



## **Bosses say employers should allow ‘Bring Your Dog to Work’ every day**

A company that has been welcoming dogs into its offices for almost two decades has drawn up a blueprint for other firms considering following suit.

Bosses at pet emergency service [Vets Now](#), based in Dunfermline, Fife, have been allowing staff to bring their pets (aka canine colleagues) to work since the business was established in 2001.

Their intention, similar to an estimated one third of UK businesses who have adopted a dog-friendly office, was to make their workplace a more relaxing and enjoyable place to be and they have a ‘dog policy’ (which they’re making available for other businesses to download, [here](#)) in place to help achieve this.

Mark Ross, chief executive of Vets Now, who are among the sponsors of Bring Your Dog to Work Day on June 21, said: “I’d encourage any company considering a dog-friendly office to give it a go.

“I don’t think there are many businesses that have been welcoming dogs into their offices for as long as Vets Now.

“But we’re proud to have pioneered this and it’s proven to be a real boon for our staff. The whole experience has been overwhelmingly positive for us.

“There are several benefits to having dogs in the workplace. For example, research shows they help lower stress among staff.

“But in addition to that, studies show they also help increase cooperation and people who have dogs at their feet are perceived as more friendly and approachable.

“It also gets people on their feet, away from their desks, helping foster discussion and collaboration.”

### **Vets Now’s checklist for firms considering following their lead is:**

1. First of all, check any insurance implications and make sure you follow any requirements.
2. Conduct a risk assessment and ensure you’ve taken sufficient precautions to prevent or minimise any risks.
3. Make sure you create a dog policy, so everyone is clear on the parameters. Vets Now has created a [template here](#) which businesses are welcome to download for free. A dog policy should consider practical things like having dogs on leads whilst inside office areas, and ensuring dogs are only brought into the office if they are in good health and not showing any signs of sickness.
4. Look after your canine colleagues— ensure they have access to fresh water, make sure there’s a quiet and comfy place for your dog to relax, and even better, arrange treat and toy stations so your doggy feels included as part of the team!

5. It's helpful to have a walking rota of sorts so any team members in meetings have their dog's walk times covered by other colleagues. It's also helpful just to know when other team members are dog-walking so you can amble together.

Laura Weir, a marketing manager at Vets Now, whose Labrador, Hunter, aged three, has been a regular canine colleague in the office since he was a puppy, said:

"Being able to bring your dog to work is a great benefit to offer staff. A bit like childcare, juggling day-care for your dog can be expensive and a worry and therefore you have peace of mind having our furry companions with us. It's also a real bonus for the dogs, helping them socialise with other colleagues and dogs as well as learning patience and obedience in an office environment gives you a well-balanced, happy dog.

"Of course, it's great for us too. Having the dogs in mean we need to take regular breaks away from the desk to exercise them which we know helps with concentration and productivity.

"In our team, the dogs are an extended part of the gang – they all have their unique personality and place. Hunter is certainly a happy-go-lucky chap and his boundless energy and eagerness for anyone who walks past the desk to throw his ball certainly raises a few smiles and usually, time out to come and make a fuss of him."

Aimee Richardson, Vets Now's learning and development administrator, said: "Having dogs in the office makes it a more enjoyable place to work and helps to relieve stress. It's also a good reason to get away from your desk now and again and to get some fresh. I love the fact they're always beside you for a cuddle and a play. They truly do become part of the team."

#### **Vets Now has compiled the benefits of having pooches a regular feature of your workplace:**

1. **You'll have a healthier workforce:** Employers are likely to be rewarded by healthier workforce with fewer sick days. Studies have shown that petting a dog lowers a person's heart rate and dog owners have lower cholesterol and fewer trips to the doctors. Dog owners walk on average 79% further than non-dog owners. Some research has shown that dog owners are much more likely to survive a heart attack compared to non-dog owners.
2. **You'll have a more positive workforce:** Caring for a dog helps relieve symptoms of depression and encourages people to be more positive. They're also likely to worry less. A number of studies have proven that petting a dog reduces stress and increases people's happy hormones. Dogs give people cheerful attention which make people feel good at work.
3. **You'll have a more productive workforce:** Short regular breaks to walk dogs will help employees' state of mind and productivity during their working days, which means higher performing teams. Pets are really good at inspiring people, some of the best ideas are born when dogs are there to help encourage discussion.
4. **You'd be fostering work-life balance:** Colleagues are able to pass long work hours more happily, and less worried about the dog left at home. Dogs in the office also remind staff to take necessary breaks, which busy professionals may not have as much time for when out-of-the-office. Have a dog-friendly office is seen as a big employment perk as well, which encourages retention.

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5. **Increased colleague interaction:** Having dogs in the office keeps spirits high and there's nothing like a little puppy love to add some comic relief. Without a doubt, having dogs around the office fosters more discussion and collaboration between colleagues during dog walks.

To get involved in the fun of Bring Your Dog to Work Day on 21 June 2019, follow the hashtag #BringYourDogToWorkDay or visit [www.bringyourdogtoworkday.co.uk](http://www.bringyourdogtoworkday.co.uk). For more information on Vets Now visit [www.vets-now.com](http://www.vets-now.com)

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For media enquires contact Gail Chalmers on [gail@gailchalmers.com](mailto:gail@gailchalmers.com) or 07919411402

**Vets Now notes to editor:**

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for companion animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service.
- Vets Now employs approximately 1300 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country's top Emergency & Critical Care