

2.08 ANIMALS

Purpose Statement

Having animals in an education and care service can be a valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships.

Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals, can help children build empathy. Providing children with access to animals in an education and care service can help them learn about the life cycle and relationships, and improve communication.

The safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals remains paramount when delivering a Family Day Care service which encourages such interactions.

Scope

This policy applies to educators, staff, children, families and visitors.

Definitions

Animal: for the purpose of this procedure an animal refers to a dog, cat, bird or any pet being cared for by an educator.

Policy Statement

ANIMALS CAN SUPPORT A CHILD'S LEARNING. CHILDREN WILL BE ASSISTED TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH ANIMALS IN AN EDUCATION AND CARE ENVIRONMENT WHERE THIS IS CONSIDERED SAFE TO DO SO.

Procedures

General

Keeping animals is not appropriate for every educator and there are other interesting ways to introduce animals to children. An educator may plan an outing to a Zoo or Hobby Farm as a way to encourage children to interact and learn from animals.

Where educators keep pets, the following rules apply:

1. A detailed risk assessment will be completed on all animals in the home and all agreed actions will be followed. Each assessment will take into consideration the type of pet and the risks associated including those to the children, families, visitors and the animal.
2. Inform all families at engagement of any animals living at the home and provide them with the risk assessment on enrolment.
3. Inform the coordination unit of the intention to introduce a new pet to the home, prior to introduction, so preparation can be made for any risk assessments.
4. Inform families of the intention to introduce a new pet to the home.

2.08 ANIMALS

5. Discuss the introduction of a new pet with the children and families accessing your service. When the new pet is introduced to a service, a risk assessment must be completed and provided to the coordination unit prior to child care provision.
6. Educate children on how to minimise his/her chance of being bitten or scratched. Remember that a child is at risk if he/she teases, hurts or plays too roughly with an animal or try's to pat a dog or cat whilst it is sleeping or eating.
7. Educators are encouraged to access pet safety community programs to provide pets with proper socialisation and training (where relevant) and learn about ways to promote positive interactions between pets and children.
8. Educators will ensure that a separate child free space is available to pets at all times and is utilised at times when visual supervision is limited.
9. Gates and fencing needs to be sufficient in structure that children cannot put hands/fingers through to animals. Some fences/gates may need additional covering (i.e. shade cloth) to achieve this.
10. An animal free access to the educator's home is to be made available to parents/guardians and coordination unit staff (when requested). The front yard should not be used as a dog run as this may hinder access. NOTE: If the front yard is the only area available for animals, a written agreement between coordination unit staff, parents/guardians and educator shall be drawn up.

Activities that Encourage Interaction with Animals/Pets

1. Below is a list of activities that children may be involved in under an educator's supervision:
 - Washing or brushing the dog
 - Brushing the cat
 - Feeding fish
 - Collecting chicken eggs
 - Changing the food and water for a pet, for example a bird, rabbit or guinea pig
 - Bottle feeding lambs
 - Patting or observing a pet or domestic animal

Health and Safety

The health, safety and wellbeing of children and animals is promoted by:

1. Supervising children at all times when they are interacting with animals
2. Supporting children to interact with animals by modelling appropriate behaviour
3. Conducting a risk assessment before facilitating a visit or outing to a zoo or animal farm
4. Maintaining hygiene where children and animals share the same space (ie washing hands after coming into contact with an animal or bird).



2.08 ANIMALS

5. Discussing any known potential allergies or illnesses with a child's parents or guardians and documenting these on the child's medical records (where applicable)
6. Observing animals and removing them from education and care setting if they appear stressed or irritated
7. All dogs, cats, birds and other pets in contact with children will be kept clean and well with regular worming and vaccinations (where applicable).
8. Bird cages are to be kept away from food preparation areas. Cages are not to be cleaned while children are in care.
9. Play, food preparation and sleep areas within the education and care setting are to be kept free from excrement, pet hair, etc.
10. Fish tanks are to be on a sturdy table or base at a height that is inaccessible to children. Fish tanks must be securely covered.

Relevant Standards/Legislation

- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care Services including:
 - Education and Care Services National Law 2011
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004

Related Policies & Links

- *Assessment, Approval and Reassessment of Approved FDC Residences Procedure*
- *Excursions and Outings Procedure*