

PETS AND OTHER ANIMALS POLICY

Aim

To provide a safe and hygienic environment for children in care.
To protect children against risk of harm from an animal.
To educate children in safe and proper handling and care of animals.

Rationale

Pets and other domestic and farm animals are a valuable part of many family settings and are often an important part of Family Day Care homes. Animals can play a significant part in children's learning and development and can provide children with companionship and entertainment. As with many experiences in Family Day Care it is the educator's responsibility to identify and manage any possible health and safety risks to children.

"The highest rate of serious injury from dog bites is in children aged less than five years..... Children were most likely to be bitten to the head and face..... Dog bites to children relate to the way in which the child interacts with the dog, particularly during feeding and playing times". (Ashby 2001)

Clarence Family Day Care encourages interactions between children and pets or other animals, providing that this interaction takes place in a safe and hygienic manner.

Policy

Every pet and farm animal that is not appropriately caged, is to be kept in an area separate and apart from areas used by children, unless involved in a specific activity that is directly supervised by the educator. *eg. brushing or bathing the dog, bottle feeding a lamb, providing food or water for chickens.*

Caged pets (eg: birds, guinea pigs, rabbits etc.) must never be kept/caged near food preparation or food handling areas or sleeping areas.

Caged animals will have their cages and the surrounding areas kept clean.

Educators will ensure that any animal or domesticated bird that enters or is kept at the premises does not pose a health or safety risk to children in care. *eg. by causing an allergic reaction or infection or in any other way having a detrimental effect on the well-being of children*

Dogs and any other animal that have the potential to bite a child are to be kept in an area/enclosure that is inaccessible to children. Dog enclosures that are adjacent to areas used by children must be made finger-proof to children.

Pets kept at Family Day Care premises will be kept in a clean and healthy condition. *ie. regularly cleaned, fed, de-fleaed, wormed and vaccinated.*

Educators will keep a written record of steps taken to ensure the health of their own pets kept at or entering the premises. *eg. Vaccination records, proof of regular worming of pets.*

In cases where a pet belonging to a child in care will be visiting the service, the educator will discuss the animal's health and temperament with the child's parent prior to the visit, to ensure it is safe to have the animal visiting the service.

Any part of the care area that may be contaminated by animal faeces is to be cleaned thoroughly prior to being accessed by children.

In the event that a sandpit is contaminated, the educator will remove contaminated sand from the area and dispose of accordingly. The area will then be hosed and if necessary a mild detergent will be used.

Educators must ensure that the following are made inaccessible to children in care unless the child is under the direct supervision of an approved person (*ie. the educator; educators registered assistant*)

- a) every domestic pet, farm animal or other potentially dangerous animal kept at the premises,
- b) any bedding, toys, litter tray, food, feeding container or water container used or consumed by animals.

Educators must ensure that all children's play areas are kept free from the following:-

- a) animal droppings,
- b) bones,
- c) holes dug by animals.

Educators must ensure that animals do not have access to the following:-

- a) bedding used by children,
- b) toys or play equipment used by children,
- c) food preparation areas or food that is to be consumed by children,
- d) eating surfaces and utensils.
- e) child car seats.

Animals are not to be transported in a motor vehicle with children unless it is for the purpose of undertaking a documented and approved excursion for the benefit of the children.

eg. Children observing the animal during routine medical care at the vet's.

When an animal is being transported by motor vehicle with children, the animal must be restrained in the vehicle by a cage, fixed barrier or harness.

Hand washing will always be undertaken after handling pets or other animals.

Educators will directly supervise children when they are handling pets and animals.

Direct supervision means that the educator is in the immediate vicinity of the child and animal and can intervene to prevent an animal harming a child.

Educators who have pets or other animals at the care premises to which children have access, will include in the children's program, how to handle and care for animals and pets.

Resources:

*Animals and Domestic Pets – fact sheet; National Childcare Accreditation Council:
Managing OHS in Children's Services:*

Relevant Legislation

Education and Care Services National Regulation 2011