

7.2 Animal Policy

Policy number: 7.2
Date last reviewed: February 2024
Reviewed by: Child Care Team

This policy relates to	
National Quality Standards Early Childhood Education & Care	2.2 Each child is protected 2.2.1 At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

Purpose

Guidelines are to be followed to ensure that children are safe in their contact with animals and that regulatory requirements are met.

Background

Animals are an interesting and educational part of life. There are many benefits to children from interacting with and enjoying the company of animals. Children may acquire valuable life skills in caring for and taking responsibility for an animal and at the same time experience fun and enjoyment from interacting with animals. However, safety of the children is the first priority.

The service aims to ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk for children. Risk assessment is to occur at all homes and venues where care is occurring and where children may come into contact with animals.

Policy

Procedures

- Any animal kept on premises where child care is provided must be maintained and housed in a clean and healthy condition. All animals must be free from parasites and be regularly treated for worms. It is advisable that pets have regular veterinary checks.
- Entry point to the home must allow safe access at all times. Dogs/animals must not prevent this from occurring.
- Educators will be vigilant in their supervision of children when animals are near and ensure that documented risk assessments have occurred for all pets. This will include providing a separate area where they are inaccessible to children. This may include finger-proofing and other measures.

- An animal that is considered likely to bite, scratch or injure children in any way will be kept in an area that is not accessible to children.
- All litter trays and food dishes will be inaccessible to children.
- Animals should not be present when children are eating or sleeping, and should be fully monitored in their interactions with children and in children's interactions with them.
- Play areas will be kept hygienic and free of pet droppings prior to children using the area.
- Animals should not have access to areas where children sleep.
- Children, educators, coordinators and visitors will wash their hands after contact with animals.
- Educators will teach and encourage children to play safely with pets and respond quickly to any danger signals.

Strategies to Minimise Risk

Dogs

- A secure area must be provided to separate dogs from children at all times except for supervised interactions
- Planned experiences with dogs would need to be documented and discussed with parents/service prior to minimise risks.
- Teach children to never disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping.
- Encourage children to pat dogs gently and calmly.
- Never allow children to approach a strange dog.
- Stand still if a dog approaches.
- Socialise the children safely with the dog (talk to the child about the dog and introduce them slowly).

Cats

- The main risk to children from cats is from touching a cat's faeces or from scratches. Keep sandpits covered and discourage children from digging in the areas of the garden areas that cats may have used.
- Ensure that any cat bites or scratches are washed and disinfected.
- Do not allow cats to sleep on children's bedding.

- Cats should not have access to where children sleep or eat.
- Separate areas need to be available for cats to be for children to play freely

Domesticated Farm Animals

- Children should be supervised in all interactions with farm animals to prevent the animal from biting the child, pushing a child over, kicking a child etc.
- Large animals must be in a separate area to where children play. Outdoor play areas need to remain free of all manure.
- Feeding animals can be a wonderful experience for children and this can occur with risk assessment in place and careful planning.
- Interactions with smaller animals such as chickens and ducks can be valuable experiences for children but should also be closely supervised, and not freely accessible at all times in the play area.
- No animals should be present during sleep or meal times for safety and hygiene reasons.

Birds

- Parrot fever (psittacosis) is common in Australia with symptoms much the same as flu. Children have less resistance to parrot fever than adults and so need to be careful when handling birds from the parrot family, including budgerigars.
- Hands should be washed after touching birds.
- Cages should be cleaned regularly to ensure that children are not exposed to dust from droppings.

Snakes/Toads

- While deaths from snakebite in Australia are rare, children should be taught the dangers of snakes and reptiles.
- Avoid walking through long grass and bushland with children. When on excursions or at home in bush settings the children should wear enclosed protective footwear. Snakes or reptiles should not be provoked. Toads are a danger to children. Educators should discuss with children not to touch or go near toads.

Insect Stings and Bites

- Ensure children wear closed-in shoes and long pants if bush-walking and use insect repellents on children (written parental permission is required).

- If a child is known to be highly allergic to bees, wasps or ants (anaphylactic shock) an action plan would be completed when the child commences care (Refer Form for Severe Allergic Reaction). The action plan and necessary medication must be on hand at all times.

Pests and Rodents

- Educators are required to maintain a clean and hygienic environment that is free of pests and rodents
- Regular checking and prevention must occur, and these checks should be documented.
- Educators must be able to demonstrate/communicate how they maintain a pest and rodent free environment

Relevant Legislation

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010- Section 167

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Protection from harm and hazards

Key Resources

Raising Children Network

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/dogs_and_children.html

The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/safetycentre/10-DogsnKids.pdf

Child and Youth Health

www.cyh.com/

Staying Healthy in Child Care Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care.

www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch43

www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/subject/General%20Health%20Information

Family Day Care Australia

www.fdca.com.au

Related Policies

[Appendix H Safe Work Practice](#)