

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Animals in the Environment



Introduction

“Educators foster children’s capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, and the land.” (EYLF V2.0) pg.22

Having a relationship with a pet and/or animal 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 learn these skills. The pet will become part of the daily educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Our Service will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, staff or visitors of the service.

Responsible ownership of pets, animals or birds that may reside at the Education and Care Service or visit the premises is vital. Role models of appropriate behaviors with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals is beneficial for children. This policy also considers the management of unwanted visitors such as pests and vermin.

Goals – What are we going to do?

Kootingal and District Preschool will:

- Provide a safe, clean and humane environment for all animals and birds that visit or reside at the service
- Ensure that the health and wellbeing of children is being maintained when engaging with animals.
- Ensure pest control measures are regularly undertaken
- Ensure there are procedures in place for removing unwanted animals, pests and vermin from the premises.

Strategies – To achieve our goals

Centre Pets and Invited Visitors

Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders, and tropical fish, may not be an appropriate choice. Check with a veterinarian if you are unsure whether a particular animal is suitable for children, and check with the local health department for regulations and advice regarding animals in education and care services. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.

Prior to commencing ownership of or visits by animals, the service will:

- Consult families.
- Complete a risk benefit/assessment tool.
- Complete a risk management plan.
- Consider the following questions in the decision making process:
 - Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?
 - How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during service closure periods?
 - What physical space is available in the service? Is it adequate for the animal you are thinking of?
 - Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the service?

- What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal?
- Are there any children or educators at your service who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes to your service's policies and procedures need to be considered? For example, your hand washing policy will need to be updated to include washing hands after having contact with the animal.
- What are the health and safety risks?
- Educators will ensure that all pets and their enclosures are kept clean and hygienic. Educators must ensure they have clean bedding and water. Food is available for the pet but kept out of reach of children at all times.
- Children must be supervised at all times when interacting with pets or animals. Educators will manage any health or safety risk for the children that may be caused by animals, such as asthma and allergies.
- Children will be supported to wash their hands after handling the pet.
- Pets will not have access to children's bedding, toys, and food preparation areas, eating surfaces or utensils.
- Animals and birds visiting the education and care service as part of the educational program are the responsibility of the owner(s). The educators will ensure that the environment remains safe and hygienic at all times during the visit. Educators will complete risk assessment paperwork in relation to the visit.

Animals and Birds Other than Pets or Invited Visitors

- There are situations that may spontaneously occur, involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the education and care service. Educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times they will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.
- If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous, such as a snake or spider, educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance. In NSW this authority is the *National Parks and Wildlife Service - 1300 361 967* (8.30am – 5.00pm) or *NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc. on 13 000 WIRES - 13 00 094 737*.
- The animal's movements should be monitored to ensure a speedy and efficient capture by a professional, but priority is to be given to educators, child, and family safety. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect, or bird to be approached or touched by educators, children or families.

Pests and Vermin

- Pest control will occur at the education and care service on an annual basis. Educators will monitor any occurrences in the service to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and vermin are seen, educators will advise the Nominated Supervisor. The Approved Provider is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits.
- Where appropriate, educators discuss with children safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin, and objects.
- Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that animals or pests have accessed in the education and care service with hot, soapy water. If the remains of animals 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 with hot, soapy water.
- Educators will be responsible for assessing any situation in the education and care service where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children, families, and animals.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Management and staff will monitor and review the effectiveness of the Animals in the Environment Policy regularly. Updated information will be incorporated as needed.

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review every 12 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved. In accordance with Regulation 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

The presence of animals in the service will be managed by educators to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children, families, educators and animals is maintained at all times. Educators will consider the risks versus the benefits of including animals in the educational program.

Links to other policies:

Child Protection

Curriculum Planning & Documentation

Interactions with Children

Incidents, Injury, Trauma and Illness

Emergencies & Evacuations

Hygiene & Infection Control

Cleaning and Maintaining the Environment

Supervision

Complies with:

NQS

Quality Area 2		Children's health and safety
<i>Standard</i>	2.1	<i>Health</i>
<i>Standard</i>	2.2	<i>Safety</i>
<i>Element</i>	2.2.1	Supervision
Quality Area 3		Physical Environment
<i>Standard</i>	3.1	<i>Design</i>
<i>Element</i>	3.1.2	Upkeep
<i>Standard</i>	3.2	<i>Use</i>
<i>Element</i>	3.2.3	Environmentally sustainable

National Regulations

Reg	103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, safe, clean and in good repair
Reg	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Reg	170	Policies and procedure to be followed

Sources:

- The Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011
- Kidsafe NSW Inc. – www.kidsafensw.org.au
- NSW Department of Health - www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/general/pettingzoo_fs.html
- Guide to the National Quality Standard (3) ACECQA (2011)
- Health and Safety in Children’s Services Model Policies and Practices – 2nd Ed. revised (2003) www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/assets/main/documents/childcare_model_policies.pdf
- Kidsafe NSW Inc. – www.kidsafensw.org.au
- Staying Healthy 5th Edition - www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/clinical%20guidelines/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0)
- ACECQA - Keeping Pets and Animals in Education and Care Services - www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/QA3_InfoSheetKeepingPetsAndAnimalsInEducationAndCareServices.pdf

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