

Having a relationship with a pet/ or animal can help children develop a caring attitude and skills such as nurturing, responsibility, empathy and improved communication. Having a pet in an early childhood environment enables children who are not otherwise exposed to animals to learn these skills. The pet will become part of the daily educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. Having a pet at our centre can be a valuable part of children's education. Enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships. Our centre aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at the centre, which will educate children in the proper care of animals.

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Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals within the Centre, there are also a range of concerns which Educators need to consider when maintaining the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals. The National Quality Standards encourages educators to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the independence between people, plants, animals and the land. Pets help children from a young age to learn to care for other living things. They can teach a sense of responsibility, caring and tolerance. They can offer many opportunities for developing observational skills and basic natural science experiences. If the educators wish to have a pet in the centre, they must make all the decisions in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and families.

Educators are encouraged to foster children's ability to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. Responsible ownership of pets, animals or birds that may reside at the Education and Care Centre or visit the premises is vital. Role models of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals are beneficial for children.

Assessing and Managing Risks

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the centre, there are issues that approved providers and educators need to consider for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned prior to choosing a pet or having an animal visit the centre.

A risk / benefit analysis should be conducted when deciding the type of animal and the way the children engage with it.

Disease

Access to animals the centre requires special consideration to prevent the spread of infectious diseases because contact with animals can spread disease. Health authorities identify that germs can be present on the skin, hair, feathers and scales, and in the faeces, urine and saliva of animals. While these germs may not cause disease in the animal, they may cause disease in humans.

Effective hand washing and cleaning

Children and adults should employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals, or cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages or enclosures. It is important to engage children with the cleaning of animal bedding, tanks, cages or enclosures, as they learn responsibility through 'hands on' learning experiences.

Appropriate supervision

Children should also be appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal.



Centre Pets

Our centre aims to provide a safe and hygienic environment that minimises the risk of a child being harmed by an animal.

- Management, Educators, children and families should consider the rationale for having a pet and long-term implications of such a decision prior to getting the pet.
- All pets and their enclosures are to be kept clean and hygienic with appropriate bedding and water.
- Food will be made available for all pets and animals, but kept out of reach of children at all times.
- Any animal or pet kept at the centre will be regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, and regularly checked for fleas and wormed. Any animal in a cage will have its cage cleaned daily.
- Animals including pets will not be allowed in the sand pit or any other play area. In event that this happens, educators will refer to the Sand Pit Policy.
- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area nor will they be allowed near the eating or sleeping area.
- Anyone who has handled the animal or pet will immediately wash their hands after they have finished handling the animal or pet.
- Children's animal or pets will only be allowed in the centre when the Nominated Supervisor has granted permission. If an animal is brought to the Centre when families are collecting children it must be left at the gate far enough way so children cannot touch the animal through the fence.
- We will include in the program how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.
- Pets will not have access to children's bedding, toys, food preparation areas, eating surfaces and utensils
- Children must be closely supervised when accessing any animal or pet at the centre.

Animal Visit

There are situations that may spontaneously occur, involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the centre. Educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times they will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.

A professional should monitor the animal's movements to ensure a speedy and efficient capture, but priority is to be given to educator, child and family safety. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect or bird to be approached or touched by educators, children or families. It is important for management or Educators of the Centre to complete a risk assessment prior to animals being brought to the Service.

Pests & Vermin

- Pest control will occur at the Education and Care Service on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Educators will monitor any occurrences in the Centre to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and vermin are seen, Educators will advise the Nominated Supervisor.
- The Approved Provider is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits.
- Where appropriate, Educators will discuss with the children safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects.
- Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that animals or pests have accessed in the Education and Care Service with disinfectant.
- If the remains of an animal or animal faeces have been found, the remains will be disposed of according to the local Council guidelines and the area where the remains were found will be thoroughly disinfected.
- Educators are responsible for assessing any situation in the Education and Care Service where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

Source: Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard, Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care – 5th Edition. Department of Health, Health and Safety In Children's Services Model Policies and Practices

Review Completed: 16/11/2020

Schedule for Review: 16/11/2021

Authorised by COM: Nov 2020



National Quality Standard – NQS**Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety**

2.1	Health	Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

Education and Care Service National Regulations

168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
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Early Years Learning Framework**Learning Outcome 2 - Children are connected with and contribute to their world**

2.4	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment
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