

EMPLOYERS Q & A



The Blue Cross hopes that Take Your Dog to Work Day is a fun event for all involved. But if a member of your staff wants to help support our work with sick and needy pets by taking part in the event, what do you need to consider?

What is Take Your Dog to Work Day?

Take Your Dog to Work Day is run by The Blue Cross animal charity and is one of the biggest and most popular events in the canine calendar. Now in its thirteenth year, thousands of workplaces across the UK take part every year.

Is it irresponsible to promote pets at work?

The Blue Cross understands that it is not possible for everyone to take part in this event (e.g. workers in restaurants or factories). The Blue Cross advises anyone who is thinking of taking a dog to work to check with their employer first, and make sure that there are no Health & Safety or insurance implications of dogs coming in to the workplace. It is also important for participants to check that colleagues are not scared of dogs or allergic to them. Owners need to respect other people's wishes and make sure that everyone in the office knows their plans. Not everyone is a dog lover.

What are the insurance implications?

Here is some general guidance on the insurance aspects of Take Your Dog To Work Day:

Employees must:

- Obtain the prior approval of the employer to bring their dog into work
- Check their own insurance and/or pet insurance policies and ensure that it provides adequate cover for damage to third party property or injury to third parties (including fellow employees)
- Keep their dog under proper control at all times

Owners need to ensure that they take full responsibility for their dog(s) whilst in company premises, in a company vehicle or on company land.

Examples of risk include:

- Damage to company property
- Injury to third parties (including other employees)

Most pet insurance policies would extend to cover public liability in event the that a dogs caused injury or damage to third parties.

Technically, if a dog, whilst being carried in a company vehicle, causes an accident and there is extensive damage to the vehicle, the insurers of the company vehicle can request subrogation rights (recovery) from the owner of the dog, i.e. the employee (though this has so far not been tested in court).

Where dogs are transported in privately owned vehicles, adequate steps need to be undertaken to transport them in a safe and proper environment. They should be restrained and not loose in the vehicle as they could cause distraction to the driver.



Employers should insist that staff:

- Obtain written approval prior to them bringing their dogs into work
- Provide proof of adequate insurance cover for damage to third party property or injury to third parties (including fellow employees)
- Keep their dogs under proper control at all times

So, what about health and safety then?

The Blue Cross offers the following advice to employee:

- Ensure you obtain the prior approval of your employer to bring their your dog into work
- Carry out a simple risk assessment. A risk assessment is simply deciding what could go wrong and ensuring you have taken sufficient precautions to prevent or minimise any risks. If your workplace employs five or more people, the risk assessment must be in writing. The points below should be considered.
- Keep your dog under proper control at all times and be responsible for clearing up any toilet accident
- Ensure their your dog is well behaved
- Check that colleagues have been informed. If you share the workplace with others, ensure that they are happy with the arrangement. Remember some people are not dog lovers and may be wary of animals.
- Consider any colleague in the workplace who has any animal allergies
- Make sure your dog is healthy and not suffering from sickness or diarrhoea
- Consider where your dog will stay and where their his bedding, bowls etc will be placed. Avoid creating trip hazards or obstructing fire exits and means of escape.
- If you need to leave your dog temporarily, make arrangements with colleagues so that they can check your dog is OK. You should consider your dog in any emergency procedures such as fire drills and other building evacuations.
- Consider where you will exercise your dog during the day and where your dog can relieve himself. Makeaking sure you have sufficient bags or 'poop scoops' and dispose of any waste in appropriate waste receptacles.
- If you are using company vehicles, you will need to check what company policies are in place for carrying animals
- Remember there are some workplaces where it is illegal to have dogs: for example in commercial kitchens, because of possible food contamination

Is having a dog at work disruptive?

In an NOP survey carried out for The Blue Cross, of those businesses questioned that DO allow dogs at work, over 90 per cent say they have noticed a positive change in the working environment since allowing our four-legged friends into the workplace.

What's so good about having a dog at work?

Research commissioned by The Blue Cross as well as by other organisations has shown that workers really benefit from being in the company of animals – physically and mentally. Having a pet in the workplace can actually help reduce stress levels and heart rates. The simple action of stroking a dog can lower your blood pressure.

Dogs are great ice-breakers with clients and they generally create a feel-good factor amongst staff.

As mentioned previously, in an NOP survey of small businesses carried out by The Blue Cross, over 90 per cent of employers who allow dogs at work say they have noticed a positive change in the working environment since allowing dogs into work.

In addition to this:

- One in two businesses noticed a decrease in absenteeism.
- 56 per cent said that their furry friends had improved work relations.
- 67 per cent said that having a dog at work had improved staff morale.

Who actually takes their dogs to work?

People from all kinds of industries take part in Take Your Dog To Work Day every year, but over the years The Blue Cross has noticed a trend in the types of industries that get involved in the event. The charity has now identified healthcare, animal care, education, construction and local government as the top five professions in Britain that are dog-friendly – either allowing dogs in the workplace on a regular basis, or at least for Take Your Dog to Work Day.

Aware of the potential benefits of having animals in the workplace, larger companies like BUPA and Lloyds Insurance also support the event.

