

Pets and Animals Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy area: [Enhance](#)

Policy owner: Enhance Family Day Care

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Purpose

Having pets and animal experiences can be a valuable part of children's education enriching their learning about nature, ecology, and relationships. Enhance FDC aims to provide a safe, hygienic, and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at the FDC residence, including educating children in the proper care of animals.

Policy

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. Animals and pets can become part of the educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children is of utmost importance, as is the wellbeing of any animal in the FDC space. Enhance FDC will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, adults or visitors in approved FDC services, and that animals have their own space away from children's play areas.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety: 2.1, 2.2, 2.2.1

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment: 3.1.2, 3.2.3

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

116 Assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues

116 (2) Risk posed by animals

168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures

Scope

This policy applies to Enhance FDC management, Practice Mentors, Educators, children, families, and visitors.

Implementation

The National Quality Standard encourages Educators to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, and the land. Animals help children from a young age learn to care for other living things. When kept as pets, animals can teach a sense of responsibility, caring and tolerance. As part of the enrolment and induction process, Educators must discuss with all potential families any pets that are kept on the premises and outline their involvement in the program.

Educators should discuss any potential new pets prior to purchase with their Practice Mentor to ensure that they will be approved by Enhance FDC. Educators should also consult their local vet to ascertain whether the type of pet is suitable for interactions with young children, and with families to ensure that they will provide permission for their child to interact with the potential pet.

An assessment of animals involved in the program is conducted at least annually to ensure that the health, safety, and wellbeing of children who are educated and cared for by the service are protected and reviewed whenever there is a change in the environment, conditions or number of animals on the property.

Considerations

Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders, and tropical fish may not be appropriate choices for Family Day Care services. 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 residences. Some animals require a license before they can be kept in a home environment.

Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for family day care may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, or guinea pigs as these animals are relatively low maintenance.

Assessing and Managing Risks

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the family day care residence, there are risks that must be minimised or mitigated for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned prior to interacting with a pet or an animal visiting the service.

As part of the risk assessment process, Educators should assess the following potential risks:

- Diseases from birds (Parrot fever (psittacosis)) and other animals
- Injury due to biting, kicking, or pushing a child over (e.g., farm animals)
- Scratching (e.g., chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs)
- Pests and vermin (snakes, rats, mice)
- Allergies (e.g., bees, wasps, ants)

Disease

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the FDC residence requires special consideration to prevent this. Health authorities identify that: germs can be present on the skin, hair, feathers, 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 washing and cleaning

Children and adults should employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals, or cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages, or enclosures. However, it is important to 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 at the FDC residence.

FDC Service Pets

On approval of a pet for the residence, Educators will ensure:

- Children's interaction with animals are planned and parents/guardians have given permission for a child to interact with a pet on enrolment or prior to the first encounter with the animal
- Children are supervised at all times while the animal is interacting with children e.g.: bathing, grooming, bottle feeding of young, play etc.
- Children are educated about correct handling techniques and acceptable behaviour when handling animal /pet
- Pets must have a separate area inaccessible to children that provides shade, food, water, and any litter requirements. This area must prevent the children from entering and the animal from leaving the space. Animals should be kept in this area when there are no direct interactions planned
- All appropriate veterinarian treatments (for example: parasite, worming, fleas, immunisations) are current
- Any shared area used by the animals, and pets must be cleaned to ensure no faeces, urine, hair, or smell is present before children are given access. Shared areas must be cleaned regularly as required
- All allergies are considered to ensure that children who may have symptoms around animals have suitable management plans in place (including no interactions while in care; where necessary).

Educators will also consider children with food allergies as some pet foods contain common allergens such as nuts and seafood

- Any incident where an animal or pet has harmed a child is reported
- The Educator should prepare children for the animal visit, gaining perception into how the children may react to the pet
- The Educator, children and families should consider the rationale for having a pet and long- term implications of such a decision prior to getting the pet
- All pets and their enclosures are to be kept clean and hygienic with appropriate bedding and water
- Food will be made available for all pets and animals, but kept out of reach of children at all times
- Animals including pets will not be allowed in the sand pit or any other play area. In event that this happens, Educators must thoroughly disinfect and sanitise the sand pit prior to children returning to play
- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area/kitchen nor will they have access to the eating or sleeping areas, toys, bedding, eating surfaces and/or utensils
- Anyone who has handled the animal or pet will immediately wash their hands
- The educational program will include how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately

Uninvited Animals

Depending on the area in which the FDC service operates, there may be times where uninvited animals enter the property, especially in more regional and rural areas. Examples of this may be, birds flying into a yard or house, a dog entering the property, or a snake found in the back yard. With safety as the first priority, Educators should ensure that the children are safe and separated from the animal and assess whether they are able to remove the animal from the property themselves (in the instance of a dog entering the yard, or bird flying into the house) or whether a local authority should be contacted for assistance.

If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous such as a snake or spider, Educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance.

In Queensland: Department of Environment and Heritage Protection 1300 130 372 or [RSPCA Queensland](#) 1300 264 625

At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect, or bird to be approached or touched by Educators, children, or families. Educators should consider whether an evacuation or soft lockdown is required to keep children and themselves safe until assistance arrives.

Uninvited animals also include animals that are other people's pets and that have not been assessed as part of the FDC risk management plan. Whilst these animals are not undomesticated, their nature and tendencies are not known and could therefore pose a safety risk to children and adults. Educators should ask the pet owner to remove their animal from the FDC residence away from children immediately.

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 friends and Educator. Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must seek permission from the Educator and from Enhance FDC prior to bringing in the pet. A risk assessment should then be completed before giving permission to the family. Families should also be advised that pets visiting the service that are not confined (for example, in a fishbowl or bird/mouse cage) must not be left at the service but be taken with the family member at the conclusion of their visit.

Interactions with Animals during an incursion or excursion

Excursions and incursions that involve animals can be very exciting for children and provides opportunities to interact with animals that they may not have encountered before. Educators will need to notify families of their intention of the incursion or excursion and highlight any animals and interactions that children may have as part of this experience.

In the event of an incursion or excursion where children will be in direct contact with an animal, Educators should ask the venue or incursion manager for their risk assessment to review on how animals and children will be kept safe.

Educators must ensure that no animal is left unsupervised by their carer where animals have direct access to children, and that animals are removed from the service after the incursion.

Educators should ensure that they have provided families with a thorough risk assessment and have written permission for their child to interact or participate in the experience prior to the day.

Pests and vermin

- Pest control will occur at the FDC residence on an annual basis as a minimum
- Pest control certificates are required as part of the annual assessment of a FDC residence
- If pests and/or vermin are seen, or evidence of pests and/or vermin such as droppings, the FDC Educator must take the necessary action to arrange for a treatment and notify a Enhance FDC Practice Mentor
- The Educator is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits for their home as required, outside of FDC service operation hours
- Where appropriate, the Educator will discuss safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin, and objects with the children
- FDC Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that pests have accessed in the residence/property with disinfectant

- If the remains of 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

Variations

FDCAQ reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy.

Links to associated documents	
Acknowledgements and references	<p>Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).</p> <p>Bone, J. (2013). The animals as the fourth Educator: A literature review of animals and young children in pedagogical relationships. <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i> 38(2). Deakin West, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.</p> <p>Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).</p> <p>ECA Code of Ethics.</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011)</p> <p>Elliott, S., McCrea, N., Edwards, H., & University of New England. (2012). Sustainable outdoor play spaces in early childhood centres: Investigating perceptions, facilitating change and generating theory.</p> <p>Frith, J., Kambouris, N., & O’Grady, O. (2003). Health and safety in children’s centres: Model policies and practices (2nd Ed.). NSW, Australia: NSW Department of Community Services. Retrieved from http://eduserve.com/sites/default/files/iccc_resources/Child_Care_Model_Policies.pdf Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).</p> <p>Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (amended 2020).</p> <p>Kidsafe NSW Inc. https://kidsafe.com.au/</p> <p>National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012) (updated June 2013). Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th Ed.).</p>

Versions

Version	Approval date	Authorised by	Effective date	Last reviewed	Next review date
1	10.05.2022	General Manager, Enhance Family Day care	27.05.2022	New policy	30.3.2025 or as required
2	03.02.2025	General Manager, Enhance	03.02.2025	03.02.2025	03.02.2030