

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HEALTH REGULATION AND LICENSING ADMINISTRATION**

**GUIDELINES FOR ALLOWING DOGS IN OUTDOOR DINING  
AREAS (PATIOS) OF FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS**

If a retail food establishment decides to allow dogs in their outdoor dining area, they must contact the Department of Health's Division of Food (DF) at [Food.Safety@dc.gov](mailto:Food.Safety@dc.gov) or (202)535-2180 for approval. The DF will conduct an inspection to ensure the establishment is in compliance with D.C. Law 22-91 "Dining with Dogs Act of 2018" and issue an approval document.

**If your establishment has been approved to allow dogs in outdoor dining areas, you must follow these guidelines:**

- **Post Department-issued approval notice, which clearly states dogs are permitted in the outdoor dining area or an unenclosed sidewalk café adjacent to the food establishment.**
- **Provide an entrance directly from the outdoors for the dogs so that dogs never enter the indoor area of the establishment**
- **Provide patrons with waste bags and sanitary means of disposing of waste bags**
- **Ensure that all foods and beverages are prepared indoors, not on the patio**
- **Ensure that reusable dishes and utensils shall not be stored, displayed, or pre-set in the outdoor dining areas. Dogs may not eat off of dishes that are used for humans.**
- **Ensure that workers do not come in to contact with pets. If contact occurs, workers must wash their hands with soap and water**
- **Ensure all dogs are leashed or confined in a pet carrier at all times and that they do not occupy seats, benches, customer laps, or other furniture**
- **Ensure that no dogs enter the indoor area of your establishment**
- **Ensure that no dogs are left unattended**
- **Keep the outdoor dining area clean. In the event of a dog accident, the establishment must properly clean and sanitize the area.**

For additional information, to request or renew the Dogs in DC Outdoor Dining Areas approval issued by the Department of Health, please contact the Division of Food at [food.safety@dc.gov](mailto:food.safety@dc.gov).