



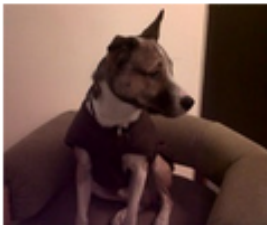
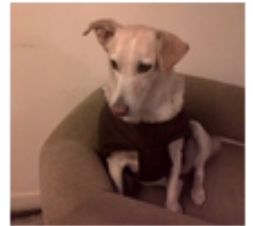
## Lemon Tree Hotels: Where strays get executive-level jobs

Contributed by ANJALI NAMBISSAN  0 Comments

**Article Category:** Profile

Posted on 25th Mar, 2015: The happy smiles and furry tail wags are all part of Lemon Tree Hotel's aptly named Pooch Policy. Founded in 2002, Lemon Tree Hotel Company owns and operates 27 midscale and budget hotels across the country. As part of company policy, they adopt a (or two) stray dog(s) from the area around the hotel. This lucky pooch not only gets regular meals, oodles of love and attention and a safe place to sleep, but also a job – complete with responsibilities and designation.

There's Vice Chairdog, Company Mascot and Senior Food Critic – Sparky Keswani: *who has been with Lemon Tree Hotels since she was born, reflects our core values of "Integrity" and "Teamwork" and represents our brand values of freshness, fun and spirited energy. Sparky is living proof that the Lemon Tree Hotel Company has redefined the term "Equal Opportunity Employer".*



Her executive assistant - Artificer Polytechnus Keswani aka Street Arthur (that's a mouthful of a name!): *an aristocratic, tan, black, brown and white male pup is currently serving his apprenticeship under Sparky Keswani. As he grows in size and confidence, it is becoming increasingly evident that Arty has some Beagle blood in him which may in time permit him to claim Greek citizenship.*

And close to 20 others living it up in any of the Lemon Tree hotels across 16 cities of India. Including Beach Hound and Junior Food Critic (Grade II A) Bobby aka Bob Tree Dogarante from the Lemon Tree Amarante Beach Resort in Goa: *a black, tan and white Indian dog of male persuasion and unknown age, has perfected the art of horizontal meditative stillness during most of his working day. Bob Tree can however be immediately roused by the smell of cooked food and may on such occasions be seen prancing hopefully behind a room service colleague on his way to deliver food at the pool side or to a room. Bob Tree also embodies our core value of "Courage and Responsibility".* You can meet all of them [here](#).



Clearly, someone at Lemon Tree loves dogs and has a great sense of humour.

We caught up with Lemon Tree Hotel's Vice President of Sustainability Initiatives, Aradhana Lal, for more on their Pooch Policy. First up, she confessed that her favourite Lemon Tree pooch is Lemo. Deputy Associate Chairman's Dog, Lemo, has his own business card which says: *In keeping with the mantra to reduce bureaucracy, Lemo has been hired as Deputy Associate to the Assistant Deputy Manager reporting to the Executive Assistant to the Chairman. His purview is to make management lean.*



"The Lemon Tree founding team who defined the brand architecture are pet-lovers and wanted to adopt and care for street dogs, that's how the idea got life," informs Aradhana, "The first hotel to adopt a dog was Lemon Tree Hotel, Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon. At all Lemon Tree hotels today we have adopted one street dog that is cared for by the Lemon Tree team. We name the dog, inoculate it and feed it well."

One would consider a hotel to be a place frequented by all types of people, with varying degrees of tolerance for the four-legged, but patrons are never bothered by these hospitable dogs, assures Aradhana. "We receive a variety of guests at our hotels, each with different likes and dislikes. We are careful not to inconvenience guests and ensure that our hotel dog is restricted to back-of-the-house areas. From employees, we haven't had anyone come up with any objections about this as well. We have only seen a lot of non-dog lovers begin to grow fond of them within few months of joining Lemon Tree," she says. Obviously, dog-loving employees and guests, alike, are all a-woof about the idea, "The dog-lovers, naturally love the idea of having a pet on the premises. To them we make it a point to let them know about our social initiative. Many of our employees love the dogs as their own and are quite active in taking care of the dogs and playing with them," she adds.

The regular pet parents on Gingertail would agree that animals are affectionate and calming companions. Aradhana agrees on behalf of Lemon Tree. The response to the hotel chain's Pooch Policy has only been encouraging. "Dogs are known to be great stress busters and a man's true friend. I guess on a personal level many of our dog-loving employees feel so. The guests who love dogs think it is interesting to know a hotel as quirky as us to adopt street dogs and look after them. Our Pooch policy just reiterates that we are a fun and refreshing hotel chain," she says.

And one cannot ignore that it works out very well for the stray dogs, as well. "People should do their best to provide shelter and food to stray dogs. They too are God's creatures and deserve a chance at survival," muses Aradhana, "For any organization that believes in diversity, it is easy to see that providing a little care to a helpless animal that is left to fend for himself, goes a long way in perpetuating diversity. And the side effect is the joy the dog can bring to employees and guests."

Lemon Tree Hotel Company's good deeds also extend to buying art objects that pay for the operations of Delhi-based animal rights organisation People for Animals. As a plan for the future, Aradhana and everyone at Lemon Tree (and possibly the animal-loving world) would like to see, "People not abandoning their pets when he/she gets old or disabled in some way. And the availability of well-run and well-meaning animal shelters." Here's hoping this vision becomes a not-so-distant reality.

If only more companies made it part of their policy to use the extra space and resources on their campuses/facilities to feed and house just one stray each – it would go a long way to tackle our strays' issue. There are a number of corporate giants who have facilities and campuses spread over acres and definitely have the resources to adopt and look after few (and not just one) strays – it would be a mutually beneficial move where companies will help the local communities address the strays issues, the strays will get a permanent home and these companies will get loyal guards for their campuses. The new company law mandates that corporates beyond a certain financial size need to invest about 2% of their average net profits on CSR – unfortunately, the definition of CSR under this law does not include animal welfare as of now (*This has been amended - please see the note below*). Perhaps, NGOs working in this area can implore the Govt to look into this and add animal welfare also in the list – that in turn, could further prompt the corporates to look into programs like these and allocate resources to help strays. If Lemon Tree being a hotel chain, where their first objective is to ensure superlative guest experience, can find the motivation to provide for our four-legged friends without affecting their brand or service, we are sure that other corporates can definitely follow suit.

Do check out the K9s at Lemon Tree video below. We guarantee it will make you day!

(Images: Lemon Tree Hotel)

*(Correction: Through a notification issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 'Animal Welfare' has been included as one of the activities under the definition of CSR in Feb, 2014. This then paves way for corporates to emulate Lemon tree like program as part of their compliance requirements. Here's hoping we will see more corporates stepping forward in this direction!)*

