

The New Era of Pet-Related Employee Benefits

If you're not seriously considering pet-related benefits for your employees, you could be losing ground on offering a competitive benefits package.



Employee benefits are designed to support your employees with services and care that make their lives a little easier and support them in being a productive contributor to your organization. The benefits offered in many cases, provide support for the employees' family members as well. Today, the family pet is no longer the token dog chained up in the backyard or the alley cat that a little milk is left out for. The role of the pet has evolved into an active and important member of the family. Your employees want you to acknowledge that role by offering pet-related benefits.

In our article, [*Pet Insurance – The Benefit Increasingly Coveted by Millennials*](#), we explored reasons why pet insurance in particular matters to the millennial generation who are quickly becoming the largest generation in the workforce. Millennials are more likely to delay family life in preference of choosing pet-parenting while they build their careers. The article highlights data that found 75 percent of Americans in their thirties have dogs. This doesn't even take into account those who own other animals such as cats, birds, reptiles, and small mammals. It's why this benefit should be considered in industries where heavy talent poaching is occurring such as is happening in the legal industry. Interestingly, in our [*2018 Law Firm Benefits Benchmarking Survey Report*](#), only one in four law firms offered pet insurance.

A new trend gaining quick popularity is "paw-ternity" or "fur-ternity" leave when an employee adopts a new pet. One example that received national news coverage

recently involved [a Minneapolis-based marketing company that adjusted its employee benefits policy](#) enabling employees to work from home for a week to welcome a new pet. Another example is of a New York-based data company that provides two weeks of paid time off for employees to acclimate a new pet.

Many organizations provide a wealth of benefits and perks to help parents-to-be and new parents with everything from costly pre-conception support to onsite daycare. However, [in a survey conducted by HABRI \(Human Animal Bond Research Institute\) and Nationwide](#), pet-friendly policies and related benefits could lead to more engaged employees no matter what stage of life they are at or what parenting choices, including not to have children, they have made.



Meet Lux, owned by Alliant Employee Benefits' Vice President of Marketing. Lux was just 16 weeks old when adopted. Luckily, he was mostly potty-trained.

Pet bereavement leave is also an up and coming trend. An article in [ScientificAmerican.com](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/pet-loss-can-be/) discusses [how painful pet loss can be](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/pet-loss-can-be/), impairing a person’s emotional and physical health with symptoms as severe as mimicking a heart attack (Broken Heart Syndrome) and acute grief lasting from a month or two to a full year. According to a [2016 Society for Human Resource Management Survey](https://www.societyforhr.org/2016-survey/), bereavement leave benefits for the loss of a spouse or child average four days. Given the role pets now play, pet bereavement leave must be considered. The good news is that [more companies are taking this benefit seriously](https://www.societyforhr.org/2016-survey/) and beginning to offer flexible hours to accommodate pet loss and even one or more days of bereavement leave, identifying it under the category of “loss in the family.”



Meet Max and Sadie, owned by the author of this article, another Alliant employee. Max passed away in September 2017. Nine months and three days later, Sadie passed away. Both pugs were 15 ½ years old when passing. The owner remains devastated.

Pet-friendly workplaces continue to grow in popularity and [according to SHRM.org](https://www.shrm.org/), allowing pets on-site at work contributes to employee loyalty and retention. In fact, many organizations particularly tech companies, pet industry companies, and smaller firms often allow pets on-site. However, it is recommended to thoroughly explore the perk prior to implementing, as it is not a good fit for every organization’s culture. Employers should consider [establishing a formal policy](https://www.shrm.org/) that includes addressing impacts to productivity, accidents on-site (whoopsie, Spot couldn’t hold it until he got outside), areas off-limits to pets, pet management during meetings/calls, employees with allergies, pet behavioral rules (e.g., excessive barking, aggression, biting), and more.

While allowing pets on-site or offering varying forms of leave for pets falls among the latest employee benefits trends, simply offering discounted services for grooming, boarding, and pet supplies can make a big difference to your employees and their families. There’s plenty of room, and services, out there to help your employees with their furry family members. After all, FiFi and Fido play a big role in what keeps them happy.

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Want to know more about the latest trends in employee benefits? Ask your Alliant representative.

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