



2.08 PETS & ANIMALS

Purpose Statement

Having pets in an education and care service can be a valuable part of a child's early learning experiences. Encouraging contact and developing bonds with pets or animals 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 to learn these skills and also provides opportunities to learn about life cycles, relationships and other animals. The safety and wellbeing of the children, and the animals remains paramount when offering an educational program which encourages such interactions.

Keeping pets is not appropriate for every Educator and there are other interesting ways to introduce animals to children. For example, Educators may plan an excursion to a zoo or animal farm as a way to encourage children to interact and learn about animals.

Scope

This policy applies to all salaried full time and part time staff (including casuals), Educators, students, children, families and visitors (including contractors) of the Service.

Definitions

Animal: for the purpose of this procedure an animal refers to any domesticated pet being cared for by an Educator or any animal that lives in a zoo or on a farm and may be part of an organised excursion

WFDC: Windermere Family Day Care

EPC: Educational Program Coordinator

Policy Statement

ANIMALS CAN SUPPORT A CHILD'S LEARNING. CHILDREN WILL BE ASSISTED TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH ANIMALS IN AN EDUCATION AND CARE ENVIRONMENT WHERE THIS IS CONSIDERED SAFE AND APPROPRIATE.

DETAILED RISK ASSESSMENTS WILL BE CONDUCTED PRIOR TO ANY ANIMAL BASED ACTIVITIES OR EXPERIENCES.

Procedures

Responsibilities of the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor/ Responsible Person:

1. To complete a detailed risk assessment on all animals in the WFDC environment, during the initial safety check or prior to the introduction of a new pet and then annually thereafter. Each risk assessment will take into consideration the type and breed of animal and the risks associated to the Educator, children, families, visitors and the animal/s.



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2. To ensure the gates and fencing of the WFDC environment meet safety check requirements and are sufficient in structure so that animals cannot reach the children in any way and children cannot put their hands/fingers through to animals.

Responsibilities of the Educator:

1. Agree to and follow the risk minimisation strategies as documented in the risk assessment of each pet or animal.
2. To ensure access to the WFDC environment remains animal free, to provide a safe entrance.
3. To ensure gates and fencing meet requirements, as per the safety check. Some fences and gates may need additional covering (i.e. shade cloth) to achieve this.
4. To ensure all activities or experiences involving the children and pets or animals are documented on the educational program.
5. To provide active supervision of children at all times while they are interacting with animals and also observe the animals and remove them from the care environment if they appear stressed or irritated.
6. To support children to interact with pets safely by role modelling appropriate behaviour with animals and provide guidance in caring for the needs of animals.
7. To maintain hygiene when interacting with animals (i.e. washing hands after contact).
8. To ensure pets and other animals in the WFDC environment are regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated and wormed (as appropriate) and checked for fleas and diseases.
9. To inform all families during the interview stage of any pets or animals in the WFDC environment and provide them with the risk assessment, to read, and sign on enrolment.
10. To inform the Coordination Unit of the intention to introduce a new pet to the WFDC residence, prior to introduction, so the safety check can be updated and risk assessments prepared.
11. To discuss the introduction of a new pet with the children and families accessing care prior to the new pet being introduced into the environment. The completed risk assessment must be signed by all families and a copy of the authorisation form emailed to the Educator's EPC.
12. To facilitate a child's own family pet visiting the WFDC environment (if appropriate) with prior planning, permission from the Educator's EPC and a completed risk assessment.
13. To conduct a risk assessment and complete an outing form prior to facilitating a routine outing or excursion to a zoo or animal farm, including parent authorisation, before emailing the form to: EducatorSupport@windemere.org.au for EPC approval.

Responsibilities of the Parents/guardians:

1. To inform and discuss with the Educator any known allergies, relating to animals and provide an allergy action plan, on enrolment.
2. To discuss with Educators, any fears or potential issues children may have if interacting with pets or animals.



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Activities that Encourage Interaction with Pets or Animals

Below is a list of activities or experiences that an Educator may plan and document in the educational program for children to be involved in, under direct supervision:

- Walking the dog
- Brushing the pet
- Feeding fish
- Collecting chicken eggs
- Changing the food and water for a pet (for example a bird, rabbit or guinea pig)
- Bottle feeding lambs
- Patting or observing a pet or domestic animal.

Health and Safety

In order to maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of children and animals in the care environment:

1. Pet and bird cages are to be kept away from food preparation areas. If they are accessible to the children, cages should have a skirt or cover over them, so children are unable to put their fingers in. Cages are not to be cleaned while children are in care.
2. Play, food preparation and sleep areas within the education and care setting are to be kept free from excrement, pet hair, pet food and water bowls etc.
3. Fish tanks and other glass enclosures are to be secured on a sturdy base or table, enclosed or covered and, if under 750mm made of safety glass, or made inaccessible to children.
4. Food and water will be made available to pets and animals but kept out of reach of children at all times.
5. Educators are encouraged to access community pet programs, for example puppy school, (outside of care hours) to provide pets with proper socialisation and training (where relevant) and learn about ways to promote safe and positive interactions between pets and children.

Uninvited Animal Visit

1. There may be unplanned incidents that occur, involving animals. For example, an animal or bird may make its way into the WFDC residence or an approved venue. Depending on the type of animal or bird the Educator may use this as a spontaneous learning opportunity for the children. At all times the highest priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and Educator.
2. If an animal, such as a snake, enters the WFDC environment or an approved venue and is potentially dangerous, Educators should contact an appropriate authority for assistance (i.e. Wildlife Victoria - Australian Wildlife Emergency Response on 03 8400 7300, or a local snake catcher). While waiting for a response, remain calm and, if possible, try to keep the animal in view, while maintaining a safe distance and ensuring the health and wellbeing of the children. If necessary, follow the procedures in the lockdown or evacuate &/or emergency closure Emergency Response Plan.



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Relevant Legislation/Standards

- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care Services including:
 - Education and Care Services National Law 2011 (Amended 2024)
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Amended 2024)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014)

Related Policies/Procedures & Links

- WFDC Policies/Procedures:
 - 1.02 Excursions & Outings
 - 1.05 Children's Educational Program
 - 2.09 Supervision
 - 2.20 Emergency Procedures
 - 2.21 Occupational Health & Safety
 - 3.02 Safety Check
 - 7.12 Assessment, Approval and Reassessment of Approved WFDC Residences/Venues
- [Kidsafe Family Day Care Safety Guidelines: FINAL-FDC-Safety-Guidelines_7thEd 2020.pdf](#)