

Early Years Services – QA2.19 Animal and Domestic Pets

TRIM Reference: D16/37049 Due for Review: 1 August 2024
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to include animals, where appropriate, as an integral part of an education program without compromising the health and safety of families, staff, students, volunteers and visitors to our services.

The purpose of including animals in programs is to:

- Promote positive interactions with animals.
- Recognise and support the important ecological role that some animals play, (e.g. Chickens & worms) in working towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly learning environment.
- Educate children in the appropriate care of animals.
- Ensure the appropriate care and protection of animals within an Early Years Program.
- Teach responsibility: children learn about the requirements of a living being such as food, water and exercise.
- Aid childhood development: animals help children develop nurturing and social skills. Developing positive feelings about animals can aid self-esteem and help children develop verbal communication and compassion.

Policy Principles

This policy applies to:

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 2.3.2, 3.3.2

Evidence of link to Education and Care Services National Regulations: 116(e)

Scope

This policy applies whenever animals are present in a Council managed registered Early Years spaces.

Policy

Strategies and Practices in Early Year's Settings

Implementation:

- All animals must remain outside the program until appropriate procedures and paperwork has been completed and approved by the Team Leader of the service.
- Animals may include (but are not exclusive of) any animals and insects deemed to have legitimate educational value for the children, will contribute to the educational program and/or considered appropriate for the environment by the nominated supervisor, Team Leader and where applicable other early years staff.
- Animals or pets will be closely supervised in any play area.
- If a pet or animal is going to live within an early year's program or be a regular visitor to the program, parents must be notified and an 'Introduction of a New Animal' form must be completed including a risk assessment management plan. In addition, parents and staff must be notified in advance to allow time to address, understand and manage any relevant allergies or concerns.

- The risk minimisation plan must detail any risks associated with having the animal or their equipment / bedding and accessories at the early year's program and how these risks will be managed.
- Where necessary animals must be fully vaccinated, wormed, free of fleas and appropriately checked by a veterinarian before entering the early year's program and removed if unwell or injured. Owners of an animal should be aware of and comply with all legal requirements regarding their animal's welfare.
- Animals will not be permitted in areas of food preparation including, but not exclusive to, kitchens and any area where children participate in food making.
- Animals must never be allowed to contaminate sandpits, soil, pot plants and vegetable gardens.

Care of animals

- Any animal that is injured or unwell will be removed from the program.
- Animals must be kept in appropriate housing and are only released under adult supervision.
- Children must be closely supervised when accessing any animal or pet at the service.
- Appropriate housing will be adequately maintained by an adult.
- Animals will be given a designated area to rest away from the children.
- Anybody product of the pet will be cleaned up and disposed of immediately.
- Animals must be considered and appropriately cared for on days of extreme weather and/or fire danger days when the service is closed. Animals kept outside must be brought inside and placed in appropriate housing with adequate food and water. In the case of fire risk days when the service is closed, where possible and safe to do so, remove animals from the facility to a safer location.
- Any injuries or illness to children/staff/animals will be dealt in accordance with appropriate policy/guidelines.

Strategies and Practices in Family Day Care (FDC)

When animals and domestic pets are present in the Family Day Care home:

The aim is to minimise the risk of injury and illness caused by animals to children using Family Day Care.

- Families must be advised of what animals are kept on the premises at the initial home visit.
- FDC staff and families must immediately be informed of any new animals on the premises.
- All pets must be kept clean, well-cared for and in a healthy condition and do not have any diseases that can be transmitted to children. Pets must be kept vaccinated, de-wormed and free of fleas or other pests or infections.
- All pets that are not part of the program must be isolated from the children in care at all times. FDC educators must provide an area to isolate animals from children – fence 1.2 metres high, that restricts penetration from children's fingers. Reptiles must be in a secure enclosure.
- Animal food bowls, beds, toys and litter trays must be inaccessible to children at all times.
- All areas accessible to children shall be free of animal faeces, animal fur, feathers, saliva and food scraps. Cat faeces can be the source of toxoplasmosis, an infection which is of particular risk to pregnant women, and can also cause mild illness in children. Animal hair, saliva and skin flakes can trigger asthma and allergic reactions.
- Parrot fever (psittacosis) can be caught by breathing dust containing dried bird droppings. 'Parrot fever' causes flu like symptoms, and can be caught from all parrots, including budgerigars. Bird cages must be cleaned with appropriate disinfectants weekly. Always wash hands after tending to birds.
- Animals must be kept away from food preparation, sleeping and, nappy change areas.
- Furniture and floors must be vacuumed and cleaned daily, before children arrive if pets are kept inside.
- Fish tanks are to be covered e.g. with safety glass, shade cloth etc.
- Children must not be exposed to potential animal hazards when on outings and excursions, this includes baby animal farms.
- If an educator wishes to include contact with an animal as part of the educational program on an ongoing basis, parents must be notified and an 'Introduction of a New Animal' form must be completed including a risk assessment management plan. This must also be documented on a regular excursion form. If the contact with animals is incidental or specific to an excursion then a non-regular excursion form must be completed with the relevant risk minimisation plan conducted.

- Parents must sign off on the excursion form and have the risk minimisation plan discussed with them prior to the contact with animals occurring.

Day-to-Day Service Management of Health and Safety Policies
Reviewed at monthly team meetings and as required.

Definitions

Not applicable

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

D15/33004	Supervision of Children Policy
D15/35312	Child Safe Environment Policy
D14/94986	First Aid Policy
D15/54272	Family Complaints Policy
D14/105413	Incident, Injury Trauma and Illness Policy
D15/42638	Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy
D15/38696	Occupational Health and Safety Policy
D15/33004	Supervision of Children Policy
D14/70705	Excursion Policy
D14/70701	Educational Programs Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D14/87971	WHS2.2 Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D16/78011	Introduction of a New Animal Form
D17/51029	WHS18.9 Family Day Care Home Safety Checklist Template

Other References

Resources and Further Readings

- National Health and Medical Research Council (2012) Staying Healthy in Early Childhood and Care: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care, 5th Edition, and Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.
- Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011
- NCAC Putting Children First. Keeping Pets in Child Care, Issue 36 December 2010.
- Early Years Learning Framework – Belonging, Being, Becoming
- ACECQA - Guide to the National Quality Standard
- DEPI - Pets
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit (www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Childcare service Handbook 2011-2012 (DEEWR)
- VEYLDF, EYLF, MTOP

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	Manager Aged and Family 1 April 2016
2	Amended	Manager Aged and Family 8 June 2017
3	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening 6 December 2018
4	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening 15 May 2020
5	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening 31 August 2021
6	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening 1 February 2023