

# International Owl Center Service Animal Policy

Adopted April 13, 2016

**As provided for by the Americans with Disabilities Act, no animals, including service animals or any other support animal, will be allowed inside the International Owl Center since the presence of animals would “fundamentally alter” the Center’s services and programs, including owls on display, since any animal who enters the building is visible to the owls.**

## Background information for visitors:

The goal of the International Owl Center is to keep our owls as well as service animals safe.

Owls of all sizes naturally react to dogs of all sizes. Large owls may perceive small dogs as prey. Owls of all sizes may perceive dogs as threats. Our owls are all alarmed to varying levels by seeing dogs. They sometimes go as far as doing alarm calls, defense displays or exhibit other fear behaviors even when they see a dog being walked outside or in a parked vehicle

Because of the small size of our building and the fact that our gift shop is only partially visually separate from the area where the owls are perched, the presence of dogs anywhere in the building has significant potential to stress or alarm one or more of our ambassador owls.

-Uhu the Eurasian Eagle Owl perches up on the mezzanine railing, untethered in any way because she does not tolerate leather jesses on her ankles well. Normally, but not always, when the public is present she stays on the railing. She can see most of what happens in the building, with the exception of small areas of the gift shop. On unpredictable occasions she has flown into the gift shop when members of the public are present. She has perches located on top of the display case and the divider wall that separate the gift shop from the program area, and from these perches she can see the entirety of the gift shop.

-Piper the American Barn Owl, Ruby the Great Horned Owl and Bea the Burrowing Owl can all see portions of the gift shop to varying degrees, including everyone who comes in the front door. JR the Eastern Screech-Owl, Bea the Burrowing Owl, Ruby the Great Horned Owl, and sometimes Uhu the Eurasian Eagle Owl can see the side door entrance.

The owls do not notice everything in the building immediately, so they may not notice a dog when it enters the building and may exhibit fear or potential aggression when they notice it at a later time, even if it is in the gift shop.

While the owls that are in enclosures are less likely to hurt themselves if stressed by a dog, Ruby the Great Horned Owl could try to fly away unexpectedly, which has a small potential to injure her. The largest risk is with Uhu the Eurasian Eagle Owl because she is untethered. If she reacts by flying, it could already be too late to prevent injury to Uhu, the dog, or people in the way.

It is for these reasons that we regretfully do not allow service animals into our current facility at all. Our future facility will be much larger and laid out differently, so likely will have opportunities for service animals to enter the gift shop and potentially exhibit areas.

Thank you for respecting our owls, even when they can’t understand your need for a service animal.