



How to Run a Pop-Up Party for National Pet Shop Day

Step by step

National Pet Shop Day is a calendar moment worth celebrating – and for pet shops and stores up and down the country, it presents the perfect opportunity to throw open the doors, bring the community together, and make some lasting memories with the pet owners who keep your business thriving. A pop-up party is one of the most rewarding ways to get involved, combining in-store atmosphere, customer engagement, and a genuine celebration of pets and the people who love them.

The idea of hosting an event might feel daunting if you've never done it before, or if previous attempts didn't quite land the way you'd hoped. The good news is that a pop-up party doesn't need to be complicated or costly to be a success. With the right planning and a clear understanding of what's involved, you can create an event that resonates with your customers, drives footfall, and gives your business a real boost.

Here's a straightforward, step-by-step breakdown of everything you need to think about.

Define your event concept

Before you start ordering decorations or drafting invites, you need to be clear on what kind of event you're running. A pop-up party can take many different forms, and the shape of yours will depend on your space, your customer base, and what you want to achieve on the day.

Consider what activities or attractions will give people a reason to show up and stay a while. Some popular options include:

- **Pet-friendly meet and greets:** Give customers the chance to interact with animals on the day, whether that's a visiting therapy dog, adoptable pets from a local rescue, or exotic species from a nearby specialist.
- **Product demonstrations and tastings:** Showcase new products or bestsellers with hands-on demos. Free samples of pet food, treats or supplements give customers something tangible to take away, and often lead directly to sales.
- **In-store activities for children:** Pet colouring stations, quizzes, or a "meet the species" trail around the store can keep younger visitors entertained and encourage families to spend longer browsing.
- **Expert talks and Q&As:** A short session from a local behaviourist, nutritionist, or groomer adds genuine value for attendees and positions your store as a trusted source of knowledge.
- **Exclusive on-the-day offers:** Time-limited discounts, bundle deals, or a free gift with purchase create urgency and reward customers for making the effort to attend in person.

You don't need to include everything on this list. A focused event with two or three well-executed activities will always outperform a sprawling programme that stretches your team and budget too thin.

Set a realistic budget

One of the most common reasons small events fail to get off the ground is a lack of clear financial planning. Deciding on your budget early will help you make sensible decisions about what to include and where to spend wisely.

Think about the costs you might face across the following areas:

- **Decorations and theming:** Balloons, banners, signage, table coverings and props. These don't need to be expensive, but they do make a difference to the overall atmosphere.
- **Refreshments:** If you're offering drinks or snacks for human visitors, factor in quantity and presentation. For pet-friendly events, treats for animal guests are a nice touch.
- **Printed materials:** Flyers, posters, programmes or activity sheets for children all have production costs attached, even if modest.
- **External guests or speakers:** If you're bringing in a nutritionist, groomer or other specialist, agree on any fees or expenses in advance.
- **Promotional activity:** Paid social posts, local advertising, or any sponsored content to drive awareness ahead of the event.

Look at what you already have available – existing supplier relationships, in-store space, loyal customers willing to help on the day – and build your budget around what genuinely needs to be sourced externally.

Plan your space

A pop-up party changes the usual flow of your shop, so it's worth mapping out how you'll use the space well before the day arrives. Think about:

- **Foot traffic and flow:** Where will people enter, move through the store, and exit? Avoid bottlenecks around high-footfall areas, and make sure emergency exits remain clear at all times.
- **Activity stations:** Designate specific areas for each activity so the event feels organised rather than chaotic. Clear signage helps visitors find what they're looking for without having to ask.
- **Animal welfare:** If animals will be present, identify a quieter area away from the busiest activity if they need a break from the noise and attention. Check in advance with any animal handlers or rescue organisations about their welfare requirements.
- **Stock protection:** Busier footfall increases the risk of accidental damage to products. Consider what needs to be moved, covered, or made more secure for the duration of the event.
- **Accessibility:** Make sure the layout works for pushchairs and wheelchair users, and that all visitors can participate comfortably.

Build your promotional plan

A well-run event with poor promotion will still draw a disappointing crowd. Start spreading the word as early as you can, ideally four to six weeks before the day, and use a mix of channels to reach as many of your potential attendees as possible.

- **Social media:** Post consistently in the build-up using National Pet Shop Day hashtags alongside your own branded content. Countdown posts, behind-the-scenes previews, and competitions or giveaways in the weeks leading up to the event are all effective ways to generate buzz. You'll find a dedicated guide to running social media competitions in the PR Toolkit.
- **Email marketing:** If you have a subscriber list, use it. A short sequence of emails covering the announcement, a mid-point reminder, and a last-chance nudge in the days before the event can significantly boost attendance. The PR Toolkit includes a step-by-step guide to email event promotion if you need support with this.
- **In-store signage and window displays:** Your physical space is one of your most powerful promotional tools. An eye-catching window display and well-positioned in-store posters will catch the attention of passing footfall who may not follow you online.

- **Local networks and community groups:** Reach out to local Facebook groups, neighbourhood apps, community noticeboards, and any local press contacts. National Pet Shop Day has strong news appeal, and a short press release or personal approach to a local journalist could earn you some valuable coverage.
- **Early bird registration:** If your event includes any ticketed elements or capacity-limited activities, consider offering early bird sign-up incentives to get commitments in early and give you a more accurate headcount. You can find guidance on early bird strategies in the PR Toolkit.

Assign roles and responsibilities

Even a modest event becomes difficult to manage without a clear structure on the day. Before you open your doors, make sure every member of your team knows exactly what they're responsible for.

Key roles to consider assigning include:

- **Event lead:** One person should have overall responsibility for the day, making decisions when things don't go to plan and acting as the main point of contact for any external guests or partners.
- **Welcome and registration:** If you're capturing visitor details or distributing wristbands or activity sheets, a dedicated person at the entrance will make the arrival experience smoother.
- **Activity hosts:** Each activity station should have at least one team member assigned to manage it, answer questions, and keep things running to time.
- **Sales and till cover:** The event should translate into sales, so make sure your till area is staffed and your team feel confident talking about products and promotions on the day.
- **Social media coverage:** Designate someone to capture content on the day – photos, short videos, quotes from happy customers – to feed into your post-event communications and future promotional content.

Prepare a run-of-day schedule

A written schedule shared with your whole team in advance is one of the simplest ways to keep an event on track. It doesn't need to be elaborate – a straightforward timeline from set-up through to close will do. Include:

- Set-up time and who is responsible for each element
- Doors open time
- Start and finish times for any scheduled activities, talks, or announcements
- Any planned social media posts or live content
- A clear end time, with pack-down responsibilities assigned

Share the schedule with every team member at least 48 hours before the event so there are no surprises on the morning.

Think about health, safety and logistics

Increasing footfall and introducing animals, children, and activities into your space creates considerations that your standard day-to-day operation might not.

Address these in advance rather than on the day:

- **Public liability insurance:** Check whether your existing policy covers you for a public-facing event. If you are unsure, speak to your insurer before the event takes place.
- **Animal handling and welfare:** If animals will be present that are not part of your regular stock, confirm that the relevant welfare and handling protocols are in place, and that the person responsible for each animal is experienced and insured.
- **First aid:** Make sure a first aid kit is accessible and that at least one member of your team knows where it is and how to use it.

- **Capacity:** Know your maximum safe capacity and have a plan for managing numbers if footfall significantly exceeds your expectations.
- **Weather contingency:** If any element of your event spills outside, have a plan for bad weather. A brief note to customers about any outdoor elements in advance will manage expectations.

Follow up after the event

The event itself is the main event, but what happens afterwards matters too. A strong post-event follow-up extends the value of everything you put into the day and keeps the momentum going with your customers.

- **Thank your attendees:** A post on social media, an email to your subscriber list, or even a handwritten note in orders placed on the day all go a long way towards building goodwill and loyalty.
- **Share your highlights:** Post photos and videos from the day while the energy is still fresh. Content from a well-attended, lively event is some of the most engaging material a pet shop can share.
- **Gather feedback:** A short survey or a simple question in your follow-up email asking what people enjoyed and what could be improved gives you genuinely useful information to take forward.
- **Review your results:** Look at your sales figures on the day compared to a typical trading day, track any new social followers or email sign-ups gained during the event period, and make a note of what worked well and what you would do differently.

A pop-up party doesn't need to be perfect to be powerful. What matters most is the genuine effort you put into creating something your customers feel welcomed into – an experience that reminds them why their local pet shop is about far more than just buying products.

National Pet Shop Day is your opportunity to put your business at the heart of your community. With careful planning, a motivated team, and a clear idea of what you want your event to feel like, you're already most of the way there.

For more resources, guides, and inspiration to help you make the most of National Pet Shop Day, visit nationalpetshopday.com.