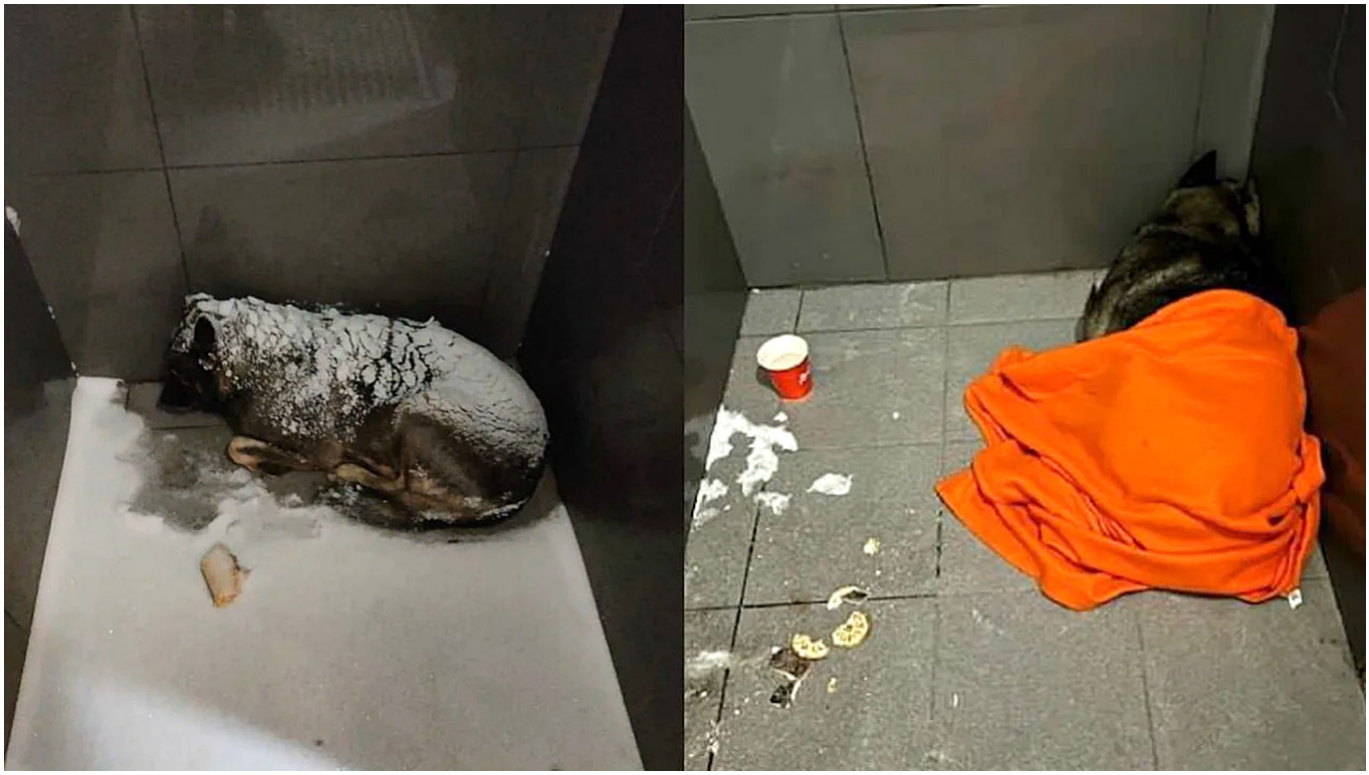
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Dodo Pizza Founder Apologizes After Employee Fired for Sheltering Stray Dog Sparks Backlash

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A stray dog nicknamed “Dodobonya” by staff at a Dodo Pizza location in Chelyabinsk. **Social media**

The founder of Russia’s largest pizza chain, Dodo Pizza, apologized Tuesday after the company faced backlash and calls for a boycott over the firing of an employee who wrapped a stray dog in a blanket during freezing weather.

The employee, a delivery driver in the city of Chelyabinsk identified in media reports only as Mikhail, was dismissed over the weekend. He said the dog had been sleeping near the restaurant for about a year and had been nicknamed “Dodobonya” by staff.

With temperatures in Chelyabinsk plunging well below zero in recent weeks, Mikhail wrapped the dog in a blanket. A newly appointed manager had previously warned employees that doing so violated company policy and threatened disciplinary action.

The dog was taken to a local animal shelter amid outrage over Mikhail’s firing, while Dodo

Pizza was flooded with one-star reviews on its app.

“On behalf of the brand, I want to publicly apologize to the delivery worker,” Dodo Pizza founder Fyodor Ovchinnikov said in a statement on Tuesday.

“We will make all of our pizzerias in Russia pet-friendly,” Ovchinnikov added, while also announcing plans for long-term support for animal shelters.

The Dodo Pizza founder said he would welcome the fired delivery driver back to the company, possibly in a role focused on animal welfare initiatives.

He also called on people to stop harassing the local manager who fired Mikhail, but noted that she was temporarily suspended from work.

Dodo Pizza’s parent company, Dodo Brands, relocated its headquarters to Kazakhstan last year.

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