For discussion on
10 February 2026

Legislative Council Panel on
Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Allowing Dogs to Enter Permitted Food Premises

Purpose

The Government supports the business sector in offering pet-friendly spaces and will introduce a new initiative under which restaurant operators may apply for permission to allow customers to bring dogs into their food premises. The first batch of permission is expected to be granted by mid-2026. This paper sets out the details of the proposal, particularly the proposed regulatory arrangements of the first phase of implementation.

Background

2. At present, the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) prohibits dogs on food premises, except for guide dogs or dogs in connection with the exercise of a lawful power. In light of changing social trends, the Government has reviewed a range of factors, including public health protection, public acceptability, market demand and the industry's views, etc., and considers that there are favourable conditions for allowing dogs to enter food premises under appropriate regulation. The Chief Executive announced in the 2025 Policy Address to allow restaurant operators to apply for permission to allow customers to bring dogs into their food premises. This will create new business opportunities for the industry.

Governing Principles

3. The implementation plan of the new initiative is formulated based on the following principles:

(a) Allowing both restaurant operators and customers to have a choice: Restaurant operators may choose whether to apply for permission to let dogs enter their food premises. Once the permission is granted,

designated signage must be displayed at a conspicuous place at the entrance of the food premises so that customers could make an informed choice;

(b) Making safety of people and animals, food safety, and environmental hygiene our priority: The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will take forward legislative amendments and impose necessary additional licensing conditions for this purpose. In other aspects, restaurant operators will have appropriate flexibility to devise suitable operational arrangements and house rules having regard to actual circumstances;

(c) Minimising compliance costs for the trade: The additional licensing conditions will not result in any significant increase in compliance costs. In addition, the permission will be granted by adding an endorsement to the existing food business licences so as to streamline application procedures and reduce fees; and

(d) Taking small steps for prudent and manageable implementation: The public has a varied degree of acceptance of pets. The first phase will be implemented on a relatively small scale and in a prudent, manageable manner, so as to allow the society to adapt gradually. Subject to smooth implementation, it is anticipated that the next phase of application could be opened about half a year after the launch of the first phase at the earliest.

Regulatory Framework

4. We propose to regulate through legislative amendments and imposing necessary additional licensing requirements and/or conditions. This will be supplemented by a set of Guidelines on Good Practices and Behaviour ("the Guidelines") to be compiled by FEHD for reference by restaurant operators and customers bringing dogs. Restaurant operators may, with reference to the Guidelines, draw up their own operational arrangements and house rules having regard to actual circumstances.

Legislation

5. We propose amending Cap. 132X to allow food premises with a permission granted by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene to admit dogs (except in food handling areas), and to set out as a matter of principle that both restaurant operators and customers bringing dogs have a responsibility to keep the dogs under effective control to protect the safety of customers and staff.

6. The key rationale for expressly stipulating the responsibility to control dogs in legislation is that loss of control over dogs on food premises would pose higher risks than other public places in general, because food premises are generally confined in space, with busy customer flow and continuous movement of staff serving hot food, drinks and soup. The Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) and the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D) respectively require in public places that all dogs must be on a leash or are otherwise under control, large dogs must be held on a leash of not more than 1.5 metres or 2 metres in length as appropriate, and for "known dangerous dogs" as classified by a magistrate's order and "fighting dogs" [1] as prescribed in law, they are required to wear specific collars for identification, as well as wear muzzles and be held on a leash of not more than 1.5 metres in length when entering or remaining in public places. To minimise risks, we consider it necessary to impose stricter regulatory requirements over the control of dogs on food premises. We therefore propose prohibiting "known dangerous dogs" and "fighting dogs" from entering food premises, and to require that other dogs[2] (except for guide dogs or dogs in connection with the exercise of a lawful power) permitted on food premises must be kept on a leash of not exceeding 1.5 metres in length, which must be securely held by an adult or tied to a fixture. Any person who fails to comply with the abovementioned requirements shall be liable to a fine at level 3 ($10,000), a daily fine of $300 and imprisonment for 3 months, which is same as the existing penalty for the offence of bringing dogs onto food premises.

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[1] Pursuant to the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D), a dog may be classified by a magistrate's order as a "known dangerous dog" if it bites or attacks any person or domestic animal causing death or serious bodily injury, or if it repeatedly attacks people without any provocation. "Fighting dogs" are types of dogs as specified in Cap. 167D, such as Pit Bull Terrier. According to the information of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), there are around 30 "known dangerous dogs" and "fighting dogs" in total in Hong Kong currently.

[2] Dogs with the bronze medal issued by AFCD for the passing of exemption examination for large dogs shall, despite their exemption from the requirement of being held on a leash in public places, be under control through a leash while present on food premises.

Licence conditions

7. FEHD will impose additional licence conditions for food premises permitted to admit dogs ("permitted restaurants") in accordance with the governing principles set out in paragraph 3 above. First, to enable members of the public to make an informed choice, permitted restaurants will be required to display, at all times and at a conspicuous place at the entrance, signages in the designated format prescribed by FEHD.

8. In addition, to safeguard food hygiene, FEHD will impose licence conditions to ensure a clear separation between food and utensils for people and those for dogs. These include: no cooking or preparation of any dog food on the food premises and only prepackaged dog food may be provided or sold; no dogs are allowed to use the reusable utensils[3] of the food premises; and no dogs are allowed on dining tables. Where a restaurant operates an open kitchen[4], no customers with dogs are permitted to sit at bar counter seats adjoining such kitchen. For fouling of food premises by dog excrement, the area must be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected immediately to maintain cleanliness of food premises.

9. To safeguard the safety of diners, staff and dogs, poisonous baits or pest/rodent-trapping devices on food premises, if any, shall be kept out of reach of dogs. To reduce safety risks in the event of loss of control over dogs, cooking or heating of food on dining tables (including open flame or using electric heating apparatus, except for candles and electric coasters for keeping tea beverage warm) is prohibited on permitted food premises **at any time** and in any seating area. Any buffet area with food heating or reheating shall be kept at least 3 metres away from the seating areas/dining tables, and measures shall be taken to keep dogs out of such area.

Guidelines and house rules of restaurants

10. As individual restaurants differ in environment and layout, staffing and mode of operation, restaurant operators may devise their own operational arrangements and house rules having regard to actual circumstances. FEHD will compile a set of Guidelines for reference by restaurant operators on matters at

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[3] Restaurants may provide or sell non-plastic disposable tableware (e.g. wooden or paper tableware) if necessary.

[4] Refer to food preparation areas without full-height partitions extending from floor to ceiling.

their discretion and the key factors to be considered, such as whether dogs should be allowed on customers' seats, the number of dogs each customer may bring, and whether dog-friendly zones or sessions should be designated, etc. The Guidelines will also set out the responsibilities of customers bringing dogs, including exercising control over dogs on food premises to avoid causing nuisance to other customers, etc., to facilitate the smooth operation of food premises.

First-phase Applications

Eligibility

11. In the first phase, it is proposed to set a quota of about 500 to 1 000 (about 3% to 5% of restaurants in Hong Kong) so that we can, having regard to the actual operation and the responses of the trade and the society, etc., refine the implementation details as needed before proceeding to the next phase to ensure prudent and manageable implementation of the initiative.

12. For safety concerns, applications from hotpot restaurants and barbecue restaurants[5] (including teppanyaki and Korean barbeque establishments, etc.) will not be accepted. All other restaurants[6] with a full licence[7] may apply to become dog-friendly restaurants.

Allocation of quotas

13. Some consider that priority can be given to restaurants with outside seating accommodations or those located in malls/zones with more mature pet-friendly facilities, while others are of the view that it would be unfair to give priority to some applicants as the aforesaid criteria are not necessarily related to the suitability of individual restaurants. After consideration, we propose not to give priority to any applicant, so as to keep the application mechanism fair and simple.

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[5] As at the end of December 2025, there was a total of about 630 hotpot restaurants and barbecue restaurants, including teppanyaki and Korean barbeque establishments, etc.

[6] Including general restaurants, light refreshment restaurants and marine restaurants.

[7] There are views that restaurants without a full licence should be allowed to apply for permission to let dogs enter their food premises for the establishment of dog-friendly themed restaurants. We will actively consider introducing the relevant arrangements when reviewing the implementation of the first phase and planning for the next phase of applications.

14. FEHD will provide electronic application. If applications exceed the quota, allocation will be made by lots drawing and the results will be announced in one go. Successful restaurant licensees are required to pay a fee of $140 within a specified period to add a dog-admission endorsement to their food business licence. Applicants who fail to pay the required fee within the specified period will be deemed to have given up their application and the quota will be allocated to other applicants in accordance with the result of the lots drawing.

Exit arrangements and handling of non-compliance

15. Restaurants which have been permitted to let dogs enter, may according to operational needs, choose to cancel the relevant endorsement in the future. After cancelling the endorsement, the designated signage for dog-admission shall be immediately removed from the conspicuous place at the entrance of the food premises.

16. On the other hand, the dog-admission permission of the food premises will be cancelled as a result of repeated breach of the dogs-related licensing conditions. In general, such cancellation shall not affect the food business licence per se. However, the food premises concerned will be prohibited from applying for another dog-admission permission for one year.

Trade facilitation

17. Between October and November 2025, we conducted a series of small-group consultations on the aforementioned principles and proposed arrangements. The trade and various stakeholders[8] were supportive in general.

18. To facilitate interested food premises in preparing their application and operational arrangements, FEHD will organise briefing sessions for the trade before the application period begins, and will invite, among others, the Institute of Shopping Centre Management and the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers to share experience in managing pet-friendly malls and matters requiring attention in relation to insurance. Moreover, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) will invite animal welfare organisations to share knowledge on interacting with animals with frontline staff of the trade. FEHD will also

[8] Including representatives of the catering industry, restaurant operators, management authority of different pet-friendly venues (including operators of West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, and other pet-friendly malls), Institute of Shopping Centre Management, animal welfare organisations and the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers.

upload the Guidelines on its website and social media platforms for reference by restaurant operators and the public.

19. Upon approval of the applications, FEHD will make available online a list of permitted restaurants participating in the initiative to facilitate public search and choice. Publicity will also be conducted to familiarise the community with the relevant arrangements.

Implementation timetable

20. We plan to table the proposed amendments to Cap. 132X before the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the first quarter of this year. Subject to the passage of the amendments by the LegCo, it is expected that the first batch of permission will be granted by mid-2026.

Advice Sought

21. Members are invited to comment on the legislative proposal and the proposed regulatory arrangements.

Environment and Ecology Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
February 2026