

# Animal and Pet Policy and Procedure



<b>Policy and Procedure Relevant to:</b>	All Staff, Educators & Families
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	September 2021
<b>Next Review:</b>	September 2022
<b>NQF:</b>	168
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## Purpose

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

## 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 services, they must make all the decisions in consultation with management 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 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 services 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.



## 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 a service. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.
- Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for an Early Childhood Service or Outside School Hours Care Service may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, mice or rats. All of 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 would need to be made for these pets during service closure periods.

## Assessing and managing risks

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the services, 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 will need to 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)



## The following questions will be discussed and applied within the Risk Assessment prior to having a pet at Adventure Patch services:

- 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 our service? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- What regulations do we need to consider for having a pet on Department of Education premises (Applicable to Outside School Hours Care Services)?
- Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at our service?
- What time will be available 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 our service who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes to our service's policies and procedures need to be considered? For example, 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?

## Disease

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the services 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. (Follow Hand Washing Policy)



## 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.

## In-Service pets

- Management, staff, and educators should prepare children for the animal visit, gaining perception into how the children may react to the pet.
- Management, staff, 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 services 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.
- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area nor will they have access to the rest areas, toys, eating surfaces and/or utensils.
- Anyone who has handled the animal or pet will immediately wash their hands (Following Hand Washing Policy).
- Children's animal or pets will only be allowed in the services when the Responsible Person in Charge and Management have granted written 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 services. 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.

**Tasmania:** [Bonorong Wildlife Rescue](#) 0447 264 625 National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council- 1300 827 727

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 Adventure Patch services on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Negotiation may be required with school management for organisation depending upon the location of Outside School Hours Care services.
- 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 management ASAP in writing.
- 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 and sanitise all areas that pests have accessed in the service with appropriate cleaning supplies.
- 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 cleaned and sanitised.



- Educators are responsible for assessing any situation in the Adventure Patch services where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

## Source

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