



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY BULLETIN



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GUIDELINES FOR THE ALLOWANCE OF PET DOGS IN OUTDOOR DINING AREAS

There has been interest on the part of restaurant owners and members of the community to allow pet dogs in the outdoor dining areas. As a result of the community interest, Environmental Health assessed the risk factors involved in the allowance of pet dogs in outdoor dining areas. After a meticulous review of supporting data and current Department policy, Los Angeles County Environmental Health made changes to the existing policy to include provisions for the allowance of pet dogs in outdoor dining areas.

Pet dogs may be allowed at the exterior areas in outdoor dining areas of a food facility if the following requirements are met:

- A separate entrance is present where pets do not enter through the food establishment to reach the outdoor dining area.
- No food preparation shall be allowed at the outdoor dining area, including the dispensing/mixing of drinks and ice.
- Customer multi-use or reusable utensils such as plates, silverware, glasses and bowls shall not be stored, displayed or pre-set at the outdoor dining area.
- Food and water served/provided to pets shall only be in single-use disposable containers.
- Employees shall be prohibited from having direct contact with pets while on duty.
- Pets shall not be allowed on chairs, seats, benches, and tables.
- The outdoor dining area shall be maintained clean.
- In cases where excrement or other bodily fluids (urine, saliva, vomit) are deposited, an employee shall immediately clean and sanitize the affected areas.
- The outdoor dining area shall not be fully enclosed (a fully enclosed dining area shall be considered to be part of the interior area of the facility).



* Business operators must still follow local ordinances related to sidewalk, public nuisance, and sanitation issues & State requirements regarding service animals.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ALLOWANCE OF PET DOGS IN OUTDOOR DINING AREAS

What you need to know:

I. What was the previous County policy regarding pet dogs in restaurants?

The previous Los Angeles County Policy (Animals in Food Facilities), restricted the presence of any live animal, bird, or fowl inside full-service, outdoor dining areas demarcated by fencing, planters, shrubs, or other means that limit pedestrian traffic,. These areas were then considered to be “in” the facility. Other exterior areas of a food facility, such as non-demarcated outdoor dining areas, outdoor dining areas without table service or parkways were not considered to be inside the facility. The exclusion or permission of animals from these areas is at the discretion of the business operator.

II. What is the new policy?

The new policy, which went into effect in December 2011, provides the restaurant operator or owner sets of guidelines to follow if they decide they would like to allow pet dogs at the outdoor patio dining area of the restaurant. The exclusion or permission of animals from these areas is at the discretion of the business operator or owner, however, they must follow these guidelines:

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The California Health and Safety Code remains the same which prohibits live animals inside the food facility, **except** for the service animals or dogs under the control of a uniformed law enforcement officer or of uniformed employees of private patrol operators. This new guideline does not affect the service animal regulation which allows them inside the food facility.

III. What is a service animal?

An animal such as guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Service animals are limited to dogs and miniature horses (*American Disability Act Section 205.04*)

IV. Why change the existing policy?

Many dog and restaurant owners advocated for this policy change, and we are pleased to support both residents and business owners with this opportunity. After carefully reviewing possible risk factors that may be associated with allowing pet dogs in outdoor dining areas, we determined policy revisions were possible.

V. Which area of the restaurant are the pet dogs allowed in?

Pet dogs will be permitted only in an outdoor patio, dining area that has a separate entrance, for pet dogs to access the outdoor area, without going through or inside the restaurant. This area may be surrounded with a fence, shrubs or bushes.

VI. Can I bring other pets besides dogs?

No, this guideline is limited to pet dogs, since dogs are the domesticated animal that most commonly accompanies pet owners and are typically trained and can follow basic directives from its owner. Pet dogs can also be restrained with a leash and are typically more manageable in a social setting.

VII. Can I share plates or share utensils with my pet dogs?

Pet dogs are only allowed to eat or drink from a disposable or single use bowls or plates. Although data has not been established to support the danger or safety of shared utensils between humans and dogs, that are properly washed and sanitized in between, it is our goal to protect food safety and to ensure safety for all patrons.

VIII. Can the employee pet or play with the pet dogs?

No, food facility employees are prohibited from having direct contact with pets while on duty. They are not allowed to pet or play with the pet dogs and handle food or utensils at the same time.

IX. Who is responsible for cleaning up after the pet dog at the outdoor dining area?

By allowing pet dogs in the outdoor dining or patio area of the restaurant, the owner of the business becomes responsible for maintaining this area in a clean and sanitary condition. After food business employees perform cleaning and maintenance of these areas, they are required to properly wash their hands.

X. How are the employees supposed to clean the affected areas?

Employees shall clean the affected floors using dustless methods of cleaning such as wet cleaning, vacuum cleaning, mopping with treated dust mops, or sweeping using a broom and dust-arresting compounds. Spillage or drippage on floors that occur between normal floor cleaning times may be cleaned without the use of dust-arresting compounds and with the use of a small amount of absorbent compound such as sawdust or diatomaceous earth applied immediately before spot cleaning. Business operators still must follow local ordinances or restrictions in chemical waste and disposal.

XI. Who is responsible if the dog misbehaves barks or is uncontrollable?

Each pet dog owner is responsible for the behavior and action of their pets. It is the responsibility of the food operator or owner to create their own rules as to what is acceptable pet dog behavior or etiquette while at their facility.

XII. Does this policy apply to all the cities in Los Angeles?

The new policy is for all restaurants in Los Angeles County that are inspected by Public Health, except for the cities of Pasadena, Long Beach and Vernon, which have their own Public Health Department.

XIII. Do other counties or states allow pet dogs at outdoor dining areas?

Helpful Hints

Dining Outdoors with Your Dog

Before You Go

- Check first to see if the restaurant allows dogs in its outdoor patio area.
- Take your dog for a walk so he or she will be ready to relax while you are dining.

At the Restaurant

- Always follow the restaurant's rules for dogs.
- Make sure your dog is well-behaved and on a leash.
- Do not walk your dog through the restaurant to get to the patio area.
- Do not tie the leash to the table, or there might be spilled drinks if he or she moves!
- Keep your dog close to your table or chair, but not on them.
- Do not let your dog eat or drink out of the restaurant glassware or dishware.
- Some restaurants may not provide doggie dishes. Check first, and bring a bowl for water, if needed.
- Give your dog doggie treats instead of food from your plate.
- Clean up after your dog and notify the restaurant staff so they can do additional cleanup.
- And, enjoy the day with your favorite pet!



Food Dangers

Some common foods can make your pet sick. Avoid feeding your dog foods that contain:

- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Chocolate
- Xylitol (artificial sweetener)
- Garlic
- Chives
- Onions
- Avocado
- Grapes
- Macadamia Nuts
- Raw Meat, Eggs, and/or Bones
- Salty or Fatty Foods

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In California, local jurisdictions have varying interpretations of the law. Santa Barbara County currently has a written policy that allows pet dogs at outdoor dining areas. In February 2012, Hawaii has a proposed a bill that will allow pet dogs in the food facility. The state of Florida enacted legislation that will permit pet dogs in restaurants with restrictions.

XIV. Where can I file a complaint when this new policy is not properly followed?

You can file a complaint by contacting Environmental Health at 1-888-700-9995 or email us at ehmail@ph.lacounty.gov.

For a complete guideline, or additional questions visit us at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh>