

### **PURPOSE**

Pets and animals can play an important role in a child's development, with contemporary early childhood thinkers putting forward the notation that animals are the fourth teacher.

Pets are a valued member of the educator's family. However, it needs to be recognised that as you are running a home-based early childhood education and care services, your family pet may not be appropriate whilst undertaking your role as a professional early childhood education and care provider.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure the safety of children.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to educators, educator assistants, visitors, people who reside at the FDC residence/venue, staff, volunteers and work placement students.

This policy must not result in restrictions to children's access to normal inside or outside activities.

### **POLICY**

Pets and other domestic animals are a valuable part of many family day care settings. Pets and domestic animals can play a significant role in children's learning and development. As with all experiences in family day care, it is the responsibility of educators to identify and manage any possible safety or health risks to children.

To avoid potential harm to a child or animal, the educator must have in place a risk assessment that considers the accessibility of the animals to children and the interactions that may take place. A cage or a hutch within the children's play area may be acceptable based on the risk assessment.

Educators who have pets or other animals at the care premises to which children have access, will be included in the educational program including how to handle and care for animals and pets.

### **PROCEDURE**

Whilst animals can support children's learning, there are a number of items/factors that need to be addressed to ensure the wellbeing and safety of both the children and the animal(s). To ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children being cared and educated for, the following procedures are to be followed:

- Educators *must notify* Clarence Family Day Care as per Regulations that they have a new pet or domestic animal on their premises. This must occur whether or not FDC children come into direct contact with the animal. Notification should occur prior to the animal/pet coming to the approved family day care premise – this notification is to be emailed to [admin@cfdc.com.au](mailto:admin@cfdc.com.au)
- A Pet Management Plan must be completed for all animals/pets (irrespective of whether or not FDC children come into contact with the animal) at the FDC residence/venue. This plan must be completed and submitted within 24 hours of the animal/pet being introduced to the FDC residence/venue.
- Prior to enrolment of a new child and/or family, the Educator must inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of any pets or animals on the premises.
- Educators are to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to obtaining new pets/animals.
- An educator who has a pet or domestic animal on the premises must ensure that they have an area where the animal can be kept that is separate and apart from any area used by the children for the animal to retire or retreat to should it require its own space or children require their own space to play free from animals. There should be a finger-proof barrier between the areas.
- All animals kept on the Family Day Care premise (whether it is a residence or a venue) must be maintained in a clean and healthy condition, and in such a way that children will not be in danger of injury or infection or illness.

- When any animal is introduced to children, the Family Day Care Educator will be sensitive to children and family's fears, anxieties and dislike of the animal(s).
- Children are not to be forced to interact with animals. It is always a child's choice as to whether or not they would like to interact with animals.
- Parents/Guardians must give permission for their child to interact with animals/pets.
- Children will be encouraged to treat animals with respect.
- When children are interacting with animals the experience must be supervised.
- Specific animals, including certain breeds of dogs which are identified from time to time as dangerous to children must be kept in an enclosed area separate and apart from any area used by the children in care. Children must have no access and no ability of contact at any time to these animals.
- The Family Day Care Educator must ensure that animals are NOT present, nor have access to the same area in which a child is sleeping.
- Animals with recurrent ear infections or recurring illnesses are to be housed in a separate area from children, regardless of current health status. This minimises inadvertent pain or stress to an otherwise gentle animal (such as patting an infected ear) which may cause it to lash out.
- 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. This does not mean that children may never interact with the animals – it just means that when the interactions do occur, they are to be closely/directly supervised by the educator and that the animal responds to the educator's commands.
- Pets kept at Family Day Care premises will be kept in a clean and healthy condition. ie. regularly cleaned, fed, have their fleas removed, 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.
- The educator is to deter animals from being on areas used for food preparation and eating.
- When children are using play areas:
  - Animal droppings and animal hair must be removed daily before children arrive, and as required during the day.
  - Animal bedding, food, bones, water and feeding containers must be inaccessible to very young children (under 24 months). Discussions will be had with older children about safety and hygiene around animals feeding and sleeping areas.
- Poultry, live-stock and beehives must be maintained per the Local Council Environmental Health By-Laws.
- Educators are required to ensure that their pets/animals are registered and that they are licensed as required by law and government regulations (e.g. council registration, wildlife license, reptile keepers license)
- Hygiene is to be considered when handling pets and livestock.
- Educators must be aware of any known allergies or illnesses that children may suffer from as a result of coming into contact with animals and domestic pets or their by-products.
- Pet management plans are to be completed at least every 12 months. A pet management plan may be completed sooner if the need arises or when there is a change in circumstances ie temperament of animal, new animal introduced or removed from setting.
- 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. The educator will complete a risk/benefit assessment and get the agreement of all the families and Nominated Supervisor to this pet incursion.
- Any part of the care area that may be contaminated by animal faeces/urine 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 a mild detergent will be used.
- If any animal has licked or slobbered or drooled or mouthed any toy or equipment, the educator is to clean the toy or equipment prior to children using the toy or equipment.

- Educators are to ensure that all children's play areas are kept free from the following
  - animal droppings
  - bones
  - holes dug by animals.
- Educators are to ensure that animals do not have access to the following
  - bedding used by children
  - toys or play equipment used by children
  - food preparation areas or food that is to be consumed by children
  - eating surfaces and utensils
  - 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 ie. Children observing the animal during routine medical care at the vets. 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.

**NOTE**

- If your dog is listed by the NSW Government as a restricted dog breed (aka a dangerous dog breed), the dog must not come into contact with FDC children.
- If an authorised council officer or a local court has declared a dog as dangerous, Clarence FDC must be notified as soon as this declaration is made. The dog is not, under any circumstance to interact with FDC children. It must be kept in an enclosure that is finger-proof.
- If an authorised council officer or a local court has declared a dog as menacing, Clarence FDC must be notified as soon as this declaration is made. The dog is not, under any circumstance to interact with FDC children. It must be kept in an enclosure that is finger-proof.
- If there is an issue/concern with the animal the Council or staff may determine that the animal must not be able to interact with children ie if the animal regularly growls at the children/family/staff, if the animal snips/nips towards the children/families/staff.

**NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK**

<b>EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS</b>	<b>NATIONAL QUALITY AREA</b>	<b>NATIONAL QUALITY ELEMENT/STANDARD</b>
77, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 168, 169	2	2.1: 2.1.1, 2.1.2 2.2: 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3
	3	3.1.2, 3.2.3
	6	6.1.2, 6.2.2
	7	7.1.2, 7.1.3

**REFERENCE & RELATED INFORMATION**

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ACECQA – Information Sheet: Keeping Pets and Animals in Education and Care Services
- KidSafe NSW [www.kidsafe.com.au](http://www.kidsafe.com.au)
- NSW Office of Local Government <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/dogs-and-cats/information-for-the-community/information-about-declared-dangerous-dogs>