

**A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY TO ENHANCE THE OUTCOMES OF  
AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)**

by

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**PRETORIA**

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“Praise be to the Lord,  
for He has heard  
my cry for mercy.

The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped.

My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.”

**Psalm 28: 6,7**

## SUMMARY

### A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY TO ENHANCE THE OUTCOMES OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

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Employees and organisations of the modern workplace exist in an extremely stressful, demanding, and competitive environment, which adversely affects the health and well-being of the individual employee and the organisation. Employees are recognised as the most important asset of any organisation, and their health and well-being play a critical role in the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of the organisation. Employers can improve employee performance and consequently organisational productivity by promoting both healthier individuals and healthier work environments. The extent to which employers are able to maintain optimal performance, together with commitment, high morale, and well-being of their employees, will ultimately determine their level of success.

Employers are, therefore, constantly searching for means that would promote employee health and well-being, and as a result also enhance organisational issues, such as productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness. The implementation of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a conventional and trusted programme that produces such outcomes. The presence of pets in the workplace could possibly contribute to the field of employee assistance. According to research, the human-animal bond, and the positive interaction between humans and animals have a beneficial impact on the well-being, and quality of life of people from all age, and target groups. If these general health-enhancing benefits of pets on their human companions are experienced in the workplace, it may benefit the economically active adult population, as well as the organisation. Consequently, the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy may be an innovative means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

The goal of this study is to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP. The study was conducted in conjunction with employees from Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP), a leading advertising company in South Africa. Twenty-eight employees participated in the

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study.

The study complies with a quantitative approach, as an electronic semi-structured self-completion questionnaire was developed and utilised to explore perceptions and opinions about the presence of pets in the workplace. Several interesting findings were made about the perceived functions, benefits, and drawbacks of pets in the workplace, as well as the overall opinion to the idea of pets in the workplace. The study also identified issues that need to be considered during the actual formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy.

Generally, research describes the benefits of pets for the more vulnerable people in society - those who are often not part of the economically active adult population. However, a pet-friendly workplace policy could benefit the economically active adult population and the organisation. This exploratory study reveals that a great deal still needs to be done before pets can be introduced into the South African work environment. It may however, in the near future, be possible to integrate a pet-friendly workplace policy as a logical, but limited, component of a comprehensive EAP as a means to enhance the outcomes of the programme.

## OPSOMMING

### 'N TROETELDIER-VRIENDELIKE WERKPLEKBELEID OM DIE RESULTATE VAN 'N WERKNEMERHULPPROGRAM (WHP) TE BEVORDER.

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Werkers en organisasies in die moderne werkplek bestaan in 'n uiters stresvolle, veeleisende en kompeterende omgewing, wat 'n negatiewe effek het op beide die individuele werker en die organisasie. Werkers word erken as die belangrikste bate van enige organisasie, en hul gesondheid en welsyn speel 'n kritieke rol in die produktiwiteit, winsgewendheid en mededingendheid van die organisasie. Die werkgever kan werknemerprestasie en gevolglik die algehele produktiwiteit van die organisasie verbeter deur beide gesonder individue en 'n gesonder werksomgewing te bevorder. Die mate waarin werkgevers daarin slaag om optimale werkverrigting, tesame met toewyding, hoë moreel en welsyn van hul werkers, te handhaaf, sal uiteindelik hul vlak van sukses bepaal.

Werkgevers is dus gedurig opsoek na wyses waarop die gesondheid en welsyn van die werkers bevorder kan word ten einde die produktiwiteit, effektiwiteit en mededingendheid van die onderneming te verbeter. Die implementering van 'n Werknemerhulpprogram (WHP) is 'n tradisionele en betroubare wyse wat hierdie resultate tot gevolg het. Die teenwoordigheid van diere in die werkplek kan moontlik bydra tot die veld van werknemer-hulp. Ingevolge navorsing het die mens-dier verbintenis en positiewe interaksie tussen mense en diere 'n voordelige uitwerking op die welsyn en lewenskwaliteit van mense van alle ouderdoms- en teikengroepe. Indien hierdie algemene gesondheids-bevorderende voordele van diere op hul menslike metgeselle in die werkplek ondervind word, kan dit die ekonomies-aktiewe volwasse populasie, sowel as die organisasie, bevoordeel. Gevolglik kan die implementering van 'n troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid 'n innoverende wyse wees wat die resultate van 'n WHP kan bevorder.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die moontlikheid vir implementering van 'n troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse werksomgewing te verken as 'n hulpmiddel vir die bevordering van WHP resultate. Die studie is uitgevoer in samewerking met die werkers van

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Lowell Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP), 'n vooraanstaande advertensie maatskappy in Suid-Afrika. Ag-en-twintig werkers het deelgeneem aan die studie.

Die studie voldoen aan 'n kwantitatiewe benadering deurdat 'n elektroniese semi-gestruktureerde vraelys vir self-voltooiing ontwikkel en gebruik is om die persepsies en opinies oor die teenwoordigheid van diere in die werkplek te verken. Verskeie interessante bevindinge is gemaak aangaande die insig met betrekking tot die funksies, voordele, en nadele van diere in die werkplek, sowel as die algehele opinie oor die idee van diere in die werkplek. Die studie identifiseer ook aspekte wat in ag geneem moet word tydens die formulering van 'n troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid.

Oor die algemeen beskryf navorsing die voordele van troeteldiere vir die meer kwesbare mense in die samelewing, diene wat dikwels nie deel is van die ekonomies-aktiewe volwasse populasie nie. 'n Troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid kan egter die ekonomies-aktiewe volwasse populasie en die organisasie bevoordeel. Die ondersoekende studie onthul dat daar nog baie gedoen moet word voordat troeteldiere ingesluit kan word in die Suid-Afrikaanse werkplek omgewing. Dit mag dalk in die nabye toekoms moontlik wees om 'n troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid as 'n logiese, tog beperkte, komponent van 'n WHP te integreer om sodoende die resultate van die program te bevorder.

## **KEY TERMS:**

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Pet-friendly workplace policy

Human-animal interaction

Human-animal bond

Pets

Companion animals

Health benefits

Well-being

Stress

Quality of life

Productivity

## **SLEUTELTERME:**

Werknemerhulpprogram (WHP)

Troeteldier-vriendelike werkplekbeleid

Mens-dierinteraksie

Mens-dierband

Troeteldiere

Geselskapsdiere

Gesondheidsvoordele

Welsyn

Stres

Lewenskwaliteit

Produktiwiteit

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