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Moneris + Steel House Doggy Daycare

- Steel House Doggy Daycare is a canine daycare offering year-round kennel-free boarding and dog training.
- Located in Sturgeon County, Alberta, the daycare caters to small dog breeds of all ages, under 20 pounds.
- The daycare is a proud member of the Alberta Force Free Alliance – an organization that advocates for the humane training and treatment of animals.
- Steel House Doggy Daycare is using the Desk/5000 terminal as their preferred payment solution.

Line of business:

Dog daycare centre

Website:

<https://steelhousedoggydaycare.com/>

Products used:

Desk/5000



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– Bridget Churchill
Steel House Doggy Daycare



Background

All her life, Bridget Churchill grew up taking care of animals like dogs, cats, and horses. So, it came as no surprise when she decided to open Steel House Doggy Daycare in the fall of 2019. Bridget and her husband started the business after they made the difficult decision to close their stainless-steel welding shop. “We built the facility from the ground up, but after so many recessions we just couldn’t take it anymore. I needed to do something that I enjoyed.” She thought, what better way to use the 4000 square foot space than to open a dog daycare for the community? She had experience running a business, taking care of dogs, and knew it was time to pursue something she was passionate about.

The couple renovated the facility into a fully functioning dog daycare, adding cedar walls, lamps, couches, beds, toys, and even televisions to make the space feel homey. Outside the facility, almost an acre of outdoor space for the dogs to run around and play. “When we first opened the daycare, business was booming. We had 14 dogs booked for our boarding services, and a lot of dogs were attending the daycare,” said Bridget.

But in March 2020, like many business owners in Canada, Bridget prepared for the worst. “People were really panicking about the pandemic. We didn’t know what COVID was and if dogs could catch it. I remember around March 15th everyone came in, no talking, and just grabbed their dogs. It was done. Everything was cancelled,” she recalled.

Because the daycare was considered an essential service, Bridget didn't shut down the business. But keeping their doors open was difficult. Bridget had to let their remaining staff go, leaving just her and her son to run the business. Sometimes, she'd only have one or two dogs to watch over the entire day, which significantly impacted their income. To support the daycare and their family, her husband had to go back to work.

As more information about the pandemic was released and safety measures were implemented, the dogs started to come back one by one. Bridget noticed an interesting change in her returning clientele. "The dogs that came back to the facility were these little, tiny dogs. I couldn't really afford the staff to help me handle dogs of all sizes at the time, so I decided to turn Steel House into a daycare for small dog breeds only."

As it turned out, the business appealed to a very niche market of dog owners, many who had concerns about leaving their four- or five-pound dog at a regular daycare with dogs of all sizes. "We received so many kind words and referrals to friends and family. Of course, it's difficult when I have to let people know about our size and weight restrictions, but they all recognize and respect the commitment I made to changing our daycare policies. They've been so supportive. I'm very, very lucky," said Bridget.



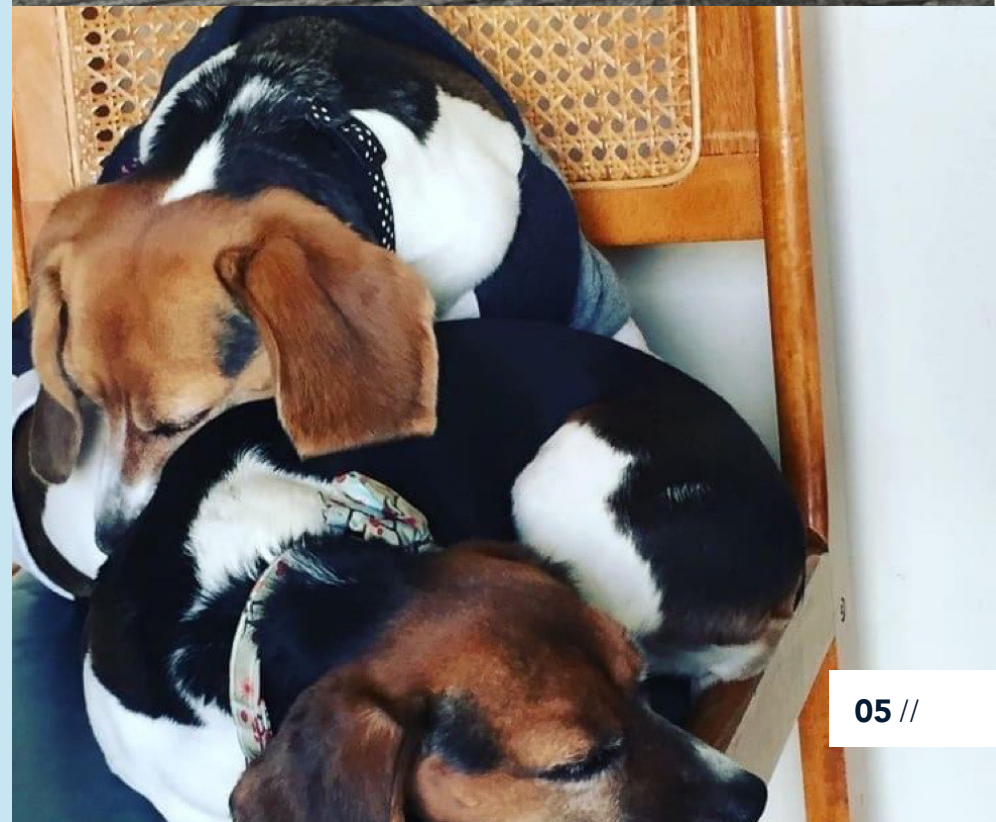
A day in the life

Bridget's day starts early in the morning when all the dogs get dropped off to the daycare. The dogs are encouraged to run around, play, and get acquainted with their fellow friends. The dogs are fed their daily meals and snacks, given multiple breaks in between play time sessions, and split their time inside and outside on the daycare's property. By 4:00 p.m., the owners start to pick up their dogs and head home for the day.

For dogs needing to stay overnight, the daycare offers kennel-free accommodations with 24/7 supervision where the dogs are free to roam and sleep in the facility's leather couches or elevated Kuranda beds. However, since the pandemic, Bridget noticed a decline in the number of dogs needing these accommodations, and realized it wasn't feasible to maintain boarding services at the daycare. With permission from the owners, she welcomed the dogs into her home. "I live about 10 minutes from the facility, and we have a huge yard and a fence. So, after daycare is done, we'll head back to my place, they'll stay overnight, and they even get to sleep in my bed – which people absolutely love. Then we head back to daycare the next day." When business picks up, Bridget plans to continue doing overnight board at the daycare.

Purpose

Bridget isn't a stranger to the hardships of running her own business. With the kind of facility she wants to manage and the reputation she hopes to maintain as a trusted daycare in her community, there's an added layer that goes into their work. "As a business owner, you're on 24/7. It's a lot of work. I learned that from our previous business, and I knew that when I started the daycare. Especially because we have such a large property, we have to be incredibly diligent about how we clean our space and care for the dogs." But for Bridget, being around them make it all worth while. "This job is so fun and rewarding. These dogs want nothing but love from you, and someone to play with. It was so comforting, especially at the height of the pandemic. I never felt isolated, not in the way that so many people felt."





Why Moneris?

Bridget remembers being introduced to Moneris while running her stainless-steel business. “I used to do all the supply runs for the welding shop. I would have to order thousands of dollars worth of equipment and I believe the business we purchased from was using Moneris at the time. The experience was always so smooth and easy. So, I thought we should give it a try for the daycare.”

Right from the set-up and installation process, Bridget recalled having a really good experience when it came to her customer service representative. “I spoke to someone maybe once or twice during the entire process, and they were excellent. They helped us get everything set up. About a year in, when we ran into issues with our machine, a technician was at the daycare the next day after our initial call. They replaced the whole machine, and I haven’t had to call since.”

Bridget’s favourite part about their terminal is the overall ease of use and flexibility for her clients. She appreciates that the machine accepts every card brand that her clients use to pay. “People will ask me if we accept a certain type of card and before they even finish, I’ll say ‘yes’. I haven’t had to turn someone down yet for their method of payment. And yes, the rates differ with each card type, but that’s with any payment processor we choose to work with. But since opening the business, we haven’t had any major issues.”

Looking ahead

Today, the business is slowly building back its clientele. Bridget was able to hire another employee and the business continues to cater to the care and boarding of small dog breeds. On average the daycare will oversee about 15 dogs per day, with the maximum capacity being 30 dogs at the facility.

Even as pandemic restrictions have eased over the last few years, people are still bringing their dogs into the daycare. Of course, Bridget is happy to have them. "It's interesting. A lot of people are still dropping off their dogs. Some continue to do so even though they work from home. I think part of it is that people realize their dogs are getting anxious and really need that time to socialize. They don't want their dogs to be afraid, so they continue to come back regularly."





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