

ANIMAL AND PET POLICY

Having a relationship with a pet and/or animal can help children develop a caring disposition 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 learn these skills. The pet will become part of the daily educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Our Service will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, staff or visitors of the service.

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 SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed

RELATED POLICIES

Educational Program Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Hand Washing Policy Managing Unidentified Dogs Policy	Physical Environment Policy Sandpit Policy Snake Awareness Policy Supervision Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Having a pet at our Service can be a valuable part of children's education enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships. Our Service aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at the Service, educating children in the proper care of animals.

SCOPE

This policy applies to management, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, students, staff, families, students and volunteers, visitors (including contractors) and children of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

The National Quality Standard encourages educators to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. Pets help children from a young age 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 provide basic natural science experiences. If the educators wish to have a pet in the Service, they must make all the decisions in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and families.

Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals within the Service, 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. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy. Providing children with access to animals within our Service will help them learn about life cycles and relationships and improve communication skills. We feel role modelling of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals are beneficial for children.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER PRIOR TO HAVING A PET AT THE SERVICE

- Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?
- How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during service closure periods?
- What physical space is available in the Service? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the Service?
- What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal or will educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
- Are there any children or educators at your Service who are allergic to, or have phobias of animals?

- What changes to your Service's policies and procedures need to be considered? For example, your hand washing policy will need to be updated to include washing hands after having contact with the animal.
- What are the health and safety risks?

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders and tropical fish may not be an appropriate choice. Check with a veterinarian if you are unsure whether an animal is suitable for children and check with the local health department for regulations and advice regarding animals in the Service. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.
- Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for the Service may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, mice or rats. All these animals are relatively low maintenance and can be left safely over a weekend if they are provided with enough food and water.

ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISKS

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the Service, 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 Service.

A comprehensive risk assessment should therefore be conducted when deciding the type of animal and the way the children engage with it.

Potential risks may include:

- diseases- from birds (Parrot fever -psittacosis) and other animals
- injury due to biting, kicking or pushing a child over (e.g., farm animals)
- scratching (e.g., chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs)
- pests and vermin (snakes, rats, mice)
- allergies (e.g., bees, wasps, ants)

DISEASE

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the Service requires special consideration to prevent this. 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. However, it is important to engage children with these tasks as they learn responsibility through 'hands on' learning experiences.

APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION and CLOTHING

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

Ensure children wear appropriate clothing and footwear when handling animals and pets. Be aware of children who may have allergies to insects such as bees, wasps and ants that may be more apparent when animals are kept in the service.

SERVICE PETS

- Management and educators should prepare children for the animal visit, gaining perception into how the children may react to the pet
- 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 Service will be regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, and wormed (as appropriate), and checked for fleas and diseases
- 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 and adhere to the *Sand Pit Policy*
- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area nor will they have access to the eating or sleeping areas, toys, bedding, eating surfaces and/or utensils
- Anyone who has handled the animal or pet will immediately wash their hands
- Children's animal or pets will only be allowed in the Service when the Nominated Supervisor has granted permission
- The program will include how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.

UNINVITED 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 Service. Depending upon the type of animal or bird, educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times the highest priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.

If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous such as a snake or spider, educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance.

Victoria: [Wildlife Victoria](#): Australian Wildlife Emergency Response 03 8400 7300

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.

If an unidentified dog enters the Service premises Educators will refer to the *Managing Unidentified Dogs Policy*.

VISITS FROM CHILDREN'S PETS

Occasionally a child may have a new pet such as a puppy or kitten that they wish to bring to the Service to show their peers and educators. Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must be advised to seek permission from the Nominated Supervisor prior to bringing in the pet. A risk assessment should then be completed before giving permission to the family. Families should also be advised that pets visiting the Service that are not confined (for example, in a fishbowl or bird/mouse cage) must not be left at the Service, but be taken with the family member at the conclusion of their visit.

PESTS AND VERMIN

- Pest control will occur at the Service on an annual basis as a minimum
- Educators will monitor any occurrences in the Service to determine the success of control measures
- If pests and/or vermin are seen, or evidence of pests and/or vermin such as droppings, educators will advise the Nominated Supervisor
- The Approved Provider is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits as required
- Where appropriate, educators will discuss safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects with the children

- Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that pests have accessed 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 where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals. (See Snake Awareness Policy)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Animal and Pet Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with families, staff, educators and management.

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Bone, J. (2013). The animals as the fourth educator: A literature review of animals and young children in pedagogical relationships. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38(2). Deakin West, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023)

Elliott, S., McCrea, N., Edwards, H., & University of New England. (2012). Sustainable outdoor play spaces in early childhood centres: Investigating perceptions, facilitating change and generating theory.

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2023).

Kidsafe NSW Inc. <https://kidsafe.com.au/>

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012) (updated June 2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th Ed.).

NSW Government Department of Health. (2018). Petting zoos and personal hygiene fact sheet. Retrieved from <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/petting-zoos-and-personal-hygiene.aspx>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

[Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Peter Colliver	Approved Provider	May 2024
POLICY REVIEWED	SEPTEMBER 2023	NEXT REVIEW DATE	SEPTEMBER 2024
VERSION NUMBER	V9.9.23		
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy maintenance - no major changes to policy • sources checked for currency • Continuous improvement/reflection section added 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCD related resource section added 	
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
SEPTEMBER 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy maintenance - no major changes to policy • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required • link to Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations added in 'Sources' 	SEPTEMBER 2023
SEPTEMBER 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor formatting edits • addition of Educational Program Policy • sources checked for currency 	SEPTEMBER 2022
SEPTEMBER 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consideration for risk assessment added • Links added to state/territory contacts for wildlife assistance • Snake Awareness policy linked 	SEPTEMBER 2021
SEPTEMBER 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sentences reworded/refined. • Additional information added. • New section added – 'Visits from children's pets'. • Sources/references corrected, updated, and alphabetised. • Related policies alphabetised. 	SEPTEMBER 2020
SEPTEMBER 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor changes made to comply with changes to the Education and Care National Regulations. • Added related policy section 	SEPTEMBER 2019
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated the National Quality Standard references to comply with revised standard 	SEPTEMBER 2018
AUGUST 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor terminology changes made – see yellow highlights 	SEPTEMBER 2018

RISK ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN – PETS/ANIMALS

The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations require services to ‘ensure that a risk assessment is conducted to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the service’ (Section 97 (2)) and ‘ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children... from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury’ (Section 167). Taking precautions involves carrying out risk assessments within your service to assess the risks and plan how to manage them.

Working in conjunction with the *Risk Assessment Guide* and *Animal and Pet Policy*, this Risk Assessment Action Plan identifies potential hazards or risks which may occur when pets and animals are kept at the service or visit the service and specifies actions to be taken to minimise or control the impact of any risk when pets or animals are kept or visit the Service.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DIAL 000					
SERVICE DETAILS IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY					
Service Name		Phone Number		Email Address	
Physical Address				Nearest Cross Street	
Nominated supervisor name		Total number of staff in attendance each day		Number of children attending each day	

RISK ASSESSMENT STEPS – Refer to *Risk Assessment Guide*

Step 1	Identify the hazard or potential hazard. Use <i>Guiding Questions</i> to be aware of potential risks.
Step 2	Assessing the risk of harm or potential harm. <i>Likelihood and Consequences</i> .
Step 3	Risk Rating Matrix
Step 4	Risk Assessment Action Plan
Step 5	Evaluate and Review

STEP 1 - GUIDING QUESTIONS	YES	NO	IF NO:
If applicable, does the [aquarium or enclosure] adhere to Australian Safety Standards?			Submit any adjustment or modification that can be implemented to minimise or eliminate the risk.
Does the [animal/s or fish or reptiles] have the required accreditation documentation?			
Have you gained advice from organisations like the RSPCA regarding the suitability of the [animal/s or fish or reptiles] at the service?			
Is the [aquarium or enclosure] made of glass? (If so, is it safety glass?)			
Does the [aquarium or enclosure] create any <u>obvious</u> hazards? (Trips, slips, falls, handling)			
Are water safety precautions in place regarding ponds or drinking water troughs?			

Is overall supervision and ratios compromised if children are close to the [aquarium or enclosure]?			
If outside, is the [aquarium or enclosure] well shaded, reducing the risk of sunburn to children?			
If an enclosure, is the fencing secure and safe providing adequate separation from the children?			
Have children been checked for any related allergies and /or fear / phobias toward the animal/s or pets?			
Is electrical equipment (water heaters for fish tank, filters etc) installed in a safe and approved manner complying with manufactures recommendations?			
Is electrical equipment tested and tagged annually?			
Are any cords hanging in a way making them accessible to the children?			
If batteries are required, are they in any way accessible to the children?			
Are there set procedures in place to guide care, safety & maintenance of the pets, animals, aquarium or enclosure?			
Have procedures guiding the use of the [aquarium or enclosure] been discussed with educators and children?			
Are educators familiar with all relevant policies relating to the care, safety and ongoing maintenance of the [animal/s or fish or reptiles] and their [aquarium or enclosure]?			
Has responsibility of caring for the [pet or animals] been delegated to selected staff and is there a roster for care and maintenance?			
Are all staff members aware of the closest First Aid Kit to the [aquarium or enclosure]?			

Are appropriate procedures in place for cleaning and disinfecting the [aquarium or enclosure]?			
Are there any dangerous substances used for cleaning? If so, are there set procedures for using the substance with appropriate safety data sheets attached?			
Are procedures in place for correct cleaning and disposal of any contaminated waste?			
Is there a routine safety & maintenance audit for the [aquarium or enclosure]?			
If an enclosure, has the site been assessed for providing appropriate shelter for animal/s during all weather conditions?			
Use additional spaces for guiding questions more specific to your physical environment			

STEP 2: ASSESSING THE LIKELIHOOD		ASSESSING THE CONSEQUENCES	
Almost certain	Has occurred on an annual basis (or more frequently) in the past	Critical	Extreme risk. Death or permanent disability or multiple serious injuries. Loss of or catastrophic damage to premises. Risk needs careful planning and consideration required before going ahead- consultation and guidance required-policies/procedures/external professionals.
Likely	Has occurred in the past few years	Major	High risk. Complete a risk assessment and consider if risk is worth accepting. Serious long-term injury or illness could occur. Major damage to premises.

Possible	May occur at some stage (has occurred at least once in the history of the Service)	Moderate	Medium risk. Deal with the hazard as soon as possible. Complete risk assessment to implement control measures to manage and reduce risk. Medical attention may be required.
Unlikely	Has never occurred within the Service but has been known to infrequently occur in similar early education and care services in the local geographic area	Minor	Low risk. Deal with the hazard when able-implement effective control measures to reduce risk. First aid may be required. Minor damage to premises. Unlikely to cause long-term problems.
Practically impossible	It is not known to have occurred in any similar early education and care service within the local geographic area	Insignificant	Very low risk. Deal with the hazard when able. No first aid required. No interruption to general operations. Damage to premises unlikely.

STEP 3: RISK RATING MATRIX. Use the Risk Score Matrix to identify and assess risks. Record the Risk Ranking within the Risk Assessment below						
LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE LEVEL					
		Critical	Major	Moderate	Minor	Insignificant
	Almost Certain	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	High	Medium
	Likely	Extreme	Extreme	High	Medium	Medium
	Possible	Extreme	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Unlikely	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very Low
	Practically Impossible	Medium	Medium	Low	Very Low	Very Low

STEP 4: RISK ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN - TEMPLATE						
ITEM	EVENT OR ACTIVITY	HAZARD IDENTIFICATION (What could go wrong?)	RISK RANKING (use matrix)	ELIMINATION OR CONTROL MEASURES	RESPONSIBILITY	
					WHO	WHEN
1						
2						
3	Add extra lines for additional events or activities as required					

STEP 5: EVALUATE AND REVIEW						
THIS RISK ASSESSMENT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH MANAGEMENT/EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES OF THE SERVICE						
Plan prepared by	Full Name		Role/Position		Signature	
Plan prepared in consultation with	Full Name		Role/Position		Signature	
Plan prepared in consultation with other agencies (if applicable)	Full Name		Role/Position		Signature	
Communicated to all relevant staff	Y / N	Comment if needed				
Approved provider authority	Full Name		Signature		Date	
Risk assessment evaluation and review date Monitor the effectiveness of the controls and change if necessary	Date		Actions required			

The template above is a guide only and services must edit to reflect practices that are accurate and relevant to their unique context. The risk assessment must be present information in a clear and understandable process. Consider if children and families can understand relevant risk assessments.