

Pet Bereavement

A Guide for Employers

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The Pet Wellness Experts

For many working pet parents, pets are part of the family. The impact of pet loss can be significant, and the support of an understanding employer at this difficult time cannot be underestimated.

Why should I implement a pet bereavement policy in my workplace?

Experiencing pet loss can have a significant physical and emotional impact on employees. It can lead to stress, distraction, poor performance, low mood or even depression.

Results from our recent survey also show that nearly half of employees (45%) have hidden a pet's death from their employer, while 74% of UK adults think employers should have pet bereavement policies in place.

It's important that employers recognise the impact that pet loss can have on their employees, and create a supportive workplace environment during this time.

How should I word the policy?

It's important to be as clear, concise and simplistic as possible when explaining the parameters in the policy, so there's no room for confusion. This will help any situations relating to pet bereavement to be handled sensitively, and ensure the rules are the same for everyone.

If you're thinking about implementing a pet bereavement policy, here are some of the things you should consider covering with suggested wording, to help you communicate your policy easily and effectively.

1. Who can take pet bereavement leave

Whatever your length of service, you can take this type of leave if you have responsibility for the pet. If you have suffered a bereavement but are unsure if you are entitled to pet bereavement leave, please contact HR or a manager for clarification.

2. What leave a pet parent can take

You are entitled to X full day(s) off on full pay.

You can take the leave at the time(s) you choose within X weeks after your bereavement.

3. Notice to take parental bereavement leave

If you need to take parental bereavement leave within 2 weeks after your bereavement, you can take the leave straight away. You do not have to provide any notice.

Please let your line manager know no later than when you are due to start work on the first day on which you wish to take leave or, if that is not feasible, as soon as you can.

How do I communicate this to my employees?

We asked Tracey Akamaguna, HR Manager at Itch, for some tips on how to effectively communicate your new policy:

- Communicate the 'big picture' idea at a company meeting, but make sure you follow up in writing with further details
- If you have an intranet, hub, or internal communication platform, then also announce your new policy there
- Make sure the new policy is added to the staff handbook, and that it is referred to in the onboarding documents for new starters. Employees should always know where to find the information should they need it
- The communication of the policy should always happen in advance and not be reactive to someone losing their pet. This minimises misunderstanding and means it can be handled sensitively
- Make sure all managers are aware of the details of the policy as they will likely be the first point of contact

It's important to remember that everyone deals with loss differently, and so even with a policy in place, it's important to be sensitive to individual needs.

What other policies or perks could I implement for pet parents?

If you're looking to implement other pet-related policies or perks within the workplace, here are some ideas to get you started:

- Bring your dog to work (this should have its own policy to ensure safety for humans and pets in the workplace)
- A gift for your new pet
- Paw-ternity (a day off to help your pet acclimatise to its new surroundings)
- Pet bereavement gift
- Time off to volunteer with pet charities
- Pet birthday gift