

Applies to	Intereach Family Day Care (FDC) and Intereach Out of School Hours (OOSH)				
Policy	NQS Three: Physical Environment Policy				
Version	2.0	Date approved	4/5/2023	Next review date	4/5/2026

1. Objective

Observing, interacting with and learning to care for an animal can be a valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children build empathy. Providing children with access to animals in an education and care service can help them learn about the life cycle and relationships, and improve communication.

It is widely recognised that while there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets in education and care services, there are issues that need to consider for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned.

2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor to:

- identify issues that need to be considered for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned.
- ensure a risk/benefit assessment is conducted by the educators or staff when Intereach children's services bring animals in for demonstration or considers keeping an animal as a pet, including:
 - conducting a risk/benefit analysis on deciding the type of animal and the way the children will engage with it;
 - considering if the animal requires an appropriately fenced off from children's outdoor play areas and if the animal's food, water, litter trays and toys need to be kept away from children's play spaces;
- ensure children are appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal;
- ensure educators and staff model appropriate hygiene and safety practices when handling animals; and,
- In the case of FDC, the educator will update the relevant section of the *Home Safety Risk Assessment Audit* after the pet has been acquired for the service.

It is the responsibility of educators and staff to ensure:

- the service implements the outcomes of the risk/benefit analysis, e.g. installation of a fence so the children have an outside play space safe from the animal;
- families are advised about the animal during the orientation visit or when arranging the demonstration;
- children are supervised while interacting with the animal to reduce the risk of potential harm to the child or animal;
- children follow hygiene practices if they touch the animal; and,
- hygienically dispose of animal waste.

3. Procedure

3.1. Animals at the Service – Assessment and evaluation

Supervised and pre planned visits of animals are part of the children's learning opportunities. Children are encouraged to become socially responsible and show respect for the environment. The educators and staff will ensure 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.

- No animals or pets are allowed on the premises without prior approval of risk benefit assessment from the Nominated Supervisor, Or for FDC, the Coordination Unit
- A risk/benefit analysis is conducted where pets/animals will have any interaction or engagement with children.
- Risk minimisation plans will be developed in consultation with parents/carer for those children with asthma or allergies prior to allowing an animal to enter the service.

For FDC Services:

- Educator must notify the coordination unit staff of the intent to include a pet/ animal in their FDC service prior to this occurring to discuss safety measures.
- Families are consulted about any pets/ animals present at the service on initial visit to determine if the placement will be appropriate for children with medical conditions.

3.2. Appropriate Supervision

Children will be appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal. The issues that will be considered includes;

- preventing children from ingesting or touching faeces (droppings) or dirt that contains animal faeces or fleas;
- identifying potential allergies. Some children may be allergic to animals and may have symptoms when around animals. Pet food might contain common allergies such as nuts and seafood, as such children with food allergies will be taken care of;
- be aware of dog and cat bites which can cause serious infections; and,
- chance of parasites that may be transferred by pets such as fleas, ringworms, and ticks.

3.3. Disease

Special consideration is given to prevent the spread of infectious diseases as access or contact with animals can spread disease. Effective handwashing and cleaning encouraged (Refer to the *Hand washing procedure*). Children and adults employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals, or cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages or enclosures.

3.4. Preventive measures

Preventive measures will be taken to minimise risks to health of children from supervised contact including:

- Animals will not be present alongside children during meal times and while eating
- children are not allowed to put their faces close to animals;
- ensure children wash and dry their hands after touching animals;
- ensure that animals are treated, wormed and immunised as recommended by a vet;
- if fish tanks are available, clean the tanks regularly;
- animals that are ill, will be treated promptly by a vet; and not have interactions with children;
- risks to contaminate sandpits, pot plants and vegetable gardens are avoided;
- gloves are worn when handling animal faeces, emptying litter trays and cleaning cages;

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- animal faeces and litter are disposed of daily and more often, if necessary, faeces and litter are placed in a plastic bag and put it out with the garbage; and,
- children are not allowed to assist in cleaning of bird cages, fish tanks or other animal cages or pens.

4. Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be reviewed every three years and incorporate feedback and suggestions from children, families, educators, co-ordinators, volunteers, and students.

5. National Quality Framework

Element	Concept	Description
.2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
.2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.

6. Context	
Standards or other external requirements	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017), <i>National Quality Standards</i> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017), <i>Guide to the National Quality Framework</i> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. <i>Childcare Service Handbook, 2018 - 2019</i>
Legislation or other requirements	Education and Care Services National Regulations consolidated 2017 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Internal Documentation	Enrolment and Orientation procedure Providing a child safe environment Supervision procedure Handwashing procedure Home Safety Audit

7. Document control			
Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	15/04/2020	R.Phillips - Acting Senior Manager, Children and Family Services	15/04/2023
2.0	4/5/2023	M. Piffero – General Manager Operations	4/5/2026