

OHS Notes No 2 – PPE in the Workplace – Pet Businesses

What is PPE? (Personal Protective Equipment)

Personal protective equipment (PPE) refers to the equipment worn by workers to reduce their exposure to hazards. PPE includes such items as:

- * Eye protection
- * Hearing protection
- * Respiratory protection
- * Foot protection
- * Head protection
- * Body protection
- * Any substance, equipment or screening used to protect health, eg sunscreen, X-Ray dosimeter.

How Do I Know What PPE I Need?

The PPE that is used in your workplace will depend on the risk as assessed by your boss or qualified assessor. The PPE you require will be based on that risk. What kind of pet business and the level of equipment and activities that you do will determine your PPE requirements. Your boss will tell you what PPE you need. The boss may provide all or some of the PPE according to the requirements.

Do I Have to Wear The PPE?

If your boss has said that you have to wear particular PPE, then you must wear it. If you fail to wear it, then you may be liable for disciplinary action, including termination. If you are not wearing the required PPE and you are injured, your insurance may be affected. It's OK to talk to your boss about the PPE that you are required to wear.

What If I Find A Workplace Risk That The Boss Hasn't Noticed?

In many states, if you find a workplace risk that the boss hasn't noticed you are *required by law* to bring it to the attention of the boss. If you do not bring it to the boss' attention and you get hurt, you may lose some of your entitlements.

What PPE Might Be Required?

While it varies by business, the following is a general risk list with PPE. It is not an all-inclusive list, your boss will assess the risks and will give you a list of what is required, if it is not provided by the business.



Enclosed shoes must be worn in ALL pet businesses to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, as well as foot damage from animals and equipment. These shoes must have NON SLIP soles. Some businesses also require steel caps on shoes, or that gumboots be worn for particular jobs.



Hearing Protection - used in grooming areas to protect against dryer noise, in boarding establishments against dog noise and in general use of equipment (eg mowing in boarding operations).



Respiratory Protection – should be used in all grooming operations where clipping or scissoring is performed (sometimes clipper vacuums are also used), where animals are washed or force dried, or in boarding operations where high pressure premises cleaning is performed (reduces faecal aerosols in water spray). Respiratory protection should also be worn when disinfecting, or using chemicals and ALWAYS when cleaning rodent, bird and reptile cages.



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Skin Protection – Gloves should be used when handling chemicals including shampoos, The type of gloves will depend on the chemicals used – particular care should be taken when handling tick collars and flea treatments. Gloves should also be worn when cleaning tanks and cages. Outdoor activities (boarding kennels, training, some doggy daycare, pet sitting and walking) also require the use of sunscreen and broad brimmed hats.

Leather gloves may be required PPE for specific cases eg handling large birds, pet rodents, or reptiles

Body Protection- those working outdoors, or in busy indoor areas, should wear high-visibility vests so that they can be seen. This includes those who work in pet warehouses, dog walkers, trainers, etc. Those using chemicals on animals should also wear aprons.



ALL pet business are likely to require full length leg covering (eg trousers, overalls) to reduce the risks of bites and scratches, and may also require full length sleeves.

Eye Protection – Wear eye protection when using chemicals, high pressure washing, disinfecting premises or when scissoring or using clippers. Sunglasses may be required PPE for those pet workers working outdoors eg trainers, pet sitters, dog walkers, pet transporters etc.



What If The Boss Says I Have To Wear PPE But Does Not Provide It?

It would be a bit silly to not wear PPE and get yourself injured just to prove a point to the boss! Get your own PPE according to the list from the boss, or according to your own assessment of the risks, and talk to your accountant about whether you can claim this back against your tax return.

Other “Plain Common Sense” OHS Issues

EVERY pet business should have:

- Suitable *hand washing* and hand drying facilities (possibly the single most effective way to reduce germs risk to workers in the workplace)
- A *First Aid Kit* for workers and at least one person trained in how to use it. (A legislative requirement!)
- Written *procedures* for work involving risk eg cleaning and disinfecting cages
- A *Fire Blanket* or Fire Extinguisher
- A safety ‘*earth leakage*’ or *circuit breaker* on the appliances or on the switchboard in case of electrical problems
- All electrical equipment *tested and tagged* by an authorised tester.
- High pressure cleaners with *trigger nozzles* to automatically turn off in case of accident
- Careful *selection* of disinfectants and chemicals to minimise the risk
- Regular staff *training* in OHS and regular discussion of possible workplace risks at staff meetings.



Again this is not an all inclusive list, but it’s worth including in risk assessment profiles.

The Bottom Line

OHS is not just the boss’ responsibility, it’s everyone’s. You are an important part of keeping yourself safe and healthy. *Please* take OHS seriously and protect your health and safety with PPE

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