hotels that impose them cluster in the lower rank bands. The hotels that welcome dogs of any size, Kimpton, Staypineapple, most Four Seasons properties, score highest. The weight cap is not a standalone policy. It is a symptom of how the property thinks about its dog owning guests. Hotels that cap at 25 pounds have decided, before the booking starts, that dogs are a concession, not a feature. Hotels that welcome a Newfoundland have decided otherwise. Allowed is not the same as welcome.

3.6 Cats Left Out Entirely

Per RDWP-03, only 10 to 15% of hotels using the term pet friendly actually accept cats. There are roughly 46.5 million cat owning households in the United States. For most of those households, the marketing label pet friendly is functionally meaningless. Cat owners have learned this the hard way, over years of being turned away from hotels that welcomed the same kind of traveller with a Cavapoo. They have stopped expecting the label to mean anything for them, and the industry has responded to their exit from the category not by fixing the problem but by doubling down on the assumption that the dog market is the only market that matters. It is a self fulfilling prophecy dressed up as consumer behaviour.

3.7 Deposits: A Separate Layer

Beyond fees, 140 of 888 ranked hotels (15.8%) require a damage deposit, with 45 of 330 (13.6%) in the US. Per RDWP-PFA-01, 184 of the 2,000 assessed hotels (9.2%) charge both a fee and a deposit. A deposit is not technically money lost. It is a hold on the guest's credit card, typically \$150 to \$500, released after checkout. But after checkout can mean days or weeks, and the timing is almost never disclosed at booking.

The practical consequences are significant. A four stop road trip with deposit requiring hotels can tie up \$1,000 or more on a single card in unreleased holds from previous stops. For a guest travelling on a fixed income, or with children and their related expenses, that credit is not theoretical. It is whether the next hotel's booking goes through. Most booking engines display either the fee or the deposit. Very few display both. Almost none explain how long the deposit hold lasts.

SECTION 4

Why the Current System Fails Everyone

The most useful way to think about the current pet fee model is that it produces losses across three stakeholder groups at once. Consumers lose. Regulators lose. Hotels lose. The fact that three different groups can all be made worse off by the same practice is what makes reform possible. Nobody is genuinely invested in defending the status quo once they see it clearly.

4.1 Consumers: Opacity, Surprise, Exclusion

Consumers experience pet fees as surprises. Booking engines display the base room rate. The pet fee appears only after selection, sometimes at check in, and with depressing frequency in the confirmation email that arrives after booking commitment has already been made.

Behavioural economics has documented this pattern extensively. Present a base price, add mandatory charges one at a time, and the total reads lower than the same total shown upfront. Every airline has built its pricing around it. Hotels have benefited commercially from the same cognitive pattern for years. The difference now is that the regulator has noticed and written rules against it.

The \$150 modal fee operates as a price anchor. Its prevalence is not a calculation but a cluster point. Once a majority of comparable hotels charge \$150, the outlier charging \$100 reads as generous and the outlier charging \$200 reads as defensible. Neither is tied to service delivered. The fee exists independent of anything the hotel does, or fails to do, for the dog.

Exclusion compounds opacity. A dog owning household frequently discovers at check in that the pet friendly property imposes a weight restriction the dog exceeds, a breed restriction it technically meets, or a policy that confines the dog to the room for the duration of the stay. None of these restrictions are consistently disclosed during the booking flow. The 46.5 million cat owning households in the United States face a version of the same problem on a structural scale. Most pet friendly hotels simply do not mean them.

The 50+ demographic is where the pattern gets most painful. Per the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging (2025), the share of adults over 50 citing cost as a main reason for not having a pet has risen from 21% in 2018 to 33% in 2025. Nearly a third of current older pet owners report that pet care strains their budget. These are the guests most likely to travel with a dog, most likely to book longer stays, and most exposed to the per night fee model that scales linearly with stay length. A retiree on a two week road trip with a medium sized dog is, under the current US pet fee model, subsidising younger travellers on weekend city breaks. That is not a fee model designed with the traveller in mind. It is a fee model designed with the fee in mind.

4.2 Regulators: An Enforcement Burden They Should Not Be Carrying

The pet fee market is not a consumer problem at the margin. It is a mass market issue affecting tens of millions of travellers annually. Federal and state regulators have responded across 2024 and 2025 with unprecedented attention to the practice. The details are in Section 5.

From the regulator's perspective, the current pet fee model presents three practical enforcement problems, each difficult on its own terms.

There is the volume problem. Millions of bookings a year, each producing a small individual violation, each too small for any individual consumer to litigate on their own. Collective action is required to produce accountability, and collective action is what state attorneys general are built for. But that means the public is paying for enforcement of a disclosure practice the industry could have fixed itself.

There is the evidence problem. The violation occurs inside a digital booking flow that is ephemeral, customised per user, and frequently A/B tested. A regulator needs to capture the flow at scale to prove a pattern of deception, not a one off glitch. That is investigatory work that ties up attorneys general for months at a time.

And there is the remediation problem. Once a violation is established, designing a remedy that actually works across thousands of properties, multiple booking platforms, and varying fee structures is hard. The Texas Hyatt settlement runs to multiple pages of required disclosure practice. Enforcing it will require ongoing monitoring.

Hotels that continue to operate opaque pet fee structures are transferring the enforcement cost of their own disclosure practices onto public agencies. This is the regulatory externality that is now being corrected. Regulators did not choose to be in the pet fee market. The industry put them there.

4.3 Hotels: Brand Inconsistency, Lost Loyalty, Rising Exposure

The hotels charging high opaque pet fees are not winning by doing so. This is the part of the argument that should interest operators most. It cuts against the intuition that fees are revenue and revenue is good.

The RDWP-03 InterContinental case study documented a 57 point scoring spread across 30 properties of a single luxury brand. The two properties charging \$250 both received F grades. The highest performing property charged \$100. The variance is not a minor inconsistency. It is brand inconsistency at a scale that defeats the purpose of having a brand. A traveller who stays at InterContinental Miami (A+, \$100) and then books InterContinental New York Times Square (F, \$250) has been taught, by direct experience, that the InterContinental name provides no reliable signal of quality in this category. For an industry whose competitive position rests on brand trust, that variance is itself a commercial liability.

The loyalty economics are similarly clear. Per RDWP-03, dog owning guests return at a 76% rate when the experience is genuine, against an industry benchmark of 30 to 40%. The same paper documented that 33% of pet parents have altered travel plans due to difficulties with pet arrangements. A hotel that charges \$150 and delivers nothing in exchange is not neutral. It is actively building the switching cost that sends the guest to a competitor on the next trip. The revenue extracted today is borrowed against the booking that does not happen next year.

And then there is the regulatory exposure, which is now direct and accelerating. The Texas Attorney General has settled six times in a row with major chains. The federal rule is effective. Four states have transparency statutes with enforcement mechanisms that include triple damages and private rights of action. Hotels running pre 2025 disclosure practices are not operating in a grey zone any more. They are operating in violation of statutes that have real penalties attached.

The current pet fee model fails consumers, fails regulators, and fails hotels themselves. It has survived, despite failing three different groups at once, because no individual stakeholder has felt enough pressure to drive reform alone. That changed on 12 May 2025.

SECTION 5

The Regulatory Convergence

In plain terms: hotels must show the real price upfront, and cannot mislabel fees. That is the shape of the shift. The detail that follows matters because stakeholders reading this paper will need to do their own compliance research, and we would rather they not have to repeat the work we have done.

5.1 The FTC Rule on Unfair or Deceptive Fees (16 C.F.R. Part 464)

- Official name: Rule on Unfair or Deceptive Fees - Published: 17 December 2024 (Federal Register) - Effective: 12 May 2025 - Scope: Live event ticket sales and short term lodging (hotels and vacation rentals) - Civil penalty per violation: Up to \$51,744 (adjusted annually for inflation)

The Rule is structured around three core requirements.

§ 464.2, the Total Price requirement. The total price of a booking, including all mandatory fees, must be displayed upfront as the first and most prominent price. Taxes and reasonable shipping fees are exempt from the upfront display requirement but must appear before checkout. Vague labels such as "resort fee," "destination fee," and "convenience fee" are prohibited unless the charge corresponds to specifically described services.

§ 464.3, the misrepresentation prohibition. It is an unfair or deceptive practice to misrepresent the nature and purpose of any amount charged, including by using misleading labels. A hotel labelling a \$150 revenue surcharge as a "cleaning fee" when the actual cleaning cost is \$6 to \$25 is exposed under this section independent of any disclosure practice. This is the legal hook that connects the fee to cost gap documented in RDWP-PFA-01 directly to actionable regulatory risk. It is also the least discussed part of the Rule and, for pet fees specifically, the part most likely to bite.

The "Clear and Conspicuous" standard. A disclosure that meets the Rule's prominence requirement must satisfy a four part test. It must be presented in the same medium as the primary pricing communication. It must be unavoidable in interactive electronic media, such as booking engines and mobile apps. It must be delivered at a volume, speed, and cadence an ordinary consumer can easily understand. And it must not be contradicted or mitigated by any other information in the communication. A pet fee disclosed only in house rules, only in a pop up at check in, or only behind a "Show Price Details" button does not meet any of the four tests.

Application to pet fees. A hotel that markets itself as pet friendly, or that responds to a pet filter search, has a federal obligation under the Rule to treat any non negotiable pet fee as a mandatory fee. The fee must be integrated into the headline total price as soon as the

consumer has indicated that a pet will be present. The pre 2025 industry pattern, a \$200 headline rate that conceals a \$100 non refundable pet fee revealed only at check in, is a prima facie violation of the Rule. That pattern is still, as of this paper's publication, the default across large swathes of the American hotel market.

5.2 Texas Attorney General Enforcement

Texas has pursued the most aggressive state level enforcement posture on hotel junk fees. Six chain level settlements have been announced in consecutive succession.

Chain	Settlement	Date
Hyatt Hotels	\$1.25 million	30 December 2025 (sixth settlement)
Booking.com	\$9.5 million	2025
Marriott International	Agreement	Prior
Omni Hotels	Agreement	Prior
Choice Hotels	Agreement	Prior
Hilton	Agreement	Prior

The pattern is now a de facto national standard. Maintaining separate disclosure practices by state is operationally untenable for any chain at scale, and the Texas AG's theory of harm has been adopted or signalled by attorneys general in several other states.

The Hyatt case, filed 15 May 2023 under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, crystallises the AG's theory in three specific mechanics. First, drip pricing: rooms marketed at prices unavailable in practice because mandatory fees are added during checkout. Second, prominence failure: consumers required to click "Show Price Details" or equivalent UI elements to view mandatory resort, destination, or cleaning fees. Third, labelling misrepresentation: fees buried in the Taxes and Fees section of the booking display, leading consumers to infer the charges were government imposed rather than corporate revenue. Under the terms of the settlement, Hyatt is now required to disclose all required fees upfront, ensuring consumers can "efficiently shop and compare prices." The language is worth noting. The AG is not arguing that fees should not exist. It is arguing that they cannot be hidden.

5.3 State Price Transparency Statutes

Beyond administrative enforcement, a new generation of state laws has codified transparency requirements.

California — SB 478, the Honest Pricing Law. Effective 1 July 2024. Explicitly covers hotels, short term rentals, and lodging generally. Requires advertised prices to include all mandatory fees a consumer cannot reasonably avoid. California is the largest US state hotel market and the first mover on comprehensive transparency statute. Any pet fee structure that is not integrated into the advertised rate for California bookings is directly exposed under this law, which has been in force for most of two years by the time this paper is published.

Virginia — SB 1212. Signed 2 May 2025, effective 1 July 2025. Amends the Virginia Consumer Protection Act to prohibit advertising a price without clearly and conspicuously displaying the total price, inclusive of all mandatory fees or surcharges. Mandatory fee is defined to include any charge that a consumer cannot reasonably avoid.

Colorado — HB25-1090, the Protections Against Deceptive Pricing Practices Act. Signed 21 April 2025, effective 1 January 2026. Codified at C.R.S. § 6-1-737. This is the most stringent US state statute on drip pricing, and the one that most directly raises the cost of non compliance for hotels. If a business fails to refund an illegally charged fee within 14 days of a consumer's written demand, it becomes liable for actual damages plus 18% annual interest compounded annually, triple damages on actual losses, statutory penalties of \$100 to \$1,000 per violation, and attorney's fees. It also provides a private right of action. For an undisclosed \$150 pet fee, a Colorado judgment plausibly exceeds \$500 per guest plus statutory attorney's fees. The arithmetic is the arithmetic of class action litigation, and plaintiffs' firms have noticed.

Oregon — SB 430. Effective 1 January 2026. Requires the first advertised price for goods or services sold online to include all mandatory fees. Enforced through Oregon's Unlawful Trade Practices Act, with enforcement authority vested in the Attorney General and in private plaintiffs.

Connecticut — SB 3. Signed 2025, most provisions effective 1 July 2026. Prohibits advertising, displaying, or offering goods or services at prices that do not incorporate all mandatory fees, charges, and costs.

Minnesota and Massachusetts have activated UDAP level hidden fee rules through Attorney General guidance and consumer protection rulemaking rather than new statute. The practical effect for hotels is similar: undisclosed pet fees are actionable under general consumer protection law in both states.

Illinois and New York have advanced comparable transparency measures through the legislative process. As of this paper's date, neither has a final statute, but both are expected to enact during 2026.

The common thread across all of these laws, whatever their individual drafting choices, is the all in principle. The first price the consumer sees must be the total the consumer will pay. A fee that only appears after that first price is the fee the rules are designed to stop.

5.4 The Deposit Question

The status of refundable pet damage deposits under the FTC Rule and state transparency statutes is a developing area of enforcement interpretation. The Rule's literal text addresses mandatory fees, and a refundable deposit is, technically, neither a cost to the consumer (if returned) nor a fee in the dictionary sense. A hotel operator reading the Rule narrowly might conclude that deposits fall outside its reach.

The analysis does not end there, and probably should not.

The Rule's prominence requirement applies to information material to the consumer's booking decision. A \$500 per night hold against a consumer's credit card is material by any reasonable consumer protection test. It constrains available credit, can produce declined transactions at subsequent hotels, and can delay other purchases. The Colorado HB25-1090 drafting and the Virginia, Oregon, and Connecticut statutes use broader mandatory and unavoidable language that extends beyond non refundable fees. A deposit the consumer cannot avoid as a condition of the pet stay plausibly qualifies as a mandatory charge in the statutory sense, even if not in the technical fee sense.

Under Texas's DTPA theory of harm, misrepresentation and lack of prominence, a \$500 deposit disclosed only at check in meets the same practical consumer harm test as an undisclosed fee. The Peninsula Chicago charges a \$150 per night deposit on top of its \$250 to \$400 weight tiered fee. The Ritz Carlton New York NoMad charges a \$500 per night deposit on top of its \$250 per stay fee. A four night stay at the latter commits a consumer to \$2,000 in available credit for deposits alone, on top of the fee and the room rate. The absence of a final doctrinal ruling does not make deposits safely excluded from the regulatory analysis. Hotels that treat refundable deposits as fully outside the Rule's scope are making an enforcement bet, not following clear guidance.

5.5 The International Context

The American regulatory shift is not localised. Major jurisdictions are moving in parallel.

In the United Kingdom, the Renters' Rights Act 2026, with pet provisions effective 1 May 2026, prohibits residential landlords from charging separate pet deposits or pet related fees in rental tenancies. Tenants have a statutory right to request a pet; landlords may only refuse for specific documented reasons, such as property unsuitability or a superior landlord's refusal. The Act applies to residential tenancies rather than hotels, but the philosophical premise, that pet ownership is a fundamental lifestyle choice not to be exploited for fee revenue, is now built into British law and will filter into hospitality. 246 of the 888 ranked hotels in our dataset are in the UK. British guest expectations on pet fees are already evolving in line with the Act's baseline.

In Australia, the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Unfair Trading Practices) Bill 2026 was introduced on 1 April 2026 and is projected to take effect on 1 July 2027. The bill includes

a specific drip pricing provision requiring transaction based charges to be disclosed alongside the base price, not at checkout. Penalties for non compliance reach the greater of AUD 100 million, three times benefit obtained, or 30% of adjusted turnover, numbers that make US penalties look modest. The bill's definition of detriment is notably expansive, extending beyond financial loss to include wasted time, confusion, and consumer pressure. It is a more consumer protective standard than the FTC Rule.

In the European Union, the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive and the 2019 Omnibus Directive establish price transparency obligations across member states. Hotel pet fees are within scope of both. Enforcement has historically run through national consumer protection authorities rather than pan EU action, and the intensity of that enforcement varies considerably by country.

In Canada, federal and provincial consumer protection regimes vary but are converging on similar transparency expectations. Quebec's Consumer Protection Act and Ontario's Consumer Protection Act both contain provisions plausibly applicable to undisclosed pet fees.

The direction of travel is consistent with the US federal and state shifts. Opaque pet fees are moving, across every major market Roch Dog has assessed, from industry norm to regulatory risk. There is no jurisdiction in the dataset where the trend is in the other direction.

SECTION 6

The Consumer Reality in 2026

The Roch Dog ranked dataset lets us look beyond the aggregates and see what the current model actually means for a guest booking a room with a pet today.

6.1 Half the Market Fails the Basic Test

Rank	Global ranked	Global share	US ranked	US share
A+	9	1.0%	4	1.2%
A	75	8.4%	26	7.9%
B	230	25.9%	89	27.0%
C	138	15.5%	49	14.8%
D	286	32.2%	108	32.7%
F	149	16.8%	54	16.4%

Half the market fails. That is the baseline experience. A dog owning household choosing at random from the ranked dataset has roughly one in two odds of ending up at a hotel that will deliver a D or F stay. Which means a room the dog may not be allowed to leave, amenities the fee did not actually buy, front desk staff unprepared for the booking, and shared spaces the dog is excluded from.

This is the current equilibrium. It is not a fringe problem or a few bad actors. It is half the category.

6.2 Structural Exclusion by Weight

Metric	Global	US
Weight restrictions (Q8 = Yes)	350 / 888 (39.4%)	154 / 330 (46.7%)

Nearly half the US market excludes average sized dogs.

A typical 75 pound family dog has roughly half the ranked US market available before fees, geography, or quality enter the decision. The other half is closed for reasons the hotel has

never been asked to defend, and in most cases cannot. There is no operational reason to refuse a 75 pound dog at a property that happily accepts a 40 pound one. Our assessment data shows no correlation between weight limits and measurable operational need. The cap is a policy choice, not a physical constraint.

6.3 The Cat Problem

Per RDWP-03, 10 to 15% of hotels using the term pet friendly accept cats. 46.5 million US households own a cat. Combine the two numbers and you see the scale of the exclusion. The pet friendly label, as the industry currently uses it, actively misrepresents the product for most cat owning households. A cat owner who books a pet friendly hotel without calling ahead is more likely than not to arrive and be turned away. The industry has not fixed this. It has simply accepted that cat owners will self select out of the category, and then pointed at the low share of cat bookings as evidence that cat owners are not interested in travel. The reasoning is circular and it has held for a decade.

6.4 Deposits as a Hidden Layer

Metric	Global	US
Damage deposit required (Q31 = Yes)	140 / 888 (15.8%)	45 / 330 (13.6%)

Per RDWP-PFA-01, 9.2% of assessed hotels charge both a fee and a deposit. The combined structure commits a guest to a hold of \$400 to \$1,000 or more before the stay begins. Most booking engines display only the fee or only the deposit. Very few display both. Almost none explain how long the deposit hold lasts after checkout. For a traveller on a fixed budget or moving between multiple cities, the deposit layer is not a theoretical inconvenience. It is the difference between the next hotel's booking going through or being declined.

6.5 The 50+ Exposure in Hard Numbers

The University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging (2025) provides the hardest data available on how older pet owners are experiencing the cost of pet ownership and travel.

- 55% of adults over 50 own a pet. Of those, 70% own a dog and 50% own a cat.
- 42% of owners aged 55 to 64 travel with their pets annually, the highest rate of any age cohort.
- The share of adults over 50 citing cost as a main reason for not having a pet rose from 21% in 2018 to 33% in 2025.
- 31% of current older pet owners say pet care strains their budget.

The demographic most likely to travel with a pet is also the most exposed to the per night fee model, and the most likely to feel the financial pressure. A retiree on a two week road trip pays pet fees a 28 year old on a weekend break never encounters. That is not a fee model designed with the traveller in mind. It is designed with the fee in mind.

SECTION 7

Chain Level Performance

The chain level is where individual property practice compounds into brand behaviour, and where the current model's inconsistencies become most visible. The Roch Dog ranked dataset in April 2026 shows significant variation. Only chains with three or more ranked properties are reported below; smaller sample sizes do not support chain level conclusions.

Chain	Ranked	Dogs stay free	Weight restricted	Deposit required
Kimpton (IHG)	22	19 (86.4%)	0 (0%)	6 (27.3%)
Four Seasons	12	9 (75.0%)	8 (66.7%)	0 (0%)
Staypineapple	9	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Hyatt	31	0 (0%)	24 (77.4%)	4 (12.9%)
InterContinental	21	0 (0%)	13 (61.9%)	3 (14.3%)
Hilton	10	0 (0%)	8 (80.0%)	1 (10.0%)
Holiday Inn	9	0 (0%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)
Best Western	9	0 (0%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)
Marriott	6	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)
Ritz Carlton	4	0 (0%)	3 (75.0%)	3 (75.0%)
Aloft	4	2 (50.0%)	3 (75.0%)	1 (25.0%)

Compliance readiness varies dramatically across the sector. Three patterns are worth pulling out.

The Kimpton Paradox: the better model already exists. This is the single most important observation in the chain level data, and its implications run well beyond Kimpton. Kimpton sits inside IHG. It operates under the same parent company, the same corporate leadership, and the same ownership and franchise infrastructure as InterContinental. And yet 86% of ranked Kimpton properties confirm dogs stay free as brand wide policy, none impose weight restrictions, and the chain consistently scores in the top rank bands. InterContinental, inside the same parent company, charges fees at every ranked property, imposes weight restrictions at 62%, and delivers a scoring spread that in the

RDWP-03 case study ranged from A+ to F inside 30 properties. The distinction between these two brands is not capability. It is not budget. It is not corporate structure. It is a decision. And that decision is not unique to IHG.

Staypineapple: transparency without free. Nine ranked properties, no weight limits, no deposits, but a consistent \$25 per night fee across the chain. Staypineapple has not absorbed the cost of dog hospitality, but it has made the cost visible, uniform, and predictable. A seven night stay costs \$175 and a fortnight costs \$350. The guest knows exactly what they are paying. Under the FTC Rule a Staypineapple booking engine that displays the total including the pet fee as the first prominent price is fully compliant. Under Colorado's triple damages regime a \$25 per night fee integrated into the advertised rate creates no exposure. Staypineapple is what the minimum viable compliance posture looks like for a chain that chooses to charge. It is also a reminder that not every chain needs to go free to get this right. Transparent and predictable is a defensible position.

Hilton, Hyatt, and Ritz Carlton are most exposed. No ranked property at any of the three brands confirms dogs stay free. 80% of ranked Hiltons and 77% of ranked Hyatts impose weight restrictions. Ritz Carlton operates the most aggressive fee stack of any chain with three or more ranked properties, with 0% free, 75% weight restricted, and 75% requiring a deposit on top of the fee. These patterns were tolerable under the pre 2025 regulatory environment. They are increasingly difficult to sustain under the FTC Rule's prominence requirement and the Colorado triple damages regime. The honest assessment is that these three brands will need to change how they operate pet policy in the next twelve to eighteen months, or accept mounting enforcement and litigation exposure as an operating cost.

SECTION 8

Specific Fee Structures Most Exposed

The following fee structures are drawn verbatim from the live Airtable Q33 field. They are presented not as indictments of specific properties but as examples of practices the industry as a whole will need to revisit under the new regulatory environment.

8.1 Tiered Fees with Mid Stay Resets

Several Hyatt properties in our ranked dataset operate what presents in marketing as a per stay fee but resets after a defined period. The mechanic is almost always disclosed in fine print rather than in the headline booking summary.

Property	Fee structure (verbatim)
Park Hyatt Chicago	\$150 per stay up to 5 nights. Additional \$150 deep cleaning fee from 6-30 nights.
Park Hyatt Aviara Resort	\$150 per stay, up to 6 days. Then another \$150 on the 7th day.
Hyatt Regency Oregon Convention Center	\$50 for one night stay, \$100 for up to six nights. Additional \$100 every six nights after.

A 10 night stay costs \$300, not \$150.

If only \$150 is shown at the point of rate display, the listing is non compliant under the FTC Rule's prominence requirement for any stay over five nights. It is also directly exposed under California SB 478, Colorado HB25-1090, and Virginia SB 1212. The guest most affected is the one booking the longest stay, which is usually the guest the hotel claims to value most.

8.2 Weight Tiered Pricing

Property	Fee structure
The Peninsula Chicago	\$250 per pet for pets under 30 pounds, \$400 per pet for pets over 30 pounds
JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside	\$150 plus taxes for the first dog, additional \$50 for the second

Weight tiered fees create a specific structural problem under the new rules. The booking engine does not typically capture pet weight at the point of price display, so the advertised rate cannot include the applicable fee as the FTC Rule requires. Either the engine is

redesigned to collect pet weight before displaying price, or the fee structure is simplified to a single amount regardless of dog size. Keeping the current structure and hoping nobody files a complaint is not a strategy.

8.3 Per Night Fees at Premium Properties

Property	Fee
Bellagio	\$150 per night
MGM Grand	\$150 per night

A seven night stay at Bellagio accumulates \$1,050 in pet fees. A fourteen night stay accumulates \$2,100.

If that total is not in the advertised rate on a pet filtered search, the listing is non compliant under the FTC Rule and California SB 478. The per night fee at \$150 is the structure most exposed to the new prominence requirement. The delta between headline rate and total price is the largest in the industry.

8.4 Combined Fee Plus Deposit Structures

Property	Fee	Deposit
The Ritz Carlton New York NoMad	\$250 + tax	\$500 per night
Mansion on Sutter, San Francisco	\$150 per stay	\$500
The Peninsula Chicago	\$250 / \$400 (weight tiered)	\$150 per night
InterContinental San Diego	\$150 per stay	\$250
Park Hyatt Chicago	\$150 per stay (+\$150 from night 6)	\$150

A four night booking at the Ritz Carlton New York NoMad requires \$2,000 in available credit against a \$500 per night deposit, on top of the \$250 fee and the room rate itself. Whatever the technical status of the deposit under the FTC Rule, the commercial reality for the consumer is unambiguous. The \$2,000 hold is material to the booking decision. The \$500 appears nowhere in the advertised rate. A guest who books and then declines the deposit at check in has, at minimum, lost a day and a booking. A guest who books and accepts the deposit has given the property two thousand dollars of credit access it does not need.

SECTION 9

Principles for a Better Model

The principles for a better pet fee model are not novel. They are visible in the hotels that already work well for dog owning guests, in the academic literature on pet friendly hospitality, and in the regulatory frameworks now converging across US federal law, state law, and international jurisdictions. We are not inventing a framework here. We are putting words to what already exists.

Five principles.

9.1 Transparency

The total cost of a pet stay, fee, deposit, taxes, and any service charges, should be disclosed as the first and most prominent price the consumer sees. No pet related charge should appear for the first time in house rules, confirmation emails, or at check in. This is the minimum threshold for compliance with the FTC Rule and state transparency statutes. It is also the minimum threshold for consumer trust. A guest who is not surprised at check in is a guest who comes back.

9.2 Proportionality

Fees must match the service delivered. The \$6 to \$25 incremental cost of accommodating a dog is documented across the Roch Dog housekeeper survey, the PIHI damage report, and the Anthrozoös study. A \$150 per stay fee that corresponds to no identifiable service, amenity, or cost is not a cleaning fee. It is revenue. Under § 464.3 of the FTC Rule, labelling revenue as a cleaning fee is itself misrepresentation. Proportionality is now a compliance requirement as well as a consumer expectation, which is a rare moment of alignment between the two.

9.3 Consistency

Fee structures and dog friendliness policies should be uniform across a chain, a booking platform, or at minimum a publicly disclosed property level policy that does not change between shifts or booking channels. The 57 point scoring spread inside a single luxury brand documented in RDWP-03 is not a minor inconsistency. It is brand defeating inconsistency. A guest cannot trust a brand whose experience varies that widely, and a chain that cannot signal quality through its own name has lost the commercial premise of being a chain.

9.4 Inclusivity

A pet friendly property should welcome dogs of reasonable sizes and should accept cats where operationally feasible. The 47% US weight restriction rate and the 10 to 15% cat acceptance rate represent structural exclusion of major consumer segments. Inclusivity is not a charitable position. Per RDWP-03, inclusive policies produce the occupancy premium, loyalty rate, and ADR lift that make dog friendly hospitality a high return revenue line in the first place. Exclusion is expensive. The industry has been paying for it without realising.

9.5 Independent Verification

Consumers have no basis for trusting a pet friendly label that carries no external verification. Hotels have no basis for differentiating themselves in a category where the label is universally used and universally meaningless. Regulators have no basis for enforcing against practices that are hidden inside a morass of self declared claims. Independent assessment against a published standard, with methodology, questions, and scoring visible to anyone who cares to look, resolves all three problems at once. It is also the cheapest way for the industry to raise its own floor.

Models That Already Work

The failure of the current pet fee model is not a failure of imagination. Better models exist in the industry today, at every quality tier and in every major market. The challenge is not design. The challenge is adoption.

10.1 The Free Pets Brand Model

Kimpton. Red Roof Inn. Motel 6. Each operates a brand wide policy where dogs stay free, weight limits are absent or generous, and fees do not exist. The Kimpton model is the most comprehensive: no fee, no weight limit, any size dog that fits through the door, consistent across 22 ranked properties globally and across the brand's history. The economic case for this model is established in RDWP-03. Dog owning guests stay 22% longer, spend 30% more on ancillaries, and return at a rate of 76% versus a 30 to 40% industry benchmark. The absence of a fee removes the friction that converts interest into abandonment. The consistency removes the brand inconsistency penalty. The inclusivity captures the large dog and mid market segments that fee charging weight restricted competitors lose.

This model is not limited to one ownership structure. It operates inside IHG, inside G6 Hospitality, and as an independent brand at Red Roof Inn. Brand wide free pets policy is viable across the full quality spectrum, from Motel 6's economy tier to Kimpton's upper upscale.

10.2 The Lifetime Fee Model

Per RDWP-PFA-01, Paséa Hotel and Spa in Huntington Beach, California, charges a one time pet fee of approximately \$150 on a guest's first stay. Every subsequent visit, the dog stays free. The fee is paid once, and the guest earns free dog stays for life.

This is a loyalty instrument disguised as a pet fee. It captures revenue on first time guests, removes the per stay friction that drives repeat bookings away, and creates a disproportionate return on a single transaction. The model converts what is currently a transactional penalty into a relationship investment. It is consistent with the FTC Rule because the first stay fee is disclosed upfront, and it is consistent with consumer expectations because subsequent stays are transparently free. We recommend it to any property looking for a middle path between Kimpton's free pets model and the transparent per night model.

10.3 The Transparent Per Night Model

Staypineapple operates a consistent \$25 per night fee across all nine ranked properties, with no weight limits, no deposits, and full dog friendliness programming. The fee is visible at booking, the structure is predictable, and the consumer knows what they are paying for.

This model does not absorb the cost of dog hospitality, but it makes the cost defensible and predictable. A seven night stay costs \$175. A two week stay costs \$350. The consumer can plan, compare, and decide before they commit. Under the FTC Rule, a Staypineapple booking engine that displays the total as the first prominent price is fully compliant. Under Colorado's triple damages regime, a \$25 per night fee disclosed in the advertised rate creates no exposure.

The transparent per night model is the minimum viable compliance posture for any property that chooses to charge a fee. It is also a commercially defensible model if the property cannot or will not move to free.

10.4 The European Nominal Model

Per RDWP-PFA-01, continental European hotels operate on fundamentally different fee structures. Italy allows dogs to stay free at 19% of assessed hotels. France reaches 39%, making it the most dog financially inclusive market in the dataset. Where fees exist, they are typically nominal, €15 to €25 per night in urban hotels, often with dogs welcomed in lobbies, restaurants, and public spaces at no additional charge. The European pattern reflects a cultural baseline that dog owning guests are guests first and dog owners second.

The European model is not directly importable to the US market without cultural adaptation. But it demonstrates that a mature hotel market can operate profitably without the US industry's reliance on high pet fees as a revenue line. American operators sometimes respond to this observation with the argument that European hotels offset the absence of pet fees with higher room rates. The data does not support that argument. European ADRs are comparable to or lower than American ADRs at equivalent quality tiers. The difference in pet fee revenue is absorbed operationally, not compensated through other charges.

10.5 The Charity Partnered Model

Per RDWP-PFA-01, approximately 20% of A and A+ ranked hotels in the Roch Dog dataset donate a portion of their pet fee to animal charities. Among D and F ranked hotels, the figure drops to 6%. This is a signalling mechanism. A hotel that shares pet fee revenue with animal welfare causes is communicating a fundamentally different relationship with its dog owning guests than one that treats the fee as pure margin.

The charity partnered model is compatible with either the per stay or per night fee model. It converts a consumer frustration point, paying for permission, into a consumer goodwill point, contributing to a cause. The economic impact of the donation is usually modest. The brand

and loyalty impact is disproportionate. We have seen this model work across hotels as different as boutique independents in Prague and luxury resorts in California.

Each of these models already exists in the industry today. Each is operationally viable. Each is consistent with the regulatory direction of travel documented in Section 5. The question is not whether the industry can adopt better models. It is which models it adopts, and how quickly.

Recommendations by Stakeholder

Reform of the pet fee market requires coordinated action across multiple stakeholder groups. No single group can fix this alone, which is why it has not been fixed. The recommendations below are organised by who can act on them.

11.1 Hotel Operators

Adopt all in pricing. Display the total booking cost, including all pet related fees, as the first and most prominent price for any booking that includes a pet. Do not disclose pet fees only in house rules, terms and conditions, or at check in. This is the minimum threshold for FTC Rule compliance and the minimum threshold for consumer trust.

Audit the fee to service ratio. For every pet fee charged, identify the specific service, amenity, or cost the fee purchases. Fees that cannot be tied to a specific deliverable are exposed under § 464.3 of the FTC Rule and vulnerable to state level misrepresentation claims. If the answer to "what does this fee buy" is "the right to have a dog in the room," the fee is structurally indefensible under the new rules.

Simplify fee structures. Tiered fees that reset mid stay, weight tiered pricing, and complex fee plus deposit structures create compliance burden and consumer confusion. Move to a single predictable structure per property: free, flat per stay, or flat per night. Complexity was tolerable when no one was watching. It is now a liability.

Disclose deposits separately and prominently. A refundable deposit is not technically a fee, but it is material to the consumer's booking decision. Display it with the same prominence as any fee. The consumer's credit card does not distinguish between a fee and a deposit when the charge hits.

Eliminate arbitrary weight restrictions. A 25 or 40 pound cap excludes the majority of common family dogs and produces no measurable risk management benefit that cannot be achieved through guest screening at check in. The weight cap was a proxy for risk in an era without structured assessment. It is obsolete.

11.2 Hotel Groups and Brands

Standardise pet policies across brand. The 57 point scoring spread within a single luxury brand documented in RDWP-03 is brand defeating. A consistent brand wide pet policy, whether free, transparent per stay, or transparent per night, produces the brand trust premium the brand exists to capture. Brand consistency is the whole point of being a brand.

Use the Kimpton operational playbook. Where the operational knowledge to deliver consistent, consumer aligned dog hospitality exists within a parent company, extend it.

IHG operates Kimpton and InterContinental under the same ownership structure. The alternative to extending the Kimpton model is maintaining multiple brands with varying exposure under the new regulatory regime, which is a long term brand equity cost most groups have not yet priced correctly.

Build pet inclusive pricing into the core rate engine. Most booking engines can be configured to display pet inclusive rates on pet filtered searches. This is a systems project, not an operational impossibility. Treating it as an impossibility has been the quiet alibi for inaction.

11.3 Online Travel Agencies and Booking Platforms

Standardise pet fee disclosure across inventory. Booking.com's \$9.5 million Texas AG settlement establishes that platforms are directly liable for the disclosure practices of the inventory they carry. Platforms can no longer treat pet fees as property level policy that is the property's responsibility to disclose. The enforcement risk now sits on both sides of the listing.

Add a mandatory "Total Pet Inclusive Price" field. Properties listing on pet filtered searches should be required to provide a single upfront total that includes fees for the specific booking length. Platforms that fail to require this field are exposing themselves to the same state level enforcement that has swept through the chain side of the industry.

Develop a pet policy standard field set. Weight limit, breed restrictions, shared space access, amenity provision, cat acceptance, and fee structure should be captured in standard fields that consumers can filter on and compare across properties. The current absence of this standardisation is a platform level market failure, and it is the largest single cause of the pet friendly label's devaluation.

11.4 Regulators

Issue FTC pet fee guidance. The FTC's small entity compliance guidance and FAQ documentation currently addresses hotel fees in general terms but does not explicitly address pet fees. An advisory or FAQ update confirming that pet fees on pet filtered searches are mandatory fees within the meaning of 16 C.F.R. Part 464 would accelerate industry compliance and reduce consumer harm during the transition period.

Support state AG coordination. The Texas pattern of serial chain level settlements has been effective. Other state attorneys general with active consumer protection programmes, California, New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, could achieve comparable industry level effects on a coordinated basis, particularly on pet fee disclosure.

Clarify deposit treatment. The status of refundable pet damage deposits under the FTC Rule and state transparency statutes should be formally clarified. Consumers deserve certainty. Hotels deserve guidance. The current ambiguity produces the worst of both outcomes: consumer surprise and industry compliance uncertainty.

11.5 Certification and Industry Collaboration

Certify against a published standard. The Roch Dog Friendly Standard (RDFS-02) is the independent, criteria based assessment this industry has lacked. Applied consistently across more than 2,000 hotels in 56 countries, with methodology, scoring, and results publicly visible at rochstandard.com. A hotel certified to RDFS-02 can demonstrate to consumers, regulators, and booking platforms that its pet friendly claim has been independently verified. Self declared claims cannot.

Make certification status visible at the point of booking. A consumer who can see that a property is certified to a published standard is in a stronger position than one who must navigate the current morass of self declared pet friendly claims. Booking platforms, chain groups, and properties should build certification status into the booking flow as a standard display element.

Work with us on reform. Roch Dog is actively partnering with hotels, chain groups, booking platforms, industry associations, and regulators to raise the baseline of dog friendly hospitality. The voluntary Pet Fee Transparency Framework proposed in Section 12 is one such partnership. Bespoke assessment programmes, industry wide data sharing, and collaborative certification schemes are others. The invitation to collaborate is open.

11.6 Consumers

Ask four questions before confirming any booking with a pet. What is the fee, per night or per stay? Is there a separate damage deposit? Is there a weight or breed restriction? And what specific dog friendly amenities does the fee cover? If any of these answers are not available upfront, the hotel may be operating outside federal and state disclosure requirements.

Use enforcement channels when appropriate. Consumers encountering pet fee disclosure failures post 12 May 2025 can file complaints with the FTC at reportfraud.ftc.gov, with state Attorneys General, and in Colorado with the direct 18% interest plus triple damages private right of action. Consumer complaints are the single most effective driver of enforcement priorities. A regulator without consumer complaints has limited mandate to act.

Favour properties with independent certification. Verified assessment against a published standard is a more reliable signal of genuine dog friendliness than any self declared claim. Your dog will know the difference. The hotel should too.

SECTION 12

A Call for Collective Action: The Pet Fee Transparency Framework

The stakeholder recommendations in Section 11 are individually valuable. They are not sufficient on their own.

Pet fee reform is, at its core, a coordination problem. No individual hotel can act unilaterally without disadvantaging itself against competitors still running opaque fees. No individual regulator can reach the whole industry through state level enforcement alone. Booking platforms cannot standardise what properties do not consistently report. Consumers cannot distinguish between good and bad actors when the labels are universally meaningless. Each group has part of the solution. None of them has all of it. The coordination failure is why a system nobody likes has persisted for two decades.

The way out is an explicit coordination mechanism.

Roch Dog invites the global hotel industry, online travel agencies, consumer advocacy groups, animal welfare organisations, and federal and state regulators to participate in a voluntary Pet Fee Transparency Framework.

The aim is a shared baseline for disclosure, proportionality, and fairness, adopted by the industry on its own terms before the terms are set for it by regulators, litigation, or consumer exit.

The specific design of the Framework is intentionally left open. The principles in Section 9, transparency, proportionality, consistency, inclusivity, independent verification, provide the starting point. The detail will be worked out by the stakeholders who participate. The Framework will succeed only if it commands broad industry support, not if it is imposed by any single voice, including ours.

Roch Dog will convene the initial working sessions and host the technical infrastructure. Three commitments from us. First, methodological openness: our standard and dataset methodology are published; the Framework will be built the same way. Second, non exclusive participation: any hotel, chain, platform, or regulator is welcome. Third, operational neutrality: Framework participation will not require Roch Dog certification.

Pet fees will be reformed. The only open question is whether reform is led from inside the industry or imposed from outside through enforcement, litigation, and regulatory prescription. Hotels that join this conversation will have a seat at the table that defines the 2026 and 2027 baseline for their own sector. Hotels that stay out will operate in a market whose rules are written without them.

The invitation is open. Contact details and next steps are at rochstandard.com.

Conclusions

The industry has spent two decades building a pet fee model that no one particularly likes. Guests do not like it. Regulators do not like it. If the data is read honestly, the hotels charging these fees are not being served well by them either. The loyalty penalty, the brand inconsistency, and the direct regulatory exposure now outweigh the revenue line the fees were meant to support.

The regulatory convergence of 2024 to 2026 has made the cost of continuing harder to ignore. The FTC Rule, California's Honest Pricing Law, Colorado's triple damages regime, the Texas AG's serial settlements, the UK Renters' Rights Act, and the Australian Unfair Trading Practices Bill collectively establish that opaque pet fees are a compliance risk everywhere that matters commercially for hospitality. The direction of travel is settled. The timing is what individual hotels still control.

The operational knowledge to fix the problem already exists inside the industry. Kimpton, Red Roof Inn, Motel 6, Staypineapple, and the long tail of independents that operate transparent fee models have been doing it for years. They are profitable. They have loyal guests. They score highest on our independent assessment. The better model is not theoretical. It is the working practice of a meaningful share of the market.

What is missing is coordination. That is what Section 12 proposes to address. The Pet Fee Transparency Framework is our invitation to the industry, booking platforms, consumer advocates, and regulators to build the shared baseline the sector has needed for a decade. We have our own certification programme and we will continue to run it. The Framework is something different. It is infrastructure, not a product, and it belongs to the industry, not to us.

Pet fee reform is coming, either led from inside or imposed from outside. The data, the regulation, and the economic evidence all argue for leading it.

Price is not a signal of quality. What the hotel provides is.

The invitation is open.

About Roch Dog

Roch Dog is the independent certification body for dog friendly hotels. The Roch Dog Friendly Standard (RDFS-02) is a structured, criteria based assessment framework applied to over 2,000 hotels across 56 countries. 888 hotels are currently ranked in the live dataset, each evaluated against 31 specific questions and receiving a letter grade A+ through F.

Roch Dog exists because pet friendly has no agreed meaning in the hospitality industry. The standard exists to provide one. The certification allows hotels to demonstrate that they meet it, and to allow consumers to verify that claim independently.

The full standard, methodology, and research are published at rochstandard.com. Certified hotels are listed at rochdog.com.

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Published by Roch Dog

Roch Dog is the dog friendly standards and certification body. We define what dog friendly means, then assess, certify and rank hotels, workplaces, and residences against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard.

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CONTACT

E: research@rochdog.com

US: 626 88 44 007

UK: +44 1992 364 007

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Roch Dog is an independent certification body. We assess, certify, and verify hotels against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard (RDFS-02). The standard, framework, and supporting reference documents are published at rochstandard.com.

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