

## Realtor Lifestyles

## The Dog Days of Real Estate

The Pet Realty Network works to unite pet owners and real estate professionals across the U.S.

**P**imms Sutter isn't your average entrepreneur. At 85 pounds, he is a lovable, brown-eyed, 6-year-old Chocolate Lab, named after a refreshing British brew. And as the official marketing director—yes, marketing director—of The Pet Realty Network™, in the past 10 months, he has made a habit of sharing his real estate expertise and interviewing some of the top dogs of the industry around his water bowl—creating quite a purr in the pet real estate niche market.

As of January, this Chocolate Lab made his online debut in the real estate industry, guided by his owner, Rhona Sutter, The Pet Realty Network's president and licensed Florida real estate agent. Having been involved in real estate sales and listings in Southwest Florida, the Bahamas and other parts of the Caribbean, Sutter and Pimms are increasing the length of their leash as they work to unite pet owners and real estate professionals across the country.

With their Pet Protect, one of England's pet healthcare insurance programs, and real estate background, Sutter and Pimms have brought together an exceptional team to form The Pet Realty Network, an online community that matches pet owners with "pet friendly" real estate agents and services.

To Sutter, after growing up with dogs and horses, her move from England to Naples, Florida, 14 years ago, made her realize the states aren't as pet friendly as England. It was further evident as she searched for a home with a dog to consider in her residential options. After entering the real estate market in the States, she knew she wasn't alone and decided to work toward a more pet-friendly environment when it comes to local communities. According to Sutter and Pimms, each year there are over 10.7 million people moving with their pets every year in the U.S. alone.



*Pimms (right) and his assistant, Reece (left), frequent grassy areas for a game of catch during their lunch hour.*

*Photos © The Pet Realty Network*



*Pimms is known to receive more e-mails per day than Rhona Sutter, the President of The Pet Realty Network.*

These residents make up some of the 69.1 million households that include pets throughout the country.

"I thought we could target not just people who are looking to buy, but also services for before, during, and after your move," explains Sutter, as Pimms takes off for his daily run. "We started in the end of January, looking for agents, and we became inundated from people phoning for different services or rentals. It was like we pushed this button and everyone and their dog was phoning and asking questions."

Participating agents pay an annual membership fee of \$50, allowing them to list unlimited properties along with photos, in addition to photos of their pets. The overall goal of Pimms and Sutter is to give their equally pet-friendly members the tools and resources necessary for when people contact them. The members' section offers a variety of resources for agents, including newsletters to send to clients and special marketing packages within the site.

The Pet Photos section links to Realtors' biographies, details about their company and their pet(s), and pet-friendly properties offered by

the agent. August brought new updates to the site, adding a pet-friendly community forum written by pet owners for pet owners covering topics from rentals, to properties, to recommended "doggie" beaches.

In addition, 10% of the annual cost is donated to a local humane society, via the Lucky Day campaign.

"It makes us feel good because we're helping shelters, and it helps agents be recognized in their own community," says Sutter. "It really is truly a challenging market. Agents have to do something to stand out from the crowd. This is quite a substantial niche market—so whether it's those moving for retirement, job relocation, or someone in their 20s or 80s—all of these people have pets."

—Kayla O'Brien