

The Canine Hospitality Playbook

A Guide To Dog Friendly Excellence

Author: Guise Bule, CEO of Roch Dog

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Executive Summary

This is a working guide for general managers, operations directors and owners who want to earn money from guests who travel with a dog. It is not a research paper. The research sits in its companion, [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#), and this playbook takes its numbers from there. What this document does is tell you what to change, in what order, what each change costs and what it returns.

The case in one paragraph. The dog friendly hotel market is worth about \$5 billion this year and growing at 12% a year. Booking data shows that properties which take dogs run fuller and at higher rates than the properties next door: 54% occupancy against 48%, and about \$17 more a night. The industry has long held that dog owners come back far more often than other guests, because once they find a hotel that genuinely welcomes the dog they stop looking. For a 250 room hotel at \$350 a night that comes to roughly \$1.9 million a year in extra revenue under cautious assumptions, before a single dog walk or dog dinner is sold. The cost of getting there is \$25,000 to \$50,000, about the price of renovating two rooms.

Most hotels capture none of it. [Roch Dog](#) has assessed more than 3,000 hotels in 56 countries against one published standard, and about half of the hotels that call themselves pet friendly do not meet its six minimum requirements. The ones that fail are not short of money or space. They have a policy written by whoever handles the insurance, a fee set to discourage, and a dog confined to a room where it earns nothing.

The fix is six operational decisions that cost almost nothing: a written policy any member of staff can enforce, real bowls and a bed in the room, one indoor shared space the dog can use, a fee stated before booking, a deposit stated before booking, and a clear limit on dogs per room. Everything else in this playbook, the services, the dog menu, the marketing, the training, builds on that floor.

Each section is written to be handed to the person who will do the work: the policy section to whoever writes the policy, the housekeeping section to the head housekeeper, the pricing section to revenue, the 90 day plan to the programme owner. Read the section you need. Then do it.

The Opportunity

1.1 How Big This Is

The dog friendly hotel segment is valued at \$5.16 billion in 2026, up from \$4.6 billion in 2025, and is forecast to reach \$8.17 billion by 2030, growing at 12.2% a year. The wider pet inclusive travel market is worth about \$31 billion. In the United States 71 million households own a dog, and the phrase "pet travel" is searched more than 19 million times a year there alone.

The people at the centre of this demand are the DINKWADs: Dual Income, No Kids, With A Dog. They control an estimated \$259 billion in annual spending power, forecast to reach \$427 billion by 2030. They are not budget travellers. They will pay more, stay longer and return more often to any property that genuinely delivers for the dog, and they will not travel without it.

1.2 Where the Money Comes From

Dog owning guests earn a hotel money in three ways, in this order.

Where it comes from	What happens	What the evidence says
More bookings at a better rate	Dog owners book rooms that would otherwise sit empty, often in shoulder season and midweek	Pet friendly rentals run at 54% paid occupancy against 48%, and earn \$17.41 more a night (KeyData; AirDNA)
Loyalty	Once a guest finds a hotel that works with the dog they stop looking and come back	The trade figure is a 76% repeat rate. It is old and indicative, but every operator who runs a real programme reports the same effect
Spend inside the building	A dog allowed in the bar or lounge keeps its owner at your tables instead of the restaurant down the street	In a controlled experiment, owners paid an extra \$146 for a staffed pet lounge and \$117 for a play area, and put a negative value on in room welcome bundles

A word on that loyalty figure. The 76% repeat rate and the claim that dog owners stay about half a night longer both trace back to American trade press pieces from 2004 and 2006. They are not Roch Dog data and the model does not rest on them. It rests on the measured, recent occupancy and rate gaps.

1.3 Calculate Your Own Return

Use your own numbers. Column one is yours. The two worked examples are a 250 room luxury hotel, the same archetype [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#) uses, and a 60 room boutique.

Step 1: Your Baseline

Input	Your property	Example A (250 rooms)	Example B (60 rooms)
Room count	_____	250	60
Average daily rate	_____	\$350	\$220
Baseline occupancy	_____	70%	68%
Occupied room nights a year (rooms x 365 x occupancy)	_____	63,875	14,892

Step 2: Your Incremental Revenue

Calculation	Your property	Example A	Example B
Occupancy lift (use 5%; the measured gap is six points)	_____	5%	5%
Additional room nights (rooms x 365 x lift)	_____	4,563	1,095
Room revenue (additional nights x ADR)	_____	\$1,597,050	\$240,900
Dog occupied nights (additional nights plus 10% of baseline nights)	_____	10,951	2,584
Rate premium (dog occupied nights x \$17.41)	_____	\$190,657	\$44,987
Dog stays (additional nights divided by the 2.56 night indicative stay)	_____	1,782	428
Fee revenue (dog stays x your fee, \$50 in the examples)	_____	\$89,100	\$21,400
Total incremental revenue	_____	\$1,876,807	\$307,287

Step 3: Your Investment

Item	Your property	250 rooms	60 rooms
Amenities: beds, real bowls, treats, bags, opening stock	-----	\$10,000 to \$20,000	\$3,000 to \$5,000
Staff training, policy rewrite, programme owner time	-----	\$5,000 to \$10,000	\$2,000 to \$4,000
Marketing, signage, website and listing changes	-----	\$10,000 to \$20,000	\$3,000 to \$6,000
Total one off investment	-----	\$25,000 to \$50,000	\$8,000 to \$15,000
Year one revenue multiple	-----	38x to 75x	20x to 38x
Operating return at about 50% flow through	-----	19x to 38x	10x to 19x

Use the 5% lift for your first year; it is deliberately below the measured gap. Revenue builds over six to twelve months as reviews, repeat visits and word of mouth compound, and the services in section 6 sit on top of these figures, not inside them.

1.4 Running Costs

Once the programme is running the costs are small, there is no special equipment to buy, and most of it is labour you already pay for.

Category	Monthly cost, 250 room hotel at 10% dog occupancy
Extra housekeeping time, about 20 minutes per dog room departure	\$1,500 to \$2,000
Amenity replenishment: treats, bags, laundering of dog bedding	\$500
Allowance for the occasional damage claim or insurance adjustment	A few hundred dollars
Total monthly running cost	About \$2,000 to \$3,000

Policy Design

2.1 What the Policy Must Say

A written dog policy is the single most important piece of infrastructure in this playbook. Without it every guest interaction is an improvisation, and inconsistency is the number one reason dog owners abandon bookings and write bad reviews.

Our study of 236 published pet policies, [The Fine Print](#), found that the six things our standard asks a policy to state can each be said in a sentence, and that only two policies in 236 said all of them. Most hotels could write the missing sentences this afternoon.

The policy answers the questions a dog owner asks, in the order they ask them. Which rooms take dogs: all of them, designated rooms or specific categories. How many dogs per room, as a number, even if the number is one. The fee, per stay or per night, or a plain statement that dogs stay free. Whether a deposit is taken and how much. Which shared spaces the dog can use: the bar, the lounge, the terrace, the garden, the restaurant. Any weight limit, and the reason for it if one exists. Those six are the six minimum requirements of the [Roch Dog Friendly Standard](#), and a hotel that cannot state them does not meet it, whatever else it does.

Then the rest of the stay. Whether the dog can be left alone in the room, and for how long. What the hotel provides: bowls, a bed, treats, bags. The house rules, a lead in shared indoor areas, vaccination, anything else you need the guest to know. And where the nearest emergency vet is, because the guest who needs that at midnight should not have to ask.

2.2 Where to Publish It

Channel	What good looks like
Hotel website	A page a guest can find from the homepage without searching. A PDF buried in the FAQ is not a published policy
Booking platforms	The fee, the limit and the shared spaces in the listing text on every platform you use
In writing on request	Anyone who emails or calls about a dog gets the full policy back in writing, the same day, the same wording
Pre-arrival email	The full policy to every guest who has told you a dog is coming
Reception	A printed card at check in that says what the website said

NOTE

The most common reason a dog owner abandons a booking is uncertainty. A guest who cannot confirm the policy before paying books somewhere else rather than phone to ask. Transparency converts.

2.3 Write It So Any Shift Can Enforce It

"At the management's discretion" and "subject to availability" in a dog policy mean the policy does not exist. They mean the guest's stay depends on who is on shift. That is the root of the "morning shift says yes, evening shift says no" problem, which produces more bad reviews from dog owners than any other single thing a hotel does.

A working policy reads the way a room rate reads: fixed, clear, enforceable by any member of staff, open to no interpretation. If dogs are welcome in the bar, they are welcome in the bar on every shift, because the written policy says so and not because the bar manager likes dogs.

Write it in that order: hospitality first, rules second, law last. Open with what the dog gets and where it can go, because that is what the guest came to find out. Then the rules of the stay, as few as you can enforce, each with its reason. Only then the legal clauses, and only the ones that do anything: the fee and deposit stated before booking, damage charged at cost, a few rules on behaviour, and the right to ask a dog that is not under control to leave. Our study of 236 policies found that the waivers, indemnities and flat fines that make most pet policies read like a warning give the hotel little real protection, while those four plain things are what the law reliably backs. Name the dog, not the pet. A policy written this way is the same document that protects the hotel, and it reads as a welcome.

Template you can adapt:

"[Hotel name] welcomes dogs in [all / designated] guest rooms. Dogs are welcome in [the bar, the lounge, the terrace, the garden]. Up to [number] dogs may stay in each room, with no weight or size restriction. [A fee of \$X per stay / No fee] applies. No damage deposit is taken. Each room is set up with food and water bowls, a dog bed and treats. Dogs are kept on a lead in shared indoor areas. We can arrange dog walking and dog sitting, and reception holds maps of local walks. For a veterinary emergency contact [vet name and number] or ask at reception."

2.4 Weight Limits

More than two policies in five in our study set a weight limit, and where a figure is given the typical limit is 40 pounds. More than a third of the hotels we have ranked publish a limit, and more than a quarter of those set it at 25 pounds or below. A 25 pound limit excludes Labradors, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, Border Collies, Boxers and most mixed breed family dogs. It excludes the most popular dog in the world. Our standard benchmarks the family dog at a Labrador sized animal of up to about 77 pounds, because that is the dog most families own.

There is no insurance data behind weight caps. No underwriter prices risk by dog weight. An untrained 15 pound dog is a bigger operational risk than a 70 pound Labrador with ten years of hotel stays behind it. Weight tells you nothing about behaviour or damage.

When a limit is legitimate: a specific room type with delicate flooring, a genuine floor loading constraint in a historic building, or a documented insurance condition that names a figure. In those cases say why. "Dogs up to 20 kg because of the historic floors in our ground floor rooms" reads as a reason. "Dogs up to 20 kg" reads as an exclusion.

2.5 Only Friendly Dogs Stay

Every hotel needs an answer to the question its pet policy is usually dodging: what happens when a dog is a problem. Most policies answer it in advance, by guessing from breed or weight which dogs will be trouble and making every owner sign for the risk. That excludes the Labrador and admits the untrained terrier. The better answer is the one [The Fine Print](#) sets out as the Friendly Dog Policy, which any hotel is free to adopt: a dog friendly hotel is defined by what it provides, and a friendly dog is defined by how it behaves.

The definition is short enough to print on the room card. A friendly dog is a dog which does not worry, intimidate or bother other guests or members of staff, and which does not cause property damage or noise complaints. In practice that means no lunging, no growling at people, no jumping up, no persistent barking, no roaming off the lead and no damage to the room. Only friendly dogs stay. A dog that is not one gets a clear warning and help where help is possible, and if the behaviour continues the stay ends under the hotel's normal cancellation terms.

The law is firmly on the hotel's side here. Ending a stay because a dog is aggressive or disruptive is lawful everywhere we have looked, in the same way a hotel may ask a guest to leave for how they behave and how they make other guests feel, and it works best when the guest was told before booking what behaviour would trigger it. It is also the test the law already applies to assistance and service dogs in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, where no fee, breed list or weight limit is permitted and behaviour is the only ground for refusal. If that test is good enough for the most protected dogs in the law, it is good enough for a Labrador. Judge every dog the same way, write the definition into the policy, and the weight limit, the breed list and the waiver can all come out.

SECTION 3

Pricing

3.1 The Best Hotels Charge the Least

Across the hotels Roch Dog has ranked, the pattern is consistent: the better the dog experience, the more likely the dog stays free.

Grade	Share of hotels where dogs stay free
A+ and A	29%
B	19%
C	13%
D	8%
F	3%

Nearly three in ten of the top graded hotels charge nothing. Among the F graded hotels it is one in thirty. The hotels that charge the most for a dog tend to deliver the least for it. Where a fee is charged, the typical figure in the United States is \$75 a stay, with most falling between \$45 and \$125.

This is not a coincidence. Hotels that have built a real programme understand that the revenue from a well served dog owner, the extra nights, the bar tab, the return visit, is worth far more than any per stay fee. Where they charge, the fee reflects a visible service rather than a deterrent.

3.2 Three Pricing Models

Model	Fee	What it says to the guest	Best for
Free	\$0	The dog is part of the guest experience, not an add on	High volume properties, loyalty led brands, boutiques competing on experience
Service priced	\$35 to \$75 a stay	The fee pays for things the guest can see and use	Most mid range and luxury hotels with an amenity programme in place
Programme priced	\$100 and up a stay	The fee funds a structured programme: walking, sitting, a menu, dedicated space	Properties with extensive services and the staff to deliver them

3.3 What a Dog Actually Costs You

The incremental cost of a dog in a room is far lower than most operators assume. Our survey of 120 housekeepers across hotels of every grade found that fewer than one in twenty described dog stays as a routine source of significant extra work. The observation they repeated most often was that children make considerably more mess than dogs.

Cost	Per dog stay
Extra cleaning labour, about 20 minutes	\$8 to \$25
Cleaning supplies: enzymatic cleaner, lint rollers	About \$1
Consumables: treats, bags, information card	\$5 to \$10
Laundering the dog throw and bed cover	\$4 to \$10
Total	\$18 to \$46

If your fee is \$150 and your cost is \$30 the difference is not cost recovery. It is margin presented as necessity. There is nothing wrong with margin, but a guest who pays \$150 and sees nothing for it does not come back.

RECOMMENDATION

Whatever you charge, make it visible. A \$50 fee with real bowls, a bed, treats, a welcome card and bar access is read as value. A \$150 fee with nothing behind it is read as a tax. The amount matters less than what the guest can see it paying for.

3.4 Put the Fee in the Headline Price

Since May 2025 a hidden pet fee is a legal risk, not just a bad habit. The Federal Trade Commission's rule on unfair or deceptive fees requires the total price, including every mandatory fee, to be shown up front as the most prominent price for lodging in the United States. The Texas Attorney General has settled with Hyatt, Marriott, Omni, Choice, Hilton and Booking.com over hidden hotel fees. In the United Kingdom the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act banned drip pricing from April 2025. A pet fee that appears at the desk now breaks the law in both countries. State it in the policy, state it in the listing, and state it in the price.

3.5 Deposits

A damage deposit tells the guest, before they arrive, that you expect the dog to break something. That is risk language, not hospitality language, and it sets the tone for the stay.

Fewer than one pet in ten causes any damage at all, and where damage occurs the average repair is about \$210. An unauthorised smoker costs a hotel around \$1,100 and two to four days out of service. Hotels do not take a smoking deposit.

If you must take a deposit, state the amount before booking, put it in the policy, and refund it fast. If you can carry the risk, dropping the deposit is a competitive advantage that costs you almost nothing.

SECTION 4

The Room

4.1 What Goes in It

Item	Specification	One off cost per room	Per stay
Food bowl	Ceramic or stainless steel, stable base, 15 to 20 cm across	\$10 to \$20	
Water bowl	Same, larger	\$10 to \$20	
Dog bed	Washable cover, waterproof liner, at least 80 by 60 cm	\$30 to \$60	
Welcome treats	A good brand in a branded bag, no rawhide	\$3 to \$6	
Waste bags	A dispenser with rolls, biodegradable	\$4	\$1
Room card	House rules, walking routes, where the dog can go, the emergency vet	\$2	
Throw	A washable throw for the bed or sofa	\$20 to \$30	
Total	\$75 to \$135 a room	\$5 to \$10 a stay	

4.2 The Bowls and the Bed Are the Floor, Not the Upsell

The controlled experiment cited in [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#) found that dog owners put a negative value on in room bundles of bowls, bedding and gifts. That does not mean leave them out. It means the guest expects them, the way they expect towels, and will not pay extra for them. What they pay for is people and places: a staffed lounge, a play area, a restaurant they can use with the dog. Put the bowls and the bed in every dog room as a matter of course, then spend your effort on the shared spaces in section 5.

Across thousands of guest reviews, four things draw the strongest response: real bowls rather than disposable ones, a proper bed rather than a towel on the floor, access to the bar or lounge, and a printed map of local walks. The weakest response relative to cost goes to branded bandanas, toy baskets and novelty gifts. Guests want function and access, not gesture.

4.3 Which Rooms

Most hotels get this backwards. They set aside a handful of rooms for dogs, usually the ones nearest the car park with the oldest carpet, and tell the dog owner that is what there is. The guest who was going to book the suite books it somewhere else, and the hotel has told its most loyal segment that it comes last.

Best practice is the reverse. Make the dog welcome in every room type, from the entry category to the suites, and reserve one or two floors as dog free for guests with allergies and guests who simply do not like dogs. At least half the hotel should be open to dogs, across every category, and never only the worst rooms in the building. Both groups of guests get a clear promise: the dog owner can book the room they actually want, and the allergic guest can be told with confidence that no dog has ever been on their floor. Housekeeping runs the turnover in section 7 on any room a dog has used, which is why the dog floors do not need to be the easy ones to clean. If demand on the dog floors outruns supply, open another floor. Do not ration the thing you are trying to sell.

4.4 The First Five Minutes

A dog owner arrives at a hotel braced for a problem. They have been turned away at the door before, charged a fee they were not told about, told the dog cannot come into the bar after all, or looked at by a receptionist as though they had brought a goat. The first five minutes decide whether this stay is going to be like that, and the guest decides it long before they see the room.

So the welcome is addressed to the dog as much as to the owner. Ask for the dog's name at booking and use it at the desk, because a receptionist who says hello to Biscuit by name has told the guest everything they need to know about the hotel. Have a bowl of water behind the desk, filled, and put it down without being asked; after a journey the dog is thirsty and the owner is watching to see whether anyone notices. Then say out loud what the website said, so the guest hears it from a person: your dog is welcome in the bar and on the terrace, the garden is through that door, and there are bowls, a bed and treats waiting in the room. Hand over the room card with the walks and the relief area on it and point to the nearest one. If the hotel offers walking, sitting or a dog menu, say so now, when the guest is deciding how the stay will go, not when they ask.

If the dog is nervous, let it settle before the paperwork. If there is a resident hotel dog, an introduction on a lead is the best welcome a hotel can give. None of this takes more than a minute or two, and the cost is a bowl. What it buys is a guest who relaxes, spends the evening in your bar instead of hiding in the room, and tells every dog owner they know.

SECTION 5

Shared Spaces

5.1 The Highest Leverage Decision in This Playbook

A guest whose dog is welcome in the bar, the lounge or the restaurant stays on the property and spends there. A guest whose dog is confined to the room goes out to eat and drink at the restaurant down the street. This one decision decides whether a dog booking earns you room revenue alone or room revenue plus food, drink and services.

The experiment in section 1 found that owners paid the most for a staffed lounge and a restaurant they could use with the dog, and nothing for the welcome basket. Of the hotels Roch Dog has ranked, about seven in ten let a dog into at least one of the bar, the lounge, the restaurant or the terrace. The other three in ten are giving their guests' evening spend to somebody else. Opening one indoor space costs a staff briefing and a hygiene protocol. Nothing else here returns as much for as little.

5.2 Three Ways to Zone

Full access. Dogs welcome in every shared space. Best for boutiques, country hotels and brands where the dog is part of the identity.

Partial access. Dogs welcome in named areas, typically the bar, the lounge and the terrace but not the main dining room. Best for larger properties balancing both kinds of guest. Open the bar and lounge first: that is where the evening spend sits.

Designated zones. A dog side of the restaurant, a set of lounge tables. Best for properties with many guests without dogs who want to serve both without friction.

5.3 Guests Without Dogs, and Outside

The fear that dog owners will upset other guests is the most common objection to shared space access. The answer is zoning, not exclusion. Sign the dog areas and the dog free areas. Seat dog tables away from the buffet and the walkways. Keep every dog on a lead indoors. Tell every guest at booking that the hotel welcomes dogs, and put anyone who says they are allergic on a dog free floor.

Every dog friendly hotel also needs a relief area: close to the rooms, lit after dark, signed from reception, with a bag dispenser and a bin. A guest arriving at ten at night must know where to take the dog. Then print a map of two or three walks from the front door, ten, twenty and thirty minutes, with the parks and water on the way. It costs nothing, guests mention it in reviews constantly, and nearly two thirds of the hotels we rank already do it.

SECTION 6

Services

The floor in sections 2 to 5 captures the demand side: more bookings, longer stays, the spend kept in the building. The services in this section are separate revenue lines on top of the base case, and they are where the dog stops being a cost line and becomes a department.

6.1 Dog Walking

The only guaranteed demand on the property. Every dog needs walking twice a day and most hotels either give the service away or do not offer it. Fewer than one in five of the hotels we rank offer walking.

Start with a vetted local agency and sell the walk through reception. The ladder that works has an entry walk of 30 minutes at \$35 to \$50 in a large American city, £30 to £45 in central London, €35 to €50 in Paris, and a signature product at about \$100: a 90 minute structured walk by a dedicated walker, with a photo and a note on return. Take a margin on the agency walk or offer it as a benefit; either way, the walk is on the room bill.

For a 250 room luxury hotel [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#) puts the walk at around \$90,000 a year arranged through the concierge, and \$365,000 to \$950,000 a year with a staffed service once demand is proven. The full arithmetic is in [The Million Dollar Mile](#).

6.2 Dog Sitting

The service that fills your restaurant. A guest who cannot leave the dog does not book dinner. Evening cover from six to eleven is the window guests ask for most. Partner with a local sitter or train a member of staff for in room sitting, at \$30 to \$60 a session. The sitting fee is recovered in the dinner it makes possible.

6.3 The Dog Menu

The highest margin plate in the hotel. A dog dish is priced like a human main and built from stock already in the walk in. Our archive of ninety published hotel dog menus from 14 countries puts the median main at about \$20 at an ultra luxury property and \$16 at a luxury one, with Kimpton Vero Beach charging \$58 for an eight ounce filet and The Peninsula Tokyo about \$75 for wagyu. Net margins after labour run above 80%, and [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#) estimates \$60,000 to \$180,000 a year for the 250 room archetype.

Building one takes the executive chef an afternoon. Four or five dishes is plenty: a breakfast, a chicken dish, a fish dish, a beef dish and a treat. Every one is a lean cooked protein with a plain carbohydrate and a vegetable, and nothing else. Skinless chicken or turkey breast, poached salmon, lean filet or scrambled egg, always cooked through, never fatty cuts, never raw, never

a cooked bone. White rice or plain oats for the carbohydrate, steamed carrot, green beans, plain pumpkin or a few blueberries for the vegetable, a spoon of plain bone broth for flavour. No seasoning at all. A dog is not a small person: onion, garlic, chives, grapes, raisins, chocolate, xylitol, macadamia nuts, avocado, alcohol, salt, butter and cream are poisonous to dogs, some at tiny doses, and every member of the kitchen team needs to know that list cold before the first plate goes out.

Keep the portions small, because a hotel dog dish is a treat, not a meal. Mains run around 100 to 180 grams, print the calorie count next to the price, and carry one line on the menu saying the dishes are an occasional treat to be fed alongside the dog's own food. Then price it to the room rate, not to the pet shop. A hotel charging \$350 a night can charge \$28 for a chicken and rice bowl without a single complaint. Put it on room service and on the bar and terrace menus, because health codes keep dogs out of most dining rooms and the room, the bar and the terrace are where the dog eats. The full guidance, the never list, the portion arithmetic and a model menu with prices are in [The Highest Margin Plate in the Hotel](#). Hand that section to the chef.

6.4 Grooming

Unless you have the space and the demand for an on site facility, partner. Identify a good local groomer, agree a referral arrangement, book through the concierge. Some properties have a groomer visit on set days. The rule for all of these services is the one our assessors apply: if the hotel will arrange it, the hotel offers it. "Available on request" with nobody to call is not a service.

6.5 Retail

At the desk, a display of treats, a take home bag, a bandana with the hotel's name on it, a gift voucher for a dog afternoon tea that brings the guest back. Across the archetype retail and events together are worth \$10,000 to \$40,000 a year. The events themselves belong to marketing, and section 9 is where they live, because what they produce is worth more than what they sell.

6.6 The Emergency Card

Keep a card at reception with the nearest 24 hour emergency vet, the nearest regular practice and their hours, and what the hotel does in a medical emergency involving a dog. Fewer than one in five of the hotels we rank hold this information. It costs nothing, it signals that the hotel has thought about the dog, and on the rare day it is needed it turns a crisis into a demonstration of care.

SECTION 7

Staff

7.1 Who Needs Training

Every guest facing team member, and housekeeping. The programme owner coordinates, but everyone who meets a dog owner or cleans a dog room needs to know the protocol.

Team	What they learn	Time
Front desk	Check in protocol, the policy, booking services, answering questions	2 hours
Housekeeping	Dog room turnover, products, allergen management, damage reporting	2 hours
Food and beverage	Dogs in shared spaces, water bowls, mats, serving both kinds of guest	1 hour
Concierge	Walks, service partners, the emergency vet, local dog friendly places	1 hour
Management	Enforcing the policy, handling complaints, tracking revenue, reviewing the programme	1 hour

Two to four hours per person at the start, and a 30 minute refresher each quarter. Fewer than one in ten of the hotels we rank told us their staff had been trained on dogs. It is one of the rarest things we find and one of the cheapest to fix.

7.2 The Front Desk

The front desk sets the tone. Greet the dog. Hand over the room card. Know the policy cold: the answer to any dog question is in the written policy, and staff do not improvise. If the policy says dogs are welcome in the bar, the answer is yes whoever asks and whatever the shift. Know how to book a walk, a sitter and a groomer, and know the emergency vet without looking it up.

7.3 Housekeeping

This is where the hygiene objection lives, and where it is answered. The dog room turnover is a short procedure. The bed cover and the throw go to the laundry. Floors and upholstery are vacuumed, any soiled area is treated with enzymatic cleaner and left to work, and the hard surfaces, furniture legs and skirting are wiped down. The bowls are washed and sanitised, a clean bed cover goes on, the treats, bags and room card are replaced, and the room is inspected for damage, which is reported through the normal process.

It adds about 20 minutes to a standard turn. It is a procedure, the way a minibar check is a procedure, not a burden, and a housekeeper who has done it twice does not think about it again.

7.4 Difficult Moments

Train staff for four moments. A distressed or aggressive dog: ask the owner to manage it, offer a quiet space, never handle the dog yourself, and escalate to the duty manager if it continues. A complaint from a guest without a dog: acknowledge it, offer a move to a dog free floor or area, and do not promise to remove the dog or apologise for the policy. Damage: photograph it, report it, and bill it after the stay rather than confronting the guest at checkout. A dog left alone and barking: call the guest first and offer sitting, and if the guest cannot be reached and the barking continues past 20 minutes, involve the duty manager.

7.5 The Programme Owner

Every revenue line in a hotel has an owner. Rooms has a revenue manager, the restaurant has a food and beverage director, the spa has a spa manager, and each of them is measured on what their department earns. Canine hospitality, which touches all three, usually has nobody. The policy was written by whoever handles the insurance, the fee was set by whoever was asked, the dog rooms were chosen by housekeeping because they are the easiest to clean, and the bar manager decides shift by shift whether a dog is welcome. Nobody is measured on it, so nobody notices when it slips, and it always slips. Of the hotels we have assessed, the ones that score well have one thing in common that has nothing to do with budget: someone is responsible for the dog.

So one person owns this. They make sure the published policy matches what every shift delivers. They coordinate the desk, housekeeping, food and beverage and management so the guest gets one answer. They manage the walkers, sitters, groomers and the vet. They track the dog guest numbers in section 10, report them to the general manager every quarter alongside the other departments, and review the programme on what the numbers say. When a guest writes to ask whether the dog can sit in the bar, their name is on the reply.

It is not a new hire. It is a clear mandate given to someone who already has authority across departments, a rooms division manager, a guest relations manager, a front office manager, with the time to do it written into their role and the dog revenue on their scorecard. Give it to a junior with no authority and the bar manager will overrule them on the first busy Friday. Give it to nobody and the head of housekeeping ends up setting dog policy by default, which is how a hotel arrives at a 25 pound weight limit, a \$150 fee and a dog that is not allowed out of the room. That is not a programme. It is the absence of one.

SECTION 8

Cleaning and Hygiene

8.1 The Objection

The most common reason hotels give for restricting dogs is hygiene. The data says the opposite. Hotels that expect dogs and build a protocol around them have better hygiene outcomes than hotels that are ambushed by them, and every hotel of scale is ambushed: one guest in five admits to having smuggled a pet into a hotel that did not allow it. The property with a protocol handles that as routine. The property without one finds out after checkout and absorbs the cost with no revenue against it. The hotel that plans for dogs beats the hotel that pretends they will not turn up.

8.2 Enzymatic Cleaners

Standard products mask odour. Enzymatic cleaners break down the proteins and fats that cause it, so they remove it rather than cover it. Use them on carpet, upholstery, soft furnishings and mattress protectors. Apply, leave for the dwell time on the label, usually ten to fifteen minutes, then blot or extract. Concentrate costs \$15 to \$25 a litre and about a dollar a room diluted. This is the only product the programme needs that you may not already hold.

8.3 Allergies

The concern operators raise most is not damage. It is the guest who checks into a room after a dog and reacts to it. The solution is zoning, not equipment. Keep one or two floors dog free, as section 4 describes. Clean a departing dog room fully before it goes to anyone. Tell every guest at booking that the hotel welcomes dogs and that dog free floors are available, and put anyone who says they are allergic on one. That is the whole protocol. No air purifier, no special machinery, and no capital line in the budget for either.

SECTION 9

Marketing

9.1 The Words

The cheapest revenue action in this playbook costs nothing. Roch Dog's search research across 33 term pairs in 14 markets over ten years found that in every mature English speaking market guests are abandoning the words "pet friendly" and searching for "dog friendly" instead. Say "dog friendly" and "dogs welcome" everywhere the guest reads: the website, the listings, the policy page. Name the dog rather than the pet in your copy. The full research is in [The Economics of Dog Friendly Hospitality](#) and in [Pet Friendly Doesn't Translate](#).

9.2 The Website

The policy page should be reachable from the homepage without a search. Not in the FAQ, not in a PDF. On it: the full policy, photographs of real dogs in your real spaces, what you provide, where the dog can go, the fee in one line, and a booking button.

9.3 Booking Platforms

Every listing that says you take dogs should say the fee or that dogs stay free, the weight limit or that there is none, which spaces the dog can use, what you provide, and the house rules. An incomplete listing is the reason guests phone to check. A guest who has to phone does not trust the listing, and many of them book elsewhere instead of calling.

9.4 Photographs and Reviews

The pictures that convert are real dogs in your actual rooms, at the feet of their owners in your bar, on your terrace. Ask dog owning guests for permission to photograph the dog. Most will be delighted, and the images will outperform any professional shoot.

Dog owners write a disproportionate share of reviews and social posts. A guest whose dog was greeted by name posts about it. Give them a photo spot, a hashtag and a place on your own feed. What they make carries the trust of a personal recommendation, which no campaign can buy.

9.5 Make Moments Worth Sharing

Everything above is the hotel talking about itself. The marketing that works for dog owners is the hotel giving them something to talk about, and nothing does that like an event built around the dog. A dog owner at a dog event photographs everything, posts all of it, tags the hotel every time, and tells the dog owners they know. One good event a month produces more genuine coverage than a year of paid posts, and it costs the hotel a terrace and a tray of treats.

The best example we have assessed is the [InterContinental Miami](#), the top ranked hotel in our dataset. Every Wednesday from five until seven, free, weather permitting, its Bayside Terrace becomes Paws Patio: cool down fountains for the dogs, free pup cups, a cash bar pouring barktails for the owners, local makers selling leads and bandanas along the wall, and special editions through the year, a Yorkie meet up, a Halloween costume party, a holiday edition. It has run every week for more than five years. Nobody books, locals walk in after work with their dogs, hotel guests wander down from their rooms, and the two crowds mix. It is the fixed point of downtown Miami's dog calendar and a major reason dog owners choose the hotel. A guest who stays there is not just allowed to bring the dog; the dog has a social life.

Any hotel can build its own version. A weekly or monthly yappy hour on the terrace with pup cups and a drink offer for the owners. A dog picnic on the lawn in summer. A guided walk from the front door on Saturday mornings. A dog afternoon tea. A dog Christmas party, an Easter egg hunt with treats, a costume party in October. A local trainer, groomer or behaviourist as a guest. And the one with the biggest reach of all: the dog photoshoot. Dog photography studios are a mainstream business in Japan and a hotel session there sells out the day it opens, and the same instinct works everywhere. Put a photographer, a good backdrop and a prop or two on the terrace for an afternoon, give every guest their portrait, and watch it travel. Several of the hotels at the top of our ranking offer free portraits as standard.

The rule for all of it is the same. Design every event as a photo opportunity, because the photographs are the point. Give it a name, a fixed day and a hashtag so it becomes a habit rather than a one off. Open it to locals as well as guests, because the local dog owners are your future guests and their friends are your reach. Feature the pictures on your own channels and in your email, with the dog's name. The content a dog owner makes about a moment you gave them carries the trust of a personal recommendation, and no campaign you could buy comes close.

9.6 Proving It

"Pet friendly" has no definition, no minimum and no verification. An A+ hotel and an F hotel can both say it, and guests know it, which is why they phone. A verified grade against a published standard removes the phone call and the abandonment with it. The assessment is free and the grade cannot be bought. Section 12 explains how.

SECTION 10

Measuring

Track these every quarter.

Metric	What it tells you	How
Dog stays as a share of bookings	Penetration	Bookings flagged as dog stays divided by all bookings
Repeat rate among dog guests	Loyalty	Returning dog guests divided by all dog guests
Spend per dog room night	The stay in effect	Food, drink, spa and services per dog room night against the same figure for other rooms
Length of stay, dog guests	The length premium	Average nights for dog stays against the house average
Dog room utilisation	Demand	Occupancy of the dog rooms against the standard rooms
Review sentiment	Perception	Dog mentions in reviews, positive and negative

The one to watch is spend per dog room night. If the dog is welcome in your bar and restaurant it should sit clearly above the house figure. If the dog is confined to the room it will not. That gap, in your own numbers, is the case for section 5.

Every 90 days the programme owner reviews the metrics against target, the review trends, staff compliance, the state of the amenities, the service partners, and whether the number of dog rooms matches demand. Adjust on data, not on opinion.

SECTION 11

The 90 Day Plan

Days 1 to 7: Decide

Make the six decisions: the written policy, bowls and a bed in every dog room, at least one indoor shared space, the fee and the deposit stated before booking, and the limit on dogs per room. Decide the weight limit: none, or a stated reason. Draft the policy from the template in section 2, get it signed off with the fee and the spaces, and name the programme owner.

Days 8 to 21: Buy and Set Up

Order bowls, beds, treats, bag dispensers, room cards and enzymatic cleaner. Designate the dog rooms and floors and set up the relief area. Contact local walkers, sitters and groomers. Find the emergency vet and write the card.

Days 22 to 45: Train and Document

Write the housekeeping turnover procedure and the front desk and food and beverage protocols. Train every team: the desk and housekeeping two hours each, food and beverage and the concierge one hour each. Produce the walking map, print the room cards, and write the dog menu with the kitchen.

Days 46 to 60: Soft Launch

Open half the planned dog rooms and take dog bookings under the new policy. Do not wait to be perfect: bowls, a bed and bar access on ten rooms beats six months of planning that produces nothing. Ask every dog owning guest for feedback at checkout and by email, run the turnover procedure under real conditions, and fix whatever the first guests find.

Days 61 to 75: Full Launch

Open every designated dog room. Publish the policy and the photographs on the website and update every listing. Change the words: dog friendly, dogs welcome. Tell past guests, local partners and your social channels.

Days 76 to 90: Measure

Compile the first quarter's numbers: dog stays, room utilisation, spend per dog night, reviews. Hold the first quarterly review, adjust on what the numbers say, and get assessed against the standard.

Get It Verified

Everything in this playbook can be done quietly, and most of it should be. But a hotel that has done the work has a problem its competitors do not: nobody knows. "Pet friendly" has no definition, no minimum and no verification, so the hotel with a bed in every dog room, a dog in the bar and a trained team says the same two words on its website as the hotel with a 25 pound limit and a fee at the desk. Dog owners have learned that the words mean nothing, which is why they phone, and why so many of them book somewhere else rather than ask.

What separates you from your pet friendly peers is independent, third party verification. A grade against a published standard, awarded by someone who does not work for you, is the one claim a dog owner cannot dismiss as marketing. The [Roch Dog Friendly Standard](#) has become the mark of trust among high value dog owners, the guests who travel often, stay longer and choose the hotel for the dog, and a verified grade with a written review the hotel can share with its guests is credibility that no amount of your own copy can buy. Without it the best dog hotel in the city is indistinguishable from the worst.

Certification is free for every hotel and the grade cannot be bought. A hotel can self assess, and a hotel that has done what this playbook describes will meet all six minimum requirements and grade well, but every self assessment is subject to independent verification. Through the year our assessors check the answers with housekeeping, the front desk, reservations and the concierge, at separate times and without announcing themselves, and we listen to guests when they report on their stays in reviews. A hotel that delivers what it says holds its grade. A hotel that does not is regraded on what its own staff told us.

Every certified hotel is ranked and listed on [rochdog.com](#) with its grade and a written review, where the guests who search for a hotel they can trust with the dog are already looking. The hotels at the top of that ranking did nothing that is not in this document. The difference is that they did it, and then had it verified.

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Roch Dog is the dog friendly standards and certification body. We define what dog friendly means, then assess, certify and rank hotels, workplaces, and residences against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard.

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CONTACT

E: research@rochdog.com

US: 626 88 44 007

UK: +44 1992 364 007

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Roch Dog is an independent certification body. We assess, certify, and verify hotels against the Roch Dog Friendly Standard (RDFS-02). The standard, framework, and supporting reference documents are published at rochstandard.com.

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