

Service animals and "nanny cams" on listings ... yes or no? | Home & Living

Q. Our house is for sale. Here's the thing. I'm allergic to dogs. Really allergic. Our Realtor said sometimes people will bring their pets to showings. We don't have pets not by choice, but because we can't. If someone brings a dog into our home, I could be miserably sick for days afterward. But our agent also said service dogs must be allowed. Is this true? What can we do?

A. I can certainly understand your dilemma. I was recently on an airplane, and there were two dogs on board. That was exactly my question: What if someone on this plane was terribly allergic?

When it comes to real estate there are federal and state laws we must follow. One of them is how it relates to fair housing, and that is where the service animal comes in. A service animal is not treated like an animal or a pet, but rather an extension of the person who needs the service animal.

However, federal and state fair housing laws allow for reasonable accommodations. No one can put you in a position that causes you harm to your health. That being said, I think there is an easy way to solve your problem.

If your Realtor has a note in their MLS to call before showing, in which there is a special code given to the buyer's Realtor opening the lockbox, the showing instructions can include the allergy talk. I would also recommend that you have your Realtor add to your listing. Put it in the remarks section if there is no more appropriate place for it and note that your home is positively pet-free due to seller's extreme allergies. This may attract someone with the same issues as you or just someone who does not want a house with any pet hair or dander.

You could even put a little plant with a sign by the front door that says "No pets, please! We have severe allergies!" It can be cute and tasteful (we often do this on listings as a reminder to take off shoes at the door).

– **Becky Claggett**, *ABR, CRS, Hampton Roads Realtors Association 2017 immediate past-chairman of the board and managing broker at Century 21 Nachman Realty, Virginia Beach*

Q. We're getting ready to list our house. My wife wants to hide "nanny cams" so we can see and hear what people say during an open house, and she doesn't even want the agent to know. Isn't this an invasion of privacy even though it's our own house? Are there any laws about this? **A.** I have been in homes with video monitoring. Sometimes I knew it right away and guarded my comments and actions. Sometimes I learned about it after the fact and felt a little weirded out about having been spied on. You're probably well within your legal rights to film people in your home, but I strongly encourage you to consult an attorney before doing so.

In my experience in working with buyers, they expect a modest level of privacy while