

EPP embraces pet-friendly shopping malls

JSE-listed EPP, Poland's biggest retail landlord, is responding to the growing influence of pet-friendly lifestyles and the needs of its pet-owning customers by welcoming pets at its shopping centres.



Source: Supplied

Explaining its embracing of pet-friendly shopping, EPP noted that many people around the world took to adopting pets during the pandemic to fulfill the need for companionship during isolation. "Young couples, empty nesters and single professionals – primarily millennials and Generation Z – are driving the rise in pet ownership. This new animal-loving lifestyle requires the world to adapt to modern changes," the company said.

To meet the needs of pet owners who don't have the ability or desire to leave their furry companions alone while shopping, EPP, which is the largest owner of Polish retail assets, decided to allow customers with small animals to visit its shopping centres. Currently, pets are welcome at 17 retail assets managed by the company and shoppers are making use of the allowance.

"We want our shopping centres to be modern places, catering to the needs of a wide range of customers, including those who want to visit with their pets. We are giving them the opportunity to bring pets into the shopping centres on condition that they comply with a few simple rules that take care of the comfort and safety of animals and other visitors alike," said Tomasz Trzósłó, CEO of EPP.

Dogs, cats and other pets accompanying their owners can visit EPP's malls' common areas and food courts, where they will find plenty of drinking water. Animals can even go inside certain retailers' shops displaying EPP's 'Pets are Welcome' paw stickers on their windows.

The initiative also respects the rights of other shoppers. To enjoy a fun and safe day of shopping, pets should be supervised by their owners at all times. Dogs should be leashed and muzzled and kept at a safe distance from others. Small animals can also be carried in a special container, bag or carrier. To ensure the highest level of comfort for all shoppers, pet owners must clean up after their animals and are responsible for the behaviour of their pets.

"Today's younger consumers don't only spend more money on their pets but also spend more time with their pets. Most see their four-legged friends as an integral part of the family. For most pet owners, enjoying a day out without their companion is simply out of the question. Yet, pets are not permitted at many locations that families typically enjoy meeting and spending time together," EPP said.



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Stimulus for retail industry

The pet-friendly lifestyle is having a positive impact on retail, being a stimulus for the industry and driving people to stores. [Bloomberg reports](#) that the bottom lines of animal health companies are enjoying a massive boost.

Locally, [Flux Trends reports](#) that South Africans already spend between R300m and R600m on pet food per year, while [PayFast recently revealed](#) that stores catering for pet supplies were among the fastest new growth industries online during the pandemic, growing by over 1,000%. Checkers also piloted its [first stand-alone pet store](#) – Petshop Science – in Cape Town this year, and pharmacy chain Dis-Chem has added a growing selection of pet food, toys and accessories to its shelves.

Animals adopted now will live at least 10-plus years, which will have a meaningful impact on the spending and lifestyle of families for a decade or longer, said EPP.

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