

Dogs at Food Premises

Amendments to the Food Premises Regulation (Ontario Regulation 493/17) made under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* relating to this matter came into effect January 1, 2020. Ontario food premises operators have the discretion to permit dogs in outdoor eating areas as long as food is not prepared in the eating area and, under certain conditions, inside a food premises. This document has been prepared for public health units, food premises operators and food industry stakeholders to raise awareness of the amendments and assist with consistent implementation.

Background

Prior to the recent regulatory amendments, with limited exceptions, the Food Premises Regulation did not allow live animals to be present in any rooms of food premises where food is prepared, packaged, served, etc. Operators found this restrictive as it did not allow them to meet the needs of customers. The recent regulatory amendments enable small businesses to remain competitive and sustainable through greater flexibility in their business models.

Dogs are now permitted in the following areas of food premises:

Outdoor eating areas (patios)

Operators now have the discretion to allow dogs in outdoor eating areas of a food service premises if:

- food is not prepared in the eating area.

Indoor eating areas

Operators now have the discretion to allow dogs in an indoor eating area of a food service premises if:

- the only food items that are manufactured, processed or prepared at the food service premise are low-risk food items; and
- the dogs are in a room where only low-risk or pre-packaged ready-to-eat food items, or both, are served, sold, offered for sale or displayed, and no manufacturing, processing or preparation of food items takes place in the room.

Best practices for permitting dogs at food premises:

- Operators have the discretion to permit or not permit dogs on their premises;
- On-site restaurant signage to indicate if the premises is dog-friendly (see page 4);
- Dogs should be under the control of the handler and kept on leash;
- Employees should not touch the dogs;
- Consumers should wash hands immediately after touching or cleaning up after a dog;
- Dogs should avoid contact with table and chairs;
- Dogs should not come in contact with utensils or dishes used to serve patrons;
- Patrons should ensure necessary supplies to clean up after dog feces (i.e. bag);
- In the case of a waste-related incident, employees should clean and sanitize the affected area immediately and then wash their hands thoroughly;
- Dogs with symptoms of illness such as diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, skin lesions etc. should not be permitted;
- Dog scratches or bites must be reported to the local public health unit. Clean affected area immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are examples of low-risk food?

Whole fruits and vegetables, bread and most baked goods (with no custard).

What are examples of pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food?

Food with no additional processing steps prior to consumption such as prepackaged yogurt, cheese, cured meats and delivered take-out foods (e.g., pizza).

What should an operator do if they want to permit dogs at their food premises?

- Review the Food Premises Regulation requirements pertaining to allowing dogs at a food premises;
- Contact the local public health unit to ensure compliance with the regulation.

What happens if there is a dog bite incident at a food premises?

In the event of a dog bite or scratch, immediately wash the injury with soap and water and seek medical attention. Record names and contact information of the dog, dog owner, and victim. Contact the local public health unit.

How will the public know if a food premises is dog friendly?

Food premises operators are encouraged to post signage indicating if dogs are allowed at their premises. Sample signage is available on page 4 to print. This may supplement a sign noting that service animals are welcome. Patrons are also advised to call prior to visiting a food premises to be informed of a food premises' specific dog policy. Food premises operators are also encouraged to update their restaurant description online.

Will service animals be affected?

The Food Premises Regulation allows service animals to be in areas of food premises where food is sold, served or offered for sale. The amendments do not impact the accessibility for service animals, which are covered under the Food Premises Regulation as a separate requirement. The *Blind Persons Rights Act* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* contain legal requirements related to Guide Dogs and service animals in Ontario.

Can dogs enter a food premises to access the outdoor patio?

Dogs are not prohibited from being in any room where food is neither prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed.

What are the risks associated with dogs in food premises?

- Allergic reactions due to accumulation of dog hair, dander or debris in the environment.
- Physical injuries and related consequences from dog bites and scratches.
- Human disease due to contamination of food by direct or indirect contact with dog saliva, feces, urine, nasal secretions or other bodily fluids.
- Human exposure to external parasites that dogs may carry such as fleas and ticks.

Additional Information

- For more information on compliance with the Food Premises Regulation please refer to the Food Premises reference document: [Food Premises Reference Document](#).



Figure 1: Dog Friendly Signage (Sample)