

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

New York: **Today**, cloudy with a period of rain, high 43. **Tonight**, clearing and breezy, low 34. **Tomorrow**, ample sunshine, high 48. **Yesterday**, high 43, low 30. Weather map is on Page A23.

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\$1 beyond the greater New York metropolitan area.

THREE DOLLARS

OFFICE SPACE

LIFE'S WORK

LISA BELKIN

Dogs at the Office: Not Always So Cute

I HAVE gotten a most unusual rush of mail since my last column — photographs of Katie the wheaten terrier, Olive the Jack Russell terrier, Harley the toy poodle, and Nukka and Brody, who appear to be border collies and who seem to be sharing an office cubicle with a python who looks to be in the midst of digesting what I can only hope is not a colleague's pet.

I often write about children in this space, and no one has ever sent me a photo of their baby. I write about dogs at work once, and now I have a gallery.

There was another kind of mail last week, no photos attached. Few complete names either, because the writers were sharing thoughts that they feared could hurt them at work — namely, that they don't think pets belong at the office. "You can't use my name because then I'll be known as the one who hates dogs," one anonymous caller told my voice mail. "I don't hate dogs. I love dogs; I grew up with a sheepdog. But it just seems unprofessional."

Many who contacted me described their

**Tension
between the
indulgent and
the resistant.**

This column about the intersection of jobs and personal lives appears every other week. E-mail: Belkin@nytimes.com.

allergies.

"My husband and I adore dogs and have a wonderful poodle we would love to have with us all the time," one e-mail message began. "But my husband has life-threatening asthma triggered by many breeds of dogs. For a while he worked in an office where the boss would bring his dog to work. Because he already had a rocky relationship with the boss, my husband felt he couldn't say anything and just had to bring his inhaler and pray he wouldn't wind up in the emergency room."

Others objected to the smells, noise and mess that come with animals.

"On a recent Monday," one reader wrote, "I began my workweek with the discovery that a dog had defecated under my desk. When I tracked down the

pooch's owner, she informed me that her pet had wandered off while she was working in the building over the weekend. I own a dog myself, love my furry friend, but wouldn't dream of bringing her to the office. It's highly inappropriate for a business setting."

A few acknowledged out-and-out fear.

"My boss thinks his Shepherd is the sweetest thing in the world," another wrote. "But I have always been nervous around dogs, and



Randall Enos

I have to take a deep breath every time I walk past the copy room, where Killer (not his real name) spends most of his day, because I have visions of the creature jumping out at me."

There are employees who fight back, but they are rare, and even when the workers win, they are reluctant to use their names. One young woman wrote to tell me of her showdown with her boss's Kerry blue terri-

lucky for me!"

Or maybe not. Cherry's anxiety turns up Puck's aggression, the woman said, "and the two spend a good part of the day barking at no one in particular." Puck also bites, she said, so he is kept on a leash. Cherry threatens to bite, she said, but has full run of the office. One worker recently spent a half-hour cowering in a supply closet, she said, because Cherry was outside the door.

Recently, Cherry "shot out from underneath the conference table barking and snarling at me," the woman wrote. "I thought, 'I can either kick this dog in a second, or yell now.' So I yelled." Cherry backed down, she wrote, and the owner gave her a look.

"Needless to say, not everyone at the company is as comfortable yelling at the dogs of the president and C.E.O.," the woman continued. "I am — both having experience with difficult dogs, and knowing that my last day of work was less than a week away."

FOR the record, when I wrote about dogs at work, I was talking about well-behaved dogs, in offices where no employee's health (physical or emotional) was threatened and everyone felt safe. I thought all that went without saying. Apparently I was wrong.

In my mountain of mail about dogs came a perfect suggestion for those who need a canine companion during the working day. The Animal Care and Control Center (www.nycacc.org) is looking for volunteers to walk homeless dogs during lunch hour. The shelter is near the No. 6 subway line in Manhattan, a five-minute stroll from the 110th Street station. (There are some slots available in Brooklyn and Staten Island, too.) The dogs wear cute vests that say "adopt me" and will love you for taking them out. □