

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The purpose of these procedures is to provide information that will promote safety for instructors and students when animals are brought into the classroom. Many times, inadequate understanding of animal disease and behavior can lead to unnecessary risks for children, teachers, and animals alike. These guidelines are designed to promote a better understanding of:

1. Types of animals appropriate to bring into a school setting.
2. Safety precautions necessary to prevent the transmission of disease.
3. Precaution necessary to ensure the safety of animals and people.
4. Sanitary practices necessary to ensure the health of animals and people.

ANIMALS THAT ARE UNACCEPTABLE FOR SCHOOL VISITS:

Wild Animals: For purposes of these guidelines, a wild animal is any mammal that is NOT one of the following: domestic dog, domestic cat, domestic ferret, domestic ungulate (e.g. cow, sheep, goat, pig, horse), pet rabbit, pet rodent (e.g. mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas). Exceptions to this are animals in professional presentations.

Poisonous Animals: Spiders, venomous insects, poisonous reptiles (including snakes), and poisonous amphibians. Exceptions to this are animals in professional presentations.

Wolfs – Hybrids: These animals are crosses between a wolf and a dog and have shown to be aggressive.

Stray Animals: Until the health and vaccination status can be verified.

Aggressive Animals: Animals which are bred or trained to demonstrate aggression towards humans or other animals, or animals which have demonstrated such aggressive behaviors in the past, should not be permitted on school campuses. Aggressive, unprovoked, or threatening behaviors should necessitate the animal's immediate removal.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ANIMALS PERMITTED TO VISIT SCHOOLS:

It is important that animals brought into schools be clean and healthy so that the risk of their transmitting diseases to students is minimal. Animals brought to school should be clean and free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks, and mites. Animals considered as appropriate for school visits include: domestic dog, domestic cat, domestic ferret, domestic ungulate (e.g. cow, sheep, goat, pig, horse), pet rabbit, pet rodent (e.g. mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas).

Verified Rabies Vaccination: A current rabies vaccination is required for all dogs, cats and ferrets being brought to the school.

Proper Restraints of Animals: Because animals may react strangely to classroom situations, it is important to have an effective way to control them.

Collars and Leashes: All dogs, cats, and ferrets should be wearing a proper collar, harness, and/or leash when on school grounds. The owner or person responsible for the animal should be able to restrain the animal at all times during the visit. No animal should be allowed to roam unrestrained in the school.

Psittacine Birds: (parrots, parakeets, cockatiels). These birds can carry zoonotic diseases such as psittacosis. Birds showing any signs of illness should not be brought into school. Psittacine birds may be brought to school as long as their cages are clean and the birds' wastes can be contained, such as within a cage. Psittacine birds permanently housed on school property in cages should be treated prophylactically with appropriate tetracyclines for psittacosis for 45 days prior to entering the premises. Pet birds should not be allowed to fly free in a classroom unless it is a part of their socialization and exercise routine.

Baby Chicks and Ducks: Because of the high risk of salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis these animals should be contained in an area specified by the classroom teacher. As with all animals they are the direct responsibility of the classroom teacher.

Estrus: Dogs and cats should be determined not to be in estrus (heat) at the time of the visit.

SUGGESTED ANIMALS HOUSED IN SCHOOLS:

The following is a list of animals that are appropriate pets to be housed in schools:

1. Small pet rodents (e.g., mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas)
2. Pet rabbits
3. Aquarium fish (salt or fresh water)
4. Non-psittacine cage and aviary birds (e.g., canaries, finches, mynahs, diamond doves)

All animals housed in schools should be provided an appropriate environment (e.g., secure housing, suitable temperature), adequate exercise and a proper diet. In addition, there should be a plan for the continued care of these animals during the days that school is not in session. Consultation with a veterinarian is advised to help with environmental and nutritional needs and provide care in the event of illness or injury to the animal.

STUDENT CONTACT WITH ANIMALS

Even very tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations; therefore, student contact with animals should be regulated by a few basic rules.

1. Because increased activity and sudden movements can make animals feel threatened, ALL student contact with animals should be organized and properly administered.
 - a. Animal bites can usually be avoided if students are kept in small groups. If an accidental bite does happen, the County Health Department should be contacted.
 - b. Rough play or teasing should not be allowed in the vicinity of the animal.
2. Small animals such as rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, and mice should be handled with leather gloves whenever possible.
3. Students should avoid "kissing" animals or having close contact with their faces. This statement is especially true for reptiles and amphibians.
4. Students should wash their hands immediately after handling animals.

5. Animals should not be placed in sinks or in any area where food is prepared, stored, or served. Dogs or cats should be kept away from sandboxes where children play.
6. Immunocompromised students and/or students with severe allergies may be especially susceptible to diseases and reactions. Therefore, the student may need to take special precautions to minimize the risk. Alternative classroom experiences may be substituted.
7. Fish – use disposable gloves when cleaning aquariums. Used tank water should be disposed of in sinks that are not used for food preparation or for obtaining water for human consumption.
8. Field Trips – While on field trips, disposable wipes/hand sanitizer should be used after handling/petting animals. Children should use soap and running water as soon as it is available.
9. Teachers are responsible for all animals within their classrooms. Visiting animals should be restricted to an area designated by the teacher. Teachers should take care to clean area that animals have occupied and encourage children to wash their hands well each time after handling any animal.

HANDLING AND DISPOSAL OF ANIMAL WASTE

Children should not be allowed to handle or clean up animal waste without proper cleaning supplies and training. Animal waste should be disposed of where children cannot come in contact with it, such as in a plastic bag or container with a lid or via the sewage system. Food handlers should not be involved in the cleanup of animal waste.

HUMANE TREATMENT OF THE ANIMALS

There should be no intentional or unintentional abuse, mistreatment or neglect of animals.

CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

A teacher should have a clear understanding of and a strong commitment to the responsible care of living animals before making any decision to use live animals for educational enrichment. Preparation for the use of live animals should include knowledge of care appropriate to the species being used housing, food, exercise, and the appropriate placement of the animals at the conclusion of the study. No animal should be allowed less than the optimum maintenance level of nutrition. Clean drinking water should always be available. Adequate provision for care should be made at all times including vacation times. The addition of animals to the classroom environment can be a positive and rewarding experience for all involved when the necessary steps are taken to avoid possible problems.

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