

Animals and Pet Policy

Having a relationship with a pet or animal can help children develop a caring disposition and skills such as empathy, responsibility, respect and caring behaviour. Having a pet or animal in an early childhood environment enables children who are not otherwise exposed to animals to learn these skills. The pet or animal may form part of the daily educational program, providing a variety of learning opportunities for children. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Quirindi Preschool Kindergarten will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, staff or visitors of the Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 1: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE		
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration
S. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices

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PURPOSE

Having a pet at our Service can be a valuable part of children's education, enriching their learning about

nature, ecology, living things and relationships. Quirindi preschool Kindergarten aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for any animals that visit or permanently reside at the Service, while supporting children to develop respect for animals, and understand how to care for them appropriately.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Animals and pets can help children from a young age learn to care for living things. They can support the development of responsibility, caring and tolerance. They can offer many opportunities for developing observational skills, learning about the natural world and providing basic natural science experiences. If educators wish to have an animal at the Service, this decision must be made in consultation with management and families.

Children's safety, health, wellbeing and best interests are the priority when introducing animals into the Service. Any decision to keep or have animals visit the Service must consider potential risks and benefits.

Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals within the Service, there are also a range of considerations educators need to address to maintain the safety and wellbeing of both children and animals. Encouraging safe interactions and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy. Providing children with access to animals within our Service can help them learn about life

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cycles, relationships and improve communication skills. Educators will model appropriate behaviours with animals and guide children in caring for their needs.

ANIMALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Animals may be incorporated into the educational program through permanent Service pets, temporary projects (such as hatching chickens or observing life cycles), visits from wildlife or animal education organisations, or planned visits from children's pets. All experiences will support children's learning while considering animal welfare, health, safety and hygiene.

PLANNING FOR ANIMALS

Before introducing an animal to the Service, the Nominated Supervisor will complete a risk assessment, considering:

- the educational purpose
- benefits to children's learning
- suitability of the animal
- children's health, allergies and medical conditions
- animal welfare
- supervision and hygiene practices
- care arrangements, including ongoing care if needed.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders and tropical fish may not be a suitable 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 the Service. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.
- Animals that may be more suitable for the Service may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, caterpillars, an ant farm or worm farm. All these animals are relatively low maintenance and can be left safely over a weekend if they are provided with enough food and water.
- If there are voluntary carers available to take the pets home over weekends and holidays, then the Service may consider guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens, mice or rats.

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- Temporary educational experiences, such as hatching chickens or visits from wildlife organisations, should only occur where appropriate supervision, hygiene and animal welfare practices can be maintained.

ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISKS

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with opportunities to interact with animals, management and educators need to consider the health, safety and wellbeing of both children and animals. Risk assessments assist in identifying potential hazards and implementing appropriate control measures to ensure animal experiences are conducted safely.

Potential risks may include:

- transmission of infectious diseases
- bites, kicks, scratches or pecks
- allergic reactions to animals, feathers, fur or insects
- illness from inadequate hygiene or contamination
- fear or distress caused by unfamiliar animals or unexpected animal behaviour.

Educators will ensure children are adequately supervised when interacting with animals and will teach and model safe and respectful interactions, while implementing appropriate risk control measures and hygiene practices to protect children from harm and injury.

DISEASE

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the Service 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 HYGIENE

Children and adults should employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals, or cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages or enclosures. Adults and children wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available). However, it is important to

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engage children with these tasks as they learn responsibility through 'hands on' learning experiences.

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.

QPK PETS AND ANIMALS

Permanent animals kept at the Service, including hens or other animals, will have appropriate housing, food, water and arrangements for care during weekends and Service closure periods. Management, 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. The educational program will support children to care for animals respectfully, understand their needs and learn about habitats, life cycles and caring for living things.

All animals and their enclosures are to be kept clean and hygienic with appropriate bedding, shelter and

water provided. 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 Service will be regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, wormed and checked for fleas and diseases (where appropriate).

Animals will not be allowed in the sand pit or any other play area. Animals will never be taken into the food preparation area, nor will they have access to the eating or sleeping areas, toys, bedding, eating surfaces and/or utensils. Anyone who has handled the animal will immediately wash their hands.

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ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

Assistance animals accompanying children, families, educators or visitors are welcomed at the Service. The Service will work with families and relevant stakeholders to promote inclusion and consider individual needs.

UNINVITED ANIMAL VISIT

There may be a situation where an animal has made its way into the Service or is found on the premises. Where appropriate, educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. However, the health, safety and wellbeing of the children will always take priority.

If an animal is potentially dangerous, educators will ensure children remain at a safe distance, restrict access to the area and where necessary, implement a partial lockdown or other appropriate emergency response in accordance with the Service's *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*. Educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance, which may include a wildlife rescue organisation, licensed snake catcher or local council. Educators, children and families will not attempt to approach, capture or remove the animal.

VISITS FROM CHILDREN'S PETS

Occasionally a child may have a new pet such as a puppy or kitten that they wish to bring to the Service to show their peers and educators. Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must be advised to seek permission from the Nominated Supervisor prior to bringing in the pet. A risk assessment should then be completed before giving permission to the family. The educational purpose of the visit and the welfare of the animal will be considered as part of the approval process. Families will be advised that pets visiting the Service must be taken home with the family member at the conclusion of their visit.

PESTS AND VERMIN

- Pest control will occur at the Service on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Educators will monitor any occurrences in the Service to determine the success of control measures.

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- Where animals such as poultry are kept on site, feed will be stored in sealed, rodent-proof containers and any spilled feed swept up daily.
- Animal housing (e.g. chicken coops) will be inspected at least monthly for signs of rodent activity in addition to the Service's annual pest control schedule.
- The pest control contractor will be advised of any animals kept on site prior to any treatment.
- If pests and/or vermin are seen, or evidence of pests and/or vermin such as droppings, educators will advise the nominated supervisor.
- The approved provider 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 all areas that pests have accessed with disinfectant.
- If the remains of an 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 disinfected.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Animals in the Environment Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at Quirindi Preschool Kindergarten or the family's ability to utilise the Service.

SOURCES

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REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Kirstyn Sampson		Nominated Supervisor/Director	14/9/26
POLICY REVIEWED	SEPTEMBER 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE		SEPTEMBER 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V1			
MODIFICATIONS	New policy to overrule existing Policy – Animals in the Environment			
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS				
SEPTEMBER 2025				