

GUIDING PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT OF ANIMALS

QUALITY AREA 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE
QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY
QUALITY AREAS 5: REALATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Introduction:

PCYC- Out of School Hours acknowledges that whilst animals are not a necessary part of the program, they can be a great source of enjoyment and stimulation for children. The opportunity for children to engage with animals offers children experiences that will enrich their understanding and appreciation of the natural environment and promote the development of their skills in caring for others.

While pets and other animals can prove an effective inclusion into the children's experiences whilst in care, they may also be a risk to children, therefore any animals that enter the service must be housed appropriately to minimise the risk of danger to the children. Strict supervision will be maintained to ensure the health and safety of the children and educators. Educators will ensure that everyone in the service treats all animals humanely and with respect.

Governance:

- All educators (whether casual, part time or full time) are subject to the policies and procedures in governing PCYC- Out of School Hours.

Definition:

- Educators: Staff who hold qualifications in Children Services
- Staff: Staff who don't hold any qualifications in Children Services

Policy

The decision to keep a pet or have an animal (or animals) visit the service will be made by the Coordinator after discussion with the Nominated Supervisor, based on an observed need or value to the children. The Coordinator will inform families of the benefits and potential risks associated with animals in the service and the procedures relating to pets and children. The Coordinator will consult with parents to determine special considerations needed for children whose immunity is compromised, or who have allergies or asthma.

Some appropriate animals to keep as service pets would include hermit crabs, fish, stick insects and similar.

Educators will:

- Wash hands after contact with animals, animal products or feed, or animal environments.
- Supervise human-animal contact, particularly involving the younger children.
- Display animals in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraints.
- Not allow animals to roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals/birds.
- Designate a specific area for contact with animals.
- Not allow food in animal contact areas; do not allow animals in areas where food and drink are prepared or consumed.
- Clean and disinfect all areas where animals have been present. Children should only perform this task under adult supervision.
- Not clean animal cages or enclosures in sinks or other areas used to prepare food and drinks.
- Obtain appropriate veterinary care if and when necessary and ensure the animals are kept immunised, clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites, and lice.
- Ensure any bedding, toys, litter tray, food feeding container or water container used or consumed by animals is inaccessible to children.
- Prepare a weekly roster to ensure the animal is appropriately fed and cared for.
- Ensure that a procedure is in place for the care of animals over the weekend, public holidays, and school development days and/or during Vacation care - particularly if the service does not operate on these days. In this instance, it may be necessary for an educator to take the animal home with them, or alternatively a family enrolled at the service may agree to care for the animal on these days.

- Remind children about the hygiene practices required for handling an animal and ensure the practices are followed.
- Maintain adequate supervision of the children and animals at all times.
- Follow the service's policies in relation to risk assessment, providing a child safe environment and/or any incidents or injuries sustained as a result of an interaction with an animal.

Minimising risk to health and safety

The mouths and claws of all animals carry bacteria that can cause infections in flesh around a bite, and eventually, if untreated, may

spread into the bloodstream. The following preventative measures will be followed to help minimise risk to health and safety from contact with animals:

- A vet should promptly treat animals that are ill, or thought to be ill. An animal that is irritable because of pain or illness is more likely to bite or scratch.
- All children will be supervised when they have contact with animals. Children should be discouraged from putting their face close to animals or playing with animals while animals are eating.
- Do not allow animals to contaminate sandpits, soil, pot plants and vegetable gardens.
- Gloves will be worn when handling animal faeces, emptying litter trays and cleaning cages.
- Dispose of animal faeces and litter daily. Faeces and litter will be placed in a plastic bag, sealed and put out with the garbage.
- Pregnant women in particular should avoid contact with cat faeces.
- If the animal is a bird, wet the floor of the cage before cleaning it to avoid inhalation of powdered, dry bird faeces.
- Avoid bringing in or keeping ferrets, turtles, iguanas, lizards or other reptiles, birds of the parrot family, or any wild or dangerous animals.
- Children and educators must wash their hands thoroughly after touching animals and cleaning their cage/litter trays.

In addition to the above, the following must be noted:

- Bat bites. Australian bats harbour a Lyssavirus, which is very similar to the rabies virus. If you are scratched or bitten by a bat, immediately clean the wound with soap and running water for 5 minutes and contact your doctor or a public health unit.
- Fish and other marine organisms. Scratches from fish and other marine organisms such as coral can cause unusual infections. If an injury caused by a fish, or a wound contaminated by sea, pond, or aquarium water, becomes infected, it is important to see a doctor and explain how the injury occurred.
- Fleas. Fleas can infect both animals and humans, causing irritation and inflammation of the skin. Treat animals, their bedding and their immediate environment (that is, where they usually rest) to destroy adult and immature fleas.

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Documents Considered:

Administration of First Aid
Dealing with Infectious Diseases
Management of Injury, Illness, Incident and Trauma
Providing a Child Safe Environment
National Quality Standards (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 6.1)
Staying Healthy in Child Care
Companion Animals Act 1998
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979