



PET AND ASSISTANCE AND EMOTIONAL ANIMALS POLICY

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Rewording in a number of sections	7/4/2025	Lesley Turner	2025 - 1
Addition of Assistance Dogs and Emotional Support Animals	7/4/2025	Lesley Turner	2025 - 1

STATEMENT

1. It is the overarching policy of Mount Cook that domestic pets are not permitted on site or on activities unless under extenuating circumstances.
2. Staff, freelancers, volunteers and visitors to Mount Cook should be aware that there are issues regarding bringing personal domestic pets onto Mount Cook premises or involving them in Mount Cook activities. Staff and volunteers must also take into consideration before accepting a position of responsibility at Mount Cook or acquiring a pet, their work routines on the clear understanding that it is not normally acceptable for them to have their pet with them on Mount Cook activities.
3. Animals and in particular dogs are sentient beings with complex emotional needs, and if a dog is taken onto activities without any prior training or assessment, it is a very stressful environment for that dog to be in. If this is compounded with children and adults who have very little idea on how to treat and be around a dog, through naivety and lack of education, there is potential for an incident. Unfortunately, a number of dogs have now bitten children in schools, and each time the dog in question has had to be euthanised.
4. In the right situation and with the right group there can be a recognised benefit to involving an animal in an activity programme. People of all ages can respond positively to the presence of an animal and there are plenty of examples of introspective children turning into lively and involved group members, due to the existence of a dog on particular activities.
5. Mount Cook has taken time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of domestic animals being involved in activities and have implemented the following policy on the grounds of the reasons listed below.
6. The reasons include:
 - Hygiene
 - Allergies of visitors and reactions to animals
 - The unpredictable nature of animals and the safety of our visitors
 - Distraction of visitors from instruction, especially with regard to safety
 - Distraction of instructional staff from their principal duties
 - Respect for the fear of individual visitors and members of staff of the Mount Cook
7. Mount Cook does not allow visitors to bring pets onto activities for the same reasons.

EXEMPTIONS TO THIS POLICY

8. Registered guide or assistance dogs (see **Assistance Dogs and Emotional Support Animals section** as below).
9. Search and rescue dogs.
10. Animals specifically involved in programmes

PROCEDURES

11. **Buildings** No animals in any Mount Cook buildings or under canvas at any time, where guests or clients have access.
12. **Grounds** Animals are to be kept on a lead or under strict control (within owner's sight) at all times in the grounds. Dogs must not be permitted to roam the grounds unsupervised.
13. **Dog Faeces** Owner to bag and bin any poo *immediately* and wash down any known area known to have been urinated on. All faeces contains bacteria that can cause stomach upsets if ingested. However, the greatest risk to public health from dog faeces is toxocariasis. Toxocariasis is an infection of the round worm, spread via dog faeces. The parasite eggs responsible for toxocariasis can survive for many months in sand or soil, so all pet faeces should be collected and disposed of in the rubbish.
14. **External Activities and Trips** Approval must be sought from the CEO, accompanying staff and young people before taking a dog or domestic pet on external Mount Cook activities. Points 2 & 3 should be followed at all times whilst out, particularly in areas with livestock.
15. **Vehicles** Pets must not be permitted to sit on vehicle seats unless they are restrained using a dog seat harness and a seat cover. If the vehicle has a load guard, then the dog should be behind this, but they are not permitted to sit/lay on equipment.
16. **General** Pet owners are responsible for ensuring all hair/dirt is cleaned up. The owners will supply their own drinking and feeding bowls. The owner will pay for any damage to buildings, contents or personal property caused by their pet.
17. **Risk Assessment** At any time, the CEO or senior representative of the Centre may carry out a dynamic risk assessment which may override any other agreement with regard to domestic/other animals on the Mount Cook site or involved with Mount Cook activities. This decision will be final and must be adhered to until such times as an appeal / full risk assessment can be carried out.

ASSISTANCE DOGS AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

18. At Mount Cook we recognise the important contribution that assistance dogs and emotional support animals provide to some of our guests. As a residential outdoor centre who aim to be as accessible as possible, we want to enable people to come and take part in our outdoor activity courses with appropriate support in place. We also need to consider the impact of animals on the safe operations of the centre and the impact the presence of animals may have on other guests.
19. We welcome trained assistance dogs accompanying our guests. We recognise that for many people, assistance dogs are not (only) pets, but key aids to helping them with day-to-

day activities that many other people take for granted. These dogs may carry out a variety of practical tasks, support independence and confidence, recognise and alert owners to potential health concerns and play a key role in their lives.

20. Assistance dogs are expected to be highly trained, well-behaved and provide an essential service to their owner. Mount Cook acknowledges that training can be provided by a recognised and accredited member organisation of Assistance Dogs UK, a non-accredited charity, a professional trainer or owner trained. In all cases it is expected that an assistance dog will:
 - Be trained to behave well in public
 - Have a safe and reliable temperament
 - Sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner when required
 - Not foul in public places
 - Be healthy and not constitute a hygiene risk
21. Assistance dogs will be able to accompany their owners around the site, in their accommodation and in public areas provided they do not cause undue disturbance, distress (eg phobia of dogs) or harm (eg due to allergies) to other guests. If there is a clear identifiable reason why banning or limiting access of assistance dogs to specific areas is a reasonable step for Mount Cook then this will be discussed with all parties concerned and may result in access of any assistance dogs being limited. All dogs must be kept on leads at all times when in Mount Cook public areas.
22. If it becomes evident that the dog is not behaving in line with the list of expected behaviours, we reserve the right to require the dog to be removed from Mount Cook grounds or restrict access to specified areas/times.
23. Due to the nature of the adventurous outdoor activities when on activity sessions, Mount Cook staff must ensure that the dog does not compromise the safety of any staff member, participant or member of the public. If it does so the instructor must either modify the activity so that the dog does not compromise safety, ensure the dog does not compromise safety by either being tethered on a lead or not being present on session, find an alternative activity, or alternatively refer the issue to a member of the operational management team.
24. We recommend that assistance dog owners obtain third-party liability insurance cover of at least £1million which covers the duration of the dog's visit to Mount Cook.

ASSISTANCE DOGS IN TRAINING

25. As standard, Mount Cook does not allow assistance dogs in training to attend our residential courses as they may not be trained to the standards expected of an assistance dog.
26. If guests wish to bring an assistance dog in training, they should contact Mount Cook and discuss their specific requirements. An assistance dog in training would be expected to display the level of appropriate behaviour and temperament of an assistance dog.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

27. Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) are not defined in UK legislation and it is unlikely to be a reasonable adjustment for Mount Cook to give access to multiple types of ESAs and dogs not trained as assistance dogs.

28. As standard, ESA's will not be accepted on Mount Cook's residential activity courses due to potential negative impacts upon facilities and other guests. If guests wish to bring an ESA, then they should contact Mount Cook and discuss their specific requirements.

29. These will be considered alongside other factors including type of animal, implications of loss/escape of animal, hygiene, cleanliness, disturbance of other guests, and registration of animal as an ESA (eg with Emotional Support Animal Registry UK). Specific conditions may be put in place including, but not limited to:

- Animal only allowed in individuals' accommodation
- Animal to be kept in crate/cage/tank when unaccompanied
- Animal not to be taken on activity session



Steve Turner
Chief Executive Officer
Mount Cook