



Animals at School Policy

Overview

The keeping of animals is common to Australian culture. Animals kept in a sound condition can be both educational to children and promote a sense of caring and responsibility if the animal is in an appropriate environment. In addition to protection of animal welfare rights, modelling positive behaviour in caring for animals is important in regard to children attending preschool. The Dandenong Ranges Steiner School values a warm and caring respect for the animal world. Whilst we welcome animals to the school, it is the responsibility of the owner to provide for the needs of the animal and for its control.

Procedure

Whilst animals in a school environment can bring much enjoyment and comfort to students, there is the potential for some risks if they are not managed appropriately. Similarly, to ensure the wellbeing of animals on school grounds, appropriate care arrangements need to be put into place.

Procedure for staff wanting to bring or keep animals at school

To minimise unnecessary risk and ill-treatment, approval is required for animals to be kept or brought regularly to school. Staff members must demonstrate the pedagogical or wellbeing benefit to students of regularly bringing or keeping an animal at school. A request must be put to the College of Teachers stating which animals are to be brought on-site, for what purpose and how they will be cared for. The College of Teachers will make a recommendation to the Management Team who will make the final decision in response to the request. If approval is given, the following must be adhered to.

- Any animals, birds or livestock kept on or about the premises of the school will be maintained in a clean and healthy condition;
- There will be an area provided where the animal's food and water containers are kept separate from children;
- All cages, tanks or sleeping areas and outdoor areas used by animals will be kept clean and excreta free; and
- If used by animals, indoor areas will be cleaned regularly. In relation to children, staff will ensure that;
 - Animals will be only be handled with adult supervision. Children will be encouraged to help feed and care for the animals;

- Animals will be inaccessible to the children unless under supervision of an adult. A physical barrier will be provided to separate animals from children and when not part of the program. A suitable cage, tank or pen will be used;
- Children with fears will be supported in any interactions they may choose to have with the animal;
- Children with allergies will be supervised by staff and interactions with animals will be in accordance with their individual needs;
- Children are closely supervised when they are with animals, including on excursions or incursions where children and animals are able to be in close contact;
- Children will be encouraged and reminded to follow appropriate hygiene practices.
- Children will be supervised when washing hands following contact with animals.
- Dogs – Staff who propose to bring a dog to school regularly must complete a risk assessment of the animal being on-site. They must also show evidence of training that qualifies their dog to be an Assistance/Therapy Dog. It is the owner’s responsibility that any dog must be held on lead at all times in the school grounds, or put into a cage when required. It is also the owner’s responsibility to clean up after their animal. If children are distressed by the dog, or the dog shows any antisocial or aggressive behaviour, the Management Team may withdraw the approval for the dog to be brought onto school grounds.

Parents/Guardians bringing animals on-site

In addition to the practices required above, parents and guardians need to note that as some children can be distressed by an animal’s presence (particularly dogs), the duty teacher or other staff member may ask the owner to remove the animal from school grounds. This may also be asked in situations where too many dogs are on school grounds at the same time. Dogs brought onto school grounds must be well-behaved and under owner control and are not to enter school buildings or attend school events or festivals. Liability for the actions of any animal brought onto the school grounds remains with the owner.

Refer also: **Student Duty of Care Program**

Approval and Review Details

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