

Pet Friendly Office

There has been an increasing trend in recent years for employers to implement pet-friendly workplaces in an effort to boost employee morale and productivity. The basis of the concept is that pets are widely understood to have the effect of improving an individual's mood and reducing levels of stress and anxiety – sentiments that are invaluable in a workplace (particularly high-intensity work environments).

Pet-friendly workplaces can take various forms such as allowing employees to bring their pets in to work with them, organising for animals to visit the workplace (e.g. some of our members and other animal welfare organisations offer programs through which they bring animals up for adoption to visit a workplace) or even having an office pet.

The decision to make the workplace a pet-friendly one should not, however, be without careful thought as it will have a significant effect on all employees and their experiences at work. There are several important practical and legal considerations that employers should consider.

We have identified three key considerations that employers should address:

The people

It should never be assumed that all employees will react positively to the introduction of pets into the workplace. There will doubtless be individuals who are not fond of pets or animals and do not want them in the workplace, which needs to be taken into consideration.

There is also the risk that employees may have allergies to some animals and cannot be near (or even in the same room) as a particular animal.

Consulting with employees about the possibility of bringing pets into the workplace will enable an employer to understand any issues or concerns that employees might have and to tailor a policy on pets in the workplace that adequately addresses those issues or concerns.

The animals

There are a few variables and associated risks for employers to consider when determining what types of animals it will permit into the workplace, including:

- the species and sizes of pets that will be permitted in the workplace;
- the need for pets to have up to date vaccinations and treatments;

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- the need for pets to be trained;
- noisy or otherwise disruptive pets (e.g. dogs that tend to bark at other people or animals);
- a pet's social comfort around other people and animals; and
- the number of animals that will be permitted in the workplace at any one time.

Each work environment will have different responses to addressing these risks, but whatever those responses are, it is essential that employers clearly set the parameters of what 'pet-friendly' means in their workplace through a tailored policy.

The workplace

Employers must also consider the environment in which they operate. For instance, it would not be appropriate to allow pets into a warehouse or some other area that operates high-risk machinery.

In some cases, it may be more practical for employers to create designated pet-friendly or pet-free areas to prevent safety concerns and maintain office cleanliness. Designated areas may also assist where employees raise concerns about pets in or around work areas.

Employers must also ensure that they set clear rules in relation to the responsibility that pet owners have when bringing their pets into the workplace. For example, pet owners should be advised that they are responsible for cleaning accidents and otherwise ensuring that their pet is not a disruption or nuisance in the workplace.

Employers should also consider insurance coverage and general liability for any damage to property or injury to people as result of the actions of a pet. Will you, as the employer, be liable for that damage or injury or, should you have the pet owners agree to accept any resulting liability? How is your workers compensation policy and premium affected in the event of an employee making a claim due to illness or injury as a result of a fellow employee's pet? Who will be liable if one pet attacks and injures another pet?

Conclusion

Adopting a pet-friendly workplace philosophy requires a delicate balancing of the interests and rights of all employees, the welfare of the animals, together with the associated liability risks.

So, employers should consult with employees and if a decision is made to have a pet-friendly workplace then, we encourage employers to create a policy that clearly sets out the expectations and rules because it only takes one bad incident to ruin what should otherwise be a positive experience for employees and the animals.

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This Pets in the workplace policy template is ready to be tailored to your company's needs and should be considered a starting point for setting up your employment policies.

Policy brief & purpose

Our pets in the workplace policy outlines our rules for bringing, caring for and supervising pets in our company's offices.

We believe that pets can foster a friendlier and happier workplace. They're fun, playful and can have positive influence on our work. We'll allow our employees to have their pets at work when they wish.

However, we want to make sure that animals won't disrupt our operations, damage properties, or cause medical issues to other employees. We expect everyone to read and respect this policy.

Scope

This policy refers to all our employees, visitors, contractors and consultants.

It applies to any space our company owns where employees perform their job duties. Regarding spaces our company rents, we're responsible to check appropriate regulations and seek approval from owner or building manager.

Policy elements

Employees who own pets can choose to bring them to their workplace. They should always consult with the Senior Executive, HR department or supervisor (referred to in the following as the Overseer to:

- Inform the Overseer that their pet is adequately trained
- Create/submit a Pet Resume - <https://rentwithpets.com.au/tips-for-tenants/pet-resume>
- Present current documentation of insurance policy that covers their pets
- Provide proof that their pets are clean, properly vaccinated, and free of parasites
- Ensure their pet will not cause allergies or other medical problems for their co-workers
- Sign waivers that state their pet's information and their owner's responsibility towards them

What pets are allowed?

Office pets are usually dogs and cats, but any pet that's well-trained and not potentially dangerous or unpleasant is also allowed. Young animals aren't allowed until they're adequately trained. Pets like snakes, spiders and uncaged bunnies (which chew up cords) are prohibited in the workplace.

Certain large dog breeds, like pit bulls, should be on a leash and their movements restricted to their owner's office space. Their owner is responsible for informing others of their dog's presence, preferably with a sign. The Overseer can give specific instructions about those pets.

When pets get sick, owners should leave them at home.

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Owner's responsibilities

Generally, we want to ensure that our company and employees' pets are cared for properly. Pet owners should clean up after their pets. They're solely responsible for their pet's behaviour and well-being. They should supervise their pets in the workplace or always know their location. More specifically, they should make sure their animal doesn't:

- Make a mess
- Fight with other office pets
- Wander in prohibited places
- Endanger themselves or others
- Damage company or employee property
- Annoy co-workers (e.g. barking constantly, climbing on their desks)

If any of these occur, it falls to the HR department's (company's) discretion to determine the seriousness of the pet's actions. As a general rule, if the pet misbehaves three times or becomes overly aggressive, their owner may be prohibited from bringing the pet to the office again. They'll also be responsible for any expenses and cleaning resulting from their pet's behaviour.

Owners can leave work to walk their animals on their lunch breaks. They should avoid using up excessive work time to look after their pets. If a pet needs constant care and attention, their owner may be instructed to leave them at home. Same goes for days that their owner has a busy schedule and won't be able to supervise them.

Pet owners are advised not to leave pets in their vehicles for great periods of time. Leaving pets in cars confined or unattended, in conditions that may endanger them, is illegal. Pet owners are obliged to know the law. When employees use company vehicles, we prohibit them from leaving pets inside, unattended and without proper ventilation, food/drink, or in extreme temperatures.

Areas where pets are prohibited

There are certain places and times where our company prohibits office pets:

- Labs, basements and attics
- Offices of employees with allergies
- Places with sensitive equipment or material
- Kitchen or cafeteria, where food is served or exposed
- Meeting rooms during meetings with clients or external parties

Security personnel, office managers and other employees should inform Overseer of any unattended or misbehaving pets at work.

The Overseer may instruct employees to restrict their pets at certain instances (e.g. company parties).

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We expect employees to comply with those instructions.

In cases when the number of pets in the office becomes excessive, we'll have to restrict them. Employees can then bring their pets to work according to a schedule/roster.

Complaint process

We want all employees to feel safe in their workplace. If an employee has concerns or problems resulting from a pet at work, they can follow this process:

1. Talk to the pet's owner in case they can resolve the problem immediately
2. Reach out to their supervisor explaining their issues
3. Consult the Overseer if they don't get a satisfactory response
4. File an official complaint

If they have a medical or personal issue (e.g. allergy, phobia), they can directly contact the Overseer (management) or any department responsible for Health & Safety.

Supervisors should take their employees' concerns seriously and investigate as soon as they receive complaints. If they're unable to resolve the problem, they should contact the Overseer (management) and inform their team member.

This policy doesn't prohibit service animals (animals trained to perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.) They are allowed to move freely with their owners. If any problem arises because of service animals, we will make appropriate accommodations to resolve it. This falls to the discretion of the Overseer (management). But we won't, under any circumstances, create problems for our employees with disabilities.

We also instruct employees to not feed other employees' pets at work, if not authorised.

Disclaimer: This policy template is meant to provide general guidelines and should be used as a reference. It may not take into account all relevant local, state or federal laws and is not a legal document. Neither the author nor Workable will assume any legal liability that may arise from the use of this policy. [Sample Workplace Pet Policy](#)

A successful pet-friendly workplace program brings many benefits. But it depends on all parties agreeing to clear guidelines about behaviours and accountability.

Here's a sample workplace pet policy with suggested guidelines for requirements, responsibilities and how to manage issues.

Your actual pet policy should reflect your organisation's decisions about bringing pets to work, such as which types of pets are allowed and what the requirements are for participants.

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Workplace Pet Policy

Pets make our lives better in so many ways. At work, they create a fun, happy environment, encourage interactions among people, and get us up for regular exercise breaks.

Pets are also a responsibility, and the opportunity to have them at our workplace is a privilege all participants must respect. To take part in our pets-at-work program, employees must agree to honour this workplace pet policy.

Scope

- This workplace pet policy applies to employees only. Because it would be too difficult to track requirements and participation, we do not allow visitors to bring pets to our workplace.
- This policy applies to [XYZ] location, and participating pets are allowed any time their owner is at work.
- The focus of our policy is dogs and cats. Other pets are not included at this time. Please contact Management if you would like to explore adding other pet types to the workplace pet policy.

Pet Requirements

To participate, pets must be:

- At least 3 months old.
- Up to date on vaccinations required by state law.
- Free of any communicable infections or any parasites such as fleas.
- Clean and well groomed.
- House-trained.
- Obedient, well-socialised and with no history of biting, excessive barking, chasing or aggressive behaviour.
- Microchipped, to help locate and return them in case they would run away while visiting.
- Covered under their owner's homeowners/renters insurance policy, which must cover dog bites.

Pet Parent Responsibilities

To comply with our workplace pet policy, pet parents who want to bring their pets to work must agree to:

- Be 100% responsible for their pet's behaviour, well-being, hygiene and happiness the entire time he or she is visiting.

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- Be respectful of other employees, and their pets, to ensure everyone can be as successful and productive as possible at work.
- Manage their workspace to ensure it is “pet-proofed” and safe for their visiting pet.
- Keep their pet with them and controlled throughout the day. Or, make arrangements with a colleague to do so if they need to step away.
- Ensure that their pet’s behaviour does not interfere with other employees’ comfort or ability to do their work.
- Provide their own pet items to ensure pet safety, such as leashes, crates or gates to keep the pet securely in the employee’s work area.
- Provide their own pet wellness items, such as waste bags, toys, food and water bowls.
- Provide adequate bathroom breaks, access to water and food, and exercise throughout the day.
- Clean up after their pet immediately if any accidents occur.
- Maintain homeowners/renters insurance that covers dog bites.
- Be legally and financially responsible for any damage caused by their pet.
- Provide annual proof of vaccination and health for their visiting pets.
- Keep pets out of pet-free areas.
- Use alternate pet care away from work on days when the employee would be unable to fully manage the pet at work (e.g., an all-day meeting) or the pet is ill.
- Take their pet home at any time if the pet’s behaviour or health makes it a distraction, nuisance or danger to anyone else, or if asked to do so by their manager.

Managing Issues

Concerns related to visiting pets or the workplace pet policy should be handled in the following way:

- Talk with the pet parent and work to resolve issues mutually.
- Escalate the issue to the pet owner’s supervisor.
- Escalate the issue to Human Resources/Management