

## Central Ohio companies among those offering time off after pet adoption

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To BrewDog, furry families are as important as the human ones.

That's why the Scottish brewer, which has based its U.S. operations in Canal Winchester, gives its employees an unusual perk: a one-time week of paid time off when they adopt a dog.

"The regular family isn't everyone's thing. We have to make sure we're nurturing people's family, whether that's furry families or human families," said Miranda Dietz, the company's supply-chain manager. "This is just a really cool way to make sure we're taking care of our people."

Although still few in number, other companies have started to offer similar benefits.

Minneapolis digital marketing agency Nina Hale has a "fur-ternity leave" policy that gives new pet parents a week of work-from-home days so they can adjust to their new pets.

"Part of embracing employee satisfaction as a business priority means recognizing important life events that happen outside of the office," Nina Hale CEO Donna Robinson said when the policy was put in place in 2018. "If we want to continue to set the example as a top workplace, it is crucial to offer innovative benefits that help to preserve the work-life happiness of our employee owners."

Pet-food company Mars Petcare, a division of Mars Inc., encourages its workers to talk with their managers to determine their plans for time off when they adopt a new pet. In addition, the company's new U.S. headquarters in a suburb of Nashville, Tennessee, has a "doggie playcare" with full-time pet-sitters.

New York City-based software company mParticle Inc. offers two weeks paid time off for those who adopt a rescue dog or cat.

Bark, the company behind the dog toy and treat subscription, BarkBox, doesn't have an official policy when it comes to giving workers time off at its Columbus operations when they adopt a new dog. Still, it gives employees time to work from home and has an extensive support system to provide help to new pup parents in the office, said Stacie Grissom, director of content and communications at Bark, where employees are permitted to bring their dogs to work.

"There are so many questions in the first few days and weeks of having a new dog, and we've noticed that it's extremely helpful to have these in-real-life human resources to support folks with a new dog," she said.

One employee has fostered 63 dogs in the past four years, making her a sort of "dogmother" to the dogs and humans in the office who need help, Grissom said.

For pet-friendly companies, the payoff from such policies is employees are more likely to be engaged with their work, some research shows.

A 2018 study by Nationwide, one of the nation's largest pet insurers, and the Human Animal Bond Research Institute found that 90% of employees in pet-friendly workplaces feel highly connected to their company mission and willing to recommend their employers to others. That drops to less than 65% in less dog-friendly companies, according to the report.

"Pet owners increasingly think of their pets as members of the family," the institute's executive director, Steven Feldman, said in the report. "When employers offer pet-friendly benefits, it sends an important signal that the company cares about every member of the family, even the ones with four legs."

John Macari, 32, of Columbus took a paid week off from work at BrewDog after he adopted Khaya, a Rhodesian ridgeback that is now 14 months old.

Macari said the benefit might be unusual for most companies but not for BrewDog, which also allows workers to bring their pets to work with them. Taking time off allows the puppy and its owner to get more accustomed to each other in a new environment for the dog, he said.

"It's good for the dog," he said. "It's good for us. It helps the dog get settled, helps you bond with them."

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