

Background

Animals as the fourth teacher, 'The Animal is a conduit for learning to be Human: Some propose that it is only through the animal that we recognise our Humanity' (Jill Bone (2013))

Having animals at the service gives children the opportunity to observe, interact and learn about animals. It can be valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning about nature, ecology, and relationships.

Policy statement

This Policy sets out the clear guidelines needed to ensure the safety of the children and the wellbeing of animals kept at or brought into the Service.

Strategies and practices

- At enrolment, parents are asked to inform the Service if their child has any allergies to animals. All staff are notified, and details of the allergy are displayed throughout the Service. Animals are kept inaccessible to children with pet allergies.
- Children are always supervised whilst handling animals at the Service.
- Due to the high risk of disease transmission for children under 5 years, reptiles and amphibians are not brought into the Service by anyone, other than recognised proficient handlers. Children are discouraged from handling these creatures or their containers.
- Any animal or pet kept at the Service is given food and water regularly and its enclosure is kept clean. When cleaning birdcages at the service, wet the floor of the cage before cleaning it to avoid inhalation of powdered, dry bird faeces.
- Pet food is stored in a place inaccessible to children, as is any equipment needed to care for the animal.
- All pet cages and containers are secured so as not to be a hazard.
- Educators intentionally teach children to respect all animals and how to handle and care for them. Educators also teach children that not all animals are friendly, and to always check with an animal's owner before patting the animal.
- Animals and pets are kept away from:
 - Infants and toddlers
 - Areas where children eat or sleep
 - Food preparation areas
 - Children's toilet and hand washing facilities
 - Educator and staff hand washing facilities
 - Areas that cannot be cleaned and sanitised readily (e.g., carpets)
 - Sandpits

- All persons including children wash their hands immediately after they have touched an animal, and children are taught the reasoning for this.
- In the event of a child being scratched or bitten by an animal and the skin penetrated, the wound will be cleansed with soap and water immediately and appropriate antiseptic applied. An Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Report will be completed, and the parent contacted and advised to take the child to a medical practitioner.
- Children's pets can only be brought into the Service with prior permission from the Nominated Supervisor. The owner always remains responsible for the pet it is in the Service.
- Any pet brought to the Service other than for an approved visit must be tethered outside the Service and out of the reach of children.

Additional safe practices for babies

- Birds in the parrot family (e.g., parakeets, cockatiels) are kept away from infants and toddlers.

Responsibilities of parents

- To obtain prior permission from the Nominated Supervisor before bringing any pet to the Service. The owner always remains responsible for the pet it is in the Service.
- To tether outside the Service and out of the reach of children any pet brought to the Service for a reason other than an approved visit.

Procedure and forms

- N/A

Links to other policies

- Handwashing Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Supervision Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2018

Regs	103	Premises, furniture and equipment must be safe, clean and in good repair
	168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

QA		2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
		2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
		3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained
		3.2.3	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible

Sources

- Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th edition, 2023)
- Belonging, Being and Becoming; The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – V2.0 (2022)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018

Further reading and useful websites

- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Staying Healthy: Other considerations to prevent the spread of infectious diseases*. 3.6.4. Animals
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf> accessed 23 June 2025
- *Keeping Pets and animals in Education and Care services*
https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-04/QA3_InfoSheetKeepingPetsAndAnimalsInEducationAndCareServices_0.pdf accessed 23 June 2025

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	6 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites – additional included.	February 2020
3	28 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites – additional included.	January 2021
4	13 October 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites.	October 2021
5	23 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	27 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites – additional information included.	September 2023
7	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed policy Accessed sources and further reading/useful websites updated.	August 2024
8	23 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	June 2026

