

## Bring your pet in while you shop at new Canadian Tire



**By Brock Weir**

If you're on Aurora's east side to do a bit of shopping for your back yard or picking up a few things for that weekend away at the cottage, why not let your pooch enjoy some retail therapy as well at Canadian Tire?

Our four-legged friends are now welcome guests at the store, which recently located to Bayview Avenue at River Ridge Road this past spring.

The new 'Pet Friendly' policy is the brainchild of store managers Christine and Jeff Hodgkinson, who believe making a few accommodations in the store to accommodate dogs and other pets was a small price to pay in preventing owners from leaving their dogs in closed-up cars during heatwaves.

'Last summer, it seemed like every time you turned on the TV or radio, there was somebody getting their windows smashed to save a pet,' says Jeff.

'The genesis of it started quite some time ago and the credit belongs to Christine. She told me there was another major retailer that was doing it and created a bunch of kerfuffle. She said it was something we should be doing. She went and talked to our vet and asked what he thought it was and he gave us guidelines to follow.'

The implementation of the program was pretty easy, with the hardest part producing the signs to spread the word.

'We needed to be prepared to do some cleanup, so we always have somebody from the janitorial staff kicking around ' but I don't believe we have had an issue yet!' says Jeff, noting they then had to decide what doggie treats would be available at the cashier kiosks on the way out. We just had to make sure the animals that are coming into the store are well-behaved. All of the pet people who have come in here so far are all responsible pet owners.

'The biggest feedback is we're now seeing repeat dogs in the store! The staff are telling me they will see one, two or three visits from the same dog and it is almost like the dog is more identifiable than the customer. I am not really sure that is a great thing, but that is reality. The people who have taken advantage of it love it and it has been pretty well received.'

Mr. Hodgkinson describes himself as 'the new kid' in Aurora, having joined the Aurora store in February as the old store at Murray Drive was transitioning to its new location.

It was a big task, but one that has paid dividends. While he speculates the move has caused them to lose some of the customers that previously came up from northwest Richmond Hill, new customers from southeast Newmarket have been coming in droves ? of both the two-legged and four-legged varieties.

?To me, this is a service you can offer your consumer that doesn't cost you anything,? he says. ?It is better for the pets ? and it is better for the windshield and window glass! It has been a win-win.?

Canadian Tire's pet friendly policy will be in place year-round.