



## **ANIMALS AND PETS**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Lake Mac Newy OOSH 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 and care taken whilst interacting with animals during excursions. Strict supervision will be maintained to ensure the health and safety of the children and educators. Staff will ensure that everyone in the service treats all animals humanely and with respect.

### **PROCEDURES:**

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

### **Questions To Consider Before Having a Pet at Our 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 OSHC Service closure periods?
- What physical space is available in our OSHC Service? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- What regulations must we consider for having a pet on Department of Education premises?
- Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at our OSHC Service?
- What time will be available to care for the animal or will educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
- Out of School Hours Care services may be mobile services, and therefore pets may not be appropriate.
- Are there any children or educators at our OSHC Service who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals.



- What changes to our service's policies and procedures need to be considered?
- 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 an OSHC Service. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.
- Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for an OSHC 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 sufficient food and water. However, arrangements need to be made for these pets during school holidays.

### **a) Educators Will During in Service and On Excursions:**

- Wash hands after any contact with animals, animal products or feed, or animal environments and encourage children to do the same.
- Supervise human-animal contact, particularly involving the younger children.
- House 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 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 a staff member 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.
- Always maintain adequate supervision of the children and animals.
- Follow the service's policies in relation to risk assessment, providing a child safe environment and/or any incidents or injuries sustained because of an interaction with an animal.

#### **b) 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, especially that are outside of the fenced playground. The school's outdoor areas share a fence that is accessible to the public and their animals. Children at the service will remain on our side of the fence and Educators will remind the children not to approach the animals. They will be asked to move away from the fence to another area for their safety.
- Do not allow animals to contaminate sandpits, soil, pot plants and vegetable gardens. Our sandpits are raked at the beginning of each session to reduce the risk of unsafe objects. And this is recorded on our Safety Checklist.
- Pregnant women should avoid contact with cat faeces.
- Gloves will be worn when handling animal faeces and cleaning cages.
- Dispose of animal faeces and litter daily. Faeces will be placed in a plastic bag, sealed and put out with the garbage.
- 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. If an injured animal is found, educators will keep it in a contained box or somewhere safe and contact the appropriate services to either collect the animal or deliver it to them.



- Children and educators must **wash their hands thoroughly** after touching animals and cleaning their cage/tanks including excursions.
- 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.

### **Assessing and Managing Risks:**

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the OSHC 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 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, horses)



## **Disease**

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the OSHC 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**

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 an educational setting.

## **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 OSHC 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.



- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area nor will they have access to the eating or rest areas, toys, 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 OSHC Service when the Nominated Supervisor has granted permission.
- The program will include how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.
- Educators are responsible for assessing any situation in the OSHC Service where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

### **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 OSHC 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 and monitor the children's screaming.

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

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.

### **Pests and Vermin**

- Pest control will occur at the OSHC Service on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Negotiation for pest control may be required with school management for organisation depending upon the location of the OSHC service
- 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 management.
- Management 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 in the OSHC Service with disinfectant.
- If the remains of 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.

**Department of Education and School Guidelines**

- Pets are to be kept outside school grounds on drop off and pick up of children,
- Families to adhere to Department of Education rules relating to animals on school grounds.
- Incursion petting zoos are prohibited on school grounds during OOSH care.

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

Education and Care Services National Law & Regulations	National Quality Standards & Elements	Links to other Service Policies	Other Documentation/ Evidence
S165, 167  R77, 109	Standards 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1  Elements 1.2.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 3.1.2  Child Safe Standards 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration of First Aid policy</li> <li>• Dealing with Infectious Diseases</li> <li>• Injury, Illness, Incident and Trauma policy</li> <li>• Providing a Child Safe Environment policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying Healthy in Child Care</li> <li>• Companion Animals Act 1998</li> <li>• Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979</li> <li>• Risk Assessments</li> </ul>

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:**

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