

VSG

BUSINESS GUIDES

REAL IDEAS. REAL STEPS. REAL RESULTS

MOBILE PET CARE & DOG FITNESS BUSINESS STARTUP GUIDE

LAUNCH. SERVE. GROW. NATIONWIDE.

Turn
Your Love
for Dogs
Into a
Profitable
Business

PREMIUM
2026
EDITION

UPDATED TOOLS
TEMPLATES
CHECKLISTS
REAL-WORLD STRATEGIES



DOG
OUTINGS



PET
TAXI



DOG
FITNESS



RECURRING
ROUTES



PRICING &
PACKAGES



TEMPLATES &
CHECKLISTS

PREMIUM GUIDE

Before You Begin

A mobile pet-care business succeeds when trust, animal safety, route design, and recurring services work together. The van is a tool - the operating system is the business.

SCOPE RULE

This guide covers non-veterinary pet care: outings, walks, dog fitness, yard-waste removal, and pet transportation. Do not diagnose, prescribe, rehabilitate medical conditions, or make treatment decisions unless you hold the required professional credentials.

What this guide is built to help you do

- ☐ Choose a service mix that can be delivered safely by one operator.
- ☐ Build a client-screening and animal-handling system before accepting recurring bookings.
- ☐ Price around route time, service time, risk, equipment, and recurring demand.
- ☐ Use packages without discounting away the cost of travel.
- ☐ Create clear emergency, transport, cancellation, and weather procedures.
- ☐ Use ready-to-run intake sheets, route worksheets, and service checklists.

Guide map

1. The Business You Are Actually Building
2. Build the Service Stack
3. Legal, Insurance, and Local Requirements
4. The New-Client Safety Gate
5. Transport and Vehicle Setup
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7. Dog Fitness and Treadmill Sessions
8. Yard Waste Removal
9. Pet Taxi and Vet/Groomer Transport
10. Pricing, Packages, and Recurring Revenue
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CHAPTER 1

The Business You Are Actually Building

You are selling dependable help with exercise, transport, and pet-care logistics - not simply time with dogs.

- Recurring clients are the foundation because route-based services become more efficient when the same homes repeat.
- Trust is the product before exercise is the product: owners are handing you access to their home, vehicle transport authority, and responsibility for an animal.
- The most profitable-looking service is not automatically the best starting service if it adds vehicle, equipment, handling, or insurance risk.

START NARROW

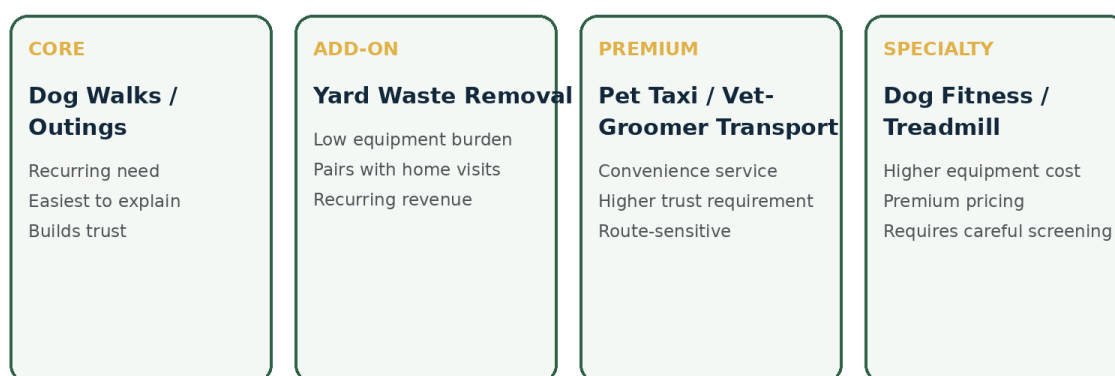
Begin with one or two services you can deliver repeatedly and document well. Add premium services only after the client roster and route density justify them.

CHAPTER 2

Build the Service Stack

The strongest mobile model layers services instead of trying to launch every pet-care idea at once.

BUILD THE SERVICE STACK IN LAYERS



Start with the lowest-risk service that customers will book repeatedly. Add equipment-heavy services only after

Recommended progression

- Core: walks, private outings, or small-group outings where appropriate.
- Low-burden add-on: yard waste removal on the same route.
- Convenience premium: pet taxi / groomer or vet transport with written authorization.

- Equipment premium: dog fitness or treadmill sessions after demand and vehicle economics are proven.

CHAPTER 3

Legal, Insurance, and Local Requirements

There is no single national pet-care license that replaces state, county, city, park, and insurer requirements.

- ☐ Register the business and any required trade name in the jurisdictions where you operate.
- ☐ Check city/county requirements for pet-care, animal transport, commercial activity in parks, and home-entry services.
- ☐ Confirm commercial auto coverage explicitly matches the business use and animal transport exposure.
- ☐ Carry general liability appropriate to animal handling, home access, and property damage.
- ☐ Ask the insurer whether care-custody-control or animal-bailee coverage is needed for animals in your possession.
- ☐ Verify workers' compensation, payroll, and worker-classification requirements before adding helpers or drivers.

FEDERAL BASICS

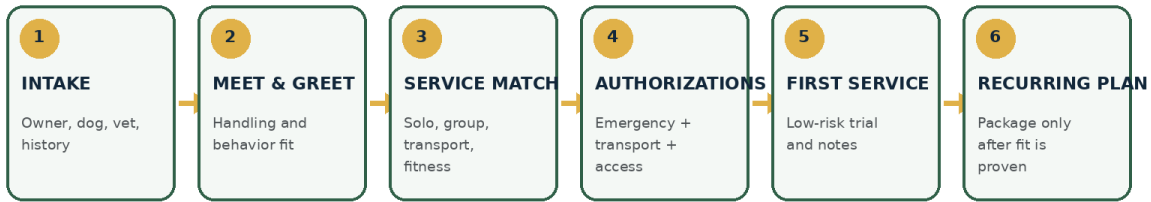
The SBA advises businesses to check state and local licensing and permit requirements. If you need an EIN, the IRS provides it directly for free.

CHAPTER 4

The New-Client Safety Gate

Do not accept a dog into recurring service before you know what you are handling.

NEW-CLIENT SAFETY GATE



The goal is not to accept every dog. The goal is to build a roster you can handle safely and consistently.

Intake information

- ☐ Owner and emergency contact information
- ☐ Veterinarian name and phone number
- ☐ Dog age, weight, breed/type, medical restrictions, medications relevant to service, and mobility limits
- ☐ Vaccination status as required by your policy, insurer, parks, and local rules
- ☐ Bite, reactivity, escape, resource-guarding, fear, and handling history
- ☐ Home-access instructions, alarm/gate notes, other animals in the home, and pickup permissions
- ☐ Emergency-care authorization limit and owner availability during service

FIT MATTERS

A polite decline is safer than accepting a dog whose needs exceed your training, equipment, staffing, insurance, or group-management ability.

CHAPTER 5

Transport and Vehicle Setup

Animal transport turns a pet-care service into a vehicle-safety operation as well.



A professional setup separates animals, secures equipment, and makes loading predictable before the route begins.

Vehicle baseline

- ☐ Use secure crates, partitions, or other appropriate restraint/containment so dogs are not loose in the driver area.
- ☐ Keep a non-slip loading path and a ramp or lift strategy for dogs that cannot safely jump.
- ☐ Store leashes, towels, water, cleaning supplies, and first-aid items so they cannot become projectiles.
- ☐ Build a cleaning and disinfection routine between dogs and after incidents.
- ☐ Never use the van as unsupervised holding while you perform unrelated stops.

HEAT AND EMERGENCY RULE

Do not leave animals unattended in a vehicle. Build the schedule so every transported dog remains under active supervision and has a planned handoff.

CHAPTER 6

Dog Walks and Outdoor Outings

Outdoor exercise should be matched to the individual dog, the weather, the location, and your handling capacity.



Small, compatible groups are easier to supervise, document, and transport than high-volume 'pack' outings.

Before every outing

- ☐ Confirm dog identity, equipment fit, leash/harness condition, owner notes, and current restrictions.
- ☐ Check weather, surface temperature, trail/park rules, and access.
- ☐ Carry water and cleanup supplies.
- ☐ Use a secure transfer protocol from home to vehicle and vehicle to activity area.
- ☐ Group only dogs whose size, behavior, energy, and handling needs are compatible.
- ☐ Document incidents, unusual behavior, injuries, and route changes immediately.

GROUP-SIZE RULE

Set a maximum based on what one handler can safely control - not on how many dogs fit in the van.

CHAPTER 7

Dog Fitness and Treadmill Sessions

Dog fitness can be a premium service, but it should stay clearly outside veterinary diagnosis and medical rehabilitation.



The handler remains present for the entire session and adjusts the workout to the individual dog's tolerance and owner instructions.

- ☐ Use equipment designed and maintained for canine use.
- ☐ Conduct a fit and temperament screening before the first paid session.
- ☐ Start conservatively and stop for distress, pain, abnormal gait, overheating, panic, or equipment problems.
- ☐ For dogs with medical, orthopedic, cardiac, respiratory, weight-management, or rehabilitation needs, request owner confirmation that veterinary guidance has been obtained when appropriate.
- ☐ Never market exercise as a cure or substitute for veterinary care.

POSITIONING

Sell controlled exercise and convenience - not medical treatment.

CHAPTER 8

Yard Waste Removal

This is a simple recurring add-on that can improve route economics without adding animal-transport risk.

Define the service

- Price by visit frequency, yard size, number of dogs, and cleanup condition.
- Use dedicated tools, gloves, sealed containment, and a disposal method consistent with local rules.
- State whether the client must unlock gates, secure dogs, and provide access.

- Photograph unusual conditions or access issues before leaving.
- Bundle the service only when the route remains profitable.

Recurring-stop worksheet

Client: _____

Address: _____

Dogs in yard during visit?: _____

Gate/access: _____

Frequency: _____

Typical minutes on site: _____

Travel minutes from prior stop: _____

Price per visit: _____

CHAPTER 9

Pet Taxi and Vet/Groomer Transport

Transport is a convenience service, but the authorization and handoff process must be precise.

- ☐ Use a written client authorization naming the destination clinic or groomer.
- ☐ Confirm who may release the pet to you and who may receive the pet on return.
- ☐ State clearly that the handler cannot authorize medical treatment unless the owner has separately provided written authority acceptable to the clinic.
- ☐ Keep the owner reachable during the appointment window.
- ☐ Document pickup, handoff, return, and any instructions or items received.

NO MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING

Pet taxi means transport and logistics. The client and veterinary professionals remain responsible for treatment decisions.

CHAPTER 10

Pricing, Packages, and Recurring Revenue

Price from the route and the risk, then use packages to create consistency.

ILLUSTRATIVE PACKAGE LADDER

Example structure - validate local prices and your route economics before using any numbers.



Packages should reward consistency without discounting the business into unprofitable travel.

Price components

- Service minutes
- Travel / deadhead time
- Vehicle cost and fuel
- Insurance and software allocation
- Equipment cost / maintenance
- Home-access or transport complexity
- After-hours, long-distance, or special-handling premium

PACKAGE RULE

A recurring package should improve schedule predictability without paying the customer to create more travel. Discount frequency only after the route math works.

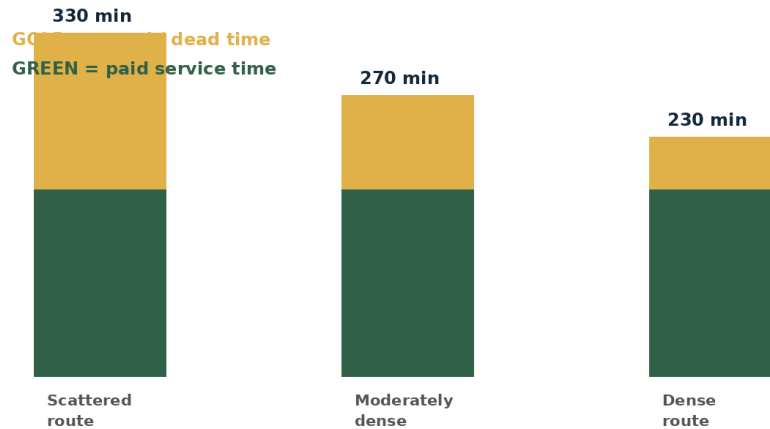
CHAPTER 11

Route Density and Scheduling

Mobile pet care can look busy while making very little money if the day is mostly windshield time.

WHY ROUTE DENSITY CHANGES THE ECONOMICS

Illustrative example only - use your actual drive times, fuel, service duration, and prices.



Route controls

- ☐ Create service zones and assign specific days or windows to each zone.
- ☐ Price long-distance clients differently instead of hiding their travel cost in every package.
- ☐ Batch yard cleanup, pet taxi, and fitness stops by geography when possible.
- ☐ Track paid service minutes versus unpaid travel minutes every week.
- ☐ Cap the route before service quality and on-time performance collapse.

CHAPTER 12

Daily Operations and Documentation

Every service should leave a short, useful record.

Daily opening

- ☐ Vehicle walk-around
- ☐ Crates/restraints checked
- ☐ Water and cleaning supplies loaded
- ☐ First-aid kit present
- ☐ Client list and special notes reviewed
- ☐ Weather reviewed
- ☐ Phone/POS/scheduling tools charged

After each service

- ☐ Dog returned securely
- ☐ Home/keys/gate restored as instructed

- ☐ Water / feeding instruction completed if in scope
- ☐ Photo or service note sent if promised
- ☐ Incident or unusual behavior logged
- ☐ Next recurring appointment confirmed

CHAPTER 13

Incidents, Emergencies, and Bite Response

A written incident plan is part of the premium product.

- ☐ Secure the animal and protect people first.
- ☐ Contact emergency services or a veterinarian when the situation requires it.
- ☐ Notify the owner promptly and document facts, photos, witnesses, and care provided.
- ☐ Follow local bite-reporting or animal-control requirements.
- ☐ Do not hide or minimize an incident to protect a review.
- ☐ Notify the insurer when the policy or incident requires it.

BITE SAFETY

CDC notes that any dog can bite, and bites can spread germs and cause injury. Use careful handling, do not provoke or force contact, and follow medical and local reporting guidance after a bite.

CHAPTER 14

Marketing and Referral Partnerships

Trust-based service grows fastest through visible professionalism and referral relationships.

- Veterinary clinics - transport referrals and general pet-care visibility
- Groomers - two-way referrals and transport coordination
- Dog trainers - clients needing structured exercise or transport
- Pet stores and community groups - local awareness
- Google Business Profile and local search
- Branded vehicle and professional before/after service updates
- Referral incentives that reward introductions without giving away high-travel services

MARKETING RULE

Lead with the problem you solve: reliable exercise, dependable transport, and practical help for owners - not with a long list of every service you could theoretically provide.

CHAPTER 15

Your First 90 Days

Prove one safe route before building a fleet.

Days 1-30: Build the gate

- ☐ Choose the first one or two services.
- ☐ Verify licensing, park/commercial-use rules, and insurance.
- ☐ Create intake, authorization, emergency, cancellation, and incident forms.
- ☐ Set a tight service radius and define route zones.

Days 31-60: Prove the service

- ☐ Complete paid meet-and-greets and low-risk first services.
- ☐ Track service minutes, travel minutes, mileage, incidents, and client feedback.
- ☐ Refine pricing from actual route data.
- ☐ Build two referral relationships.

Days 61-90: Prove recurring demand

- ☐ Convert suitable clients to recurring packages.
- ☐ Add one low-burden service before adding equipment-heavy services.
- ☐ Review route density and drop unprofitable geography if necessary.
- ☐ Decide whether treadmill equipment, a larger vehicle, or help is justified by booked demand.

CHAPTER 16

Workbook and Field Sheets

Use these pages in the field. The open space is intentional.

New-client intake

Owner name: _____

Emergency contact: _____

Dog name / age / weight: _____

Veterinarian: _____

Medical restrictions relevant to service: _____

Behavior / reactivity notes: _____

Bite history: _____

Escape history: _____

Other animals in home: _____

Access instructions: _____

Authorized services: _____

Emergency care authorization limit: _____

Service-fit decision

Can I safely handle this dog alone? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

Is the requested service within my scope? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

Does my insurance cover it? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

Is the route profitable? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

Do I need veterinary guidance before fitness work? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

Is group service appropriate? YES ☐ NO ☐ NOTES: _____

CHAPTER 16

Workbook - Route & Service Control Sheet

FIELD	ENTRY
Date	_____
Zone / route	_____
Client / dog	_____
Service	_____
Scheduled time	_____
Travel minutes	_____
Service minutes	_____
Mileage	_____
Price	_____
Special notes	_____
Incident / follow-up	_____
Next service	_____

End-of-day review

- ☐ All animals returned / handed off
- ☐ Keys/access items secured
- ☐ Incidents documented
- ☐ Vehicle cleaned
- ☐ Crates/restraints checked
- ☐ Tomorrow's route confirmed
- ☐ Mileage and payments recorded

CHAPTER 17

Sources & Annual Verification Checklist

Recheck anything that can change before relying on it in a live business.

Primary sources reviewed for this edition

- Internal source: Dog_Care_Business_Plan (2).docx.
- Internal source: Mobile_Dog_Gym_Business_Model.docx.
- U.S. Small Business Administration - Launch Your Business (state/local registration, licenses, and permits).
- Internal Revenue Service - Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN available free directly from IRS).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Dogs / Healthy Pets, Healthy People (dog-bite prevention and response).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Pet Safety in Emergencies (first aid is not a substitute for veterinary care).

Annual / operational verification checklist

- ☐ State, county, and city business / pet-service licensing
- ☐ Commercial activity rules for parks and public lands
- ☐ Commercial auto and animal-transport coverage
- ☐ General liability and care-custody-control coverage
- ☐ Workers' compensation and worker-classification rules
- ☐ Rabies / vaccination documentation requirements used by your insurer, parks, and local law
- ☐ Emergency veterinary and bite-reporting procedures
- ☐ Vehicle restraint / crate setup and equipment condition
- ☐ Current mileage, fuel, software, insurance, and equipment costs
- ☐ Local market pricing and service radius economics

FINAL QUALITY RULE

A premium pet-care business grows by refusing unsafe work, documenting what it promises, and making recurring routes easier - not by accepting every dog and every service.