

## Companion Dogs in Outdoor Dining Areas Submission – May 2012

That Companion Dogs be permitted in Outdoor Dining Areas at the discretion of the occupier provided the occupier can demonstrate that food, food surfaces and food utensils will not be contaminated by the animal.

To achieve this an occupier will need to inform the person for whom the dog is a companion (the person in charge) that the animal:

- a) must remain on the floor/ground,
- b) can not be fed or given water within the outdoor dining area, and
- c) must not come into contact with food surfaces or utensils

Accordingly the person in charge of a dog may, as a result of item b), demand that the occupier provide a utensil from which the animal can drink.

Given HACCP & best practice principles, contamination must be assumed. Hence suitable changes will have to be made to food safety practices and plans.

Knowing that the discretion to permit a dog to be present within an outdoor dining area comes with obligations, increased workload and changes to food safety practices and plans may influence an occupier's decision to allow the practice.

In essence, because of the risk factors, I believe the most suitable solution would be that an occupier advise their 'food hygiene agency' (eg Local Authority) of the intention to allow Companion Dogs be permitted in Outdoor Dining Areas of his/her establishment.

This would provide the 'food hygiene agency' with an opportunity to offer relevant/necessary advice to the occupier so that all obligations and requirements are understood and implemented so as to ensure minimal risk to public safety and issues of liability are addressed.

Vincent Dingjan

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