

Safe Work Guideline Pets in the Classroom

Prepared By:
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Effective:
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Revised By:
Don Doherty

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Guidelines:

Pets in the classroom can provide valuable learning opportunities for staff and students. However, school staff should be aware of the potential health risks associated with handling and caring for animals. Animals can carry infections that are harmful to humans. Pet dander and waste can also have an adverse effect on indoor environmental quality. The decision whether to keep pets in the classroom or school should consider the potential health risks to staff and students, whether pets can be properly cared for, and whether safe handling precautions can be followed. Before allowing pets in a school or work setting you should consider the following:

- Approval from the site administrator should be obtained before bringing any pet on site. The person bringing the pet on site is responsible for its proper care.
- Classrooms or work areas that have individuals with poor health status, asthma or allergies should not allow pets.
- All pets should be in good health, show no evidence of disease, and be friendly toward children.
- All reptiles carry Salmonella bacteria. Therefore reptiles including turtles and iguanas are not appropriate pets for schools. Also avoid exotic pets such as ferrets, or wild animals.
- Pets should not be allowed to roam free in the building classroom.
- Teach staff and children to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling pets or pet items and before eating.
- Do not allow food in animal contact areas; do not allow animals in areas where food and drink are prepared or consumed.
- Clean and disinfect all areas where animals have been present.
- Children should be taught how to behave around a pet. They should not provoke the pet or remove the pet's food.
- Children should be taught to keep their faces away from a pet's mouth, beak, or claws and never to kiss an animal. Do not permit unsupervised handling of pets by children under 12.
- Persons with open cuts or sores should not handle pets. Disposable gloves are recommended. If someone is scratched or bitten immediately wash the wounds well with soap and water.
- Keep a tray or drop sheet under pet cages to capture pet waste and materials. Do not allow these materials to spill onto floors and furnishings.

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- **Clean the pet's living area at least once a week.** All pet waste should be disposed of immediately. Pet waste boxes should not be accessible to children. Place feces and waste in a plastic bag and then dispose in the outside trash bin.
- Never clean cages in kitchens or anywhere where food is prepared or eaten. Do not use kitchen sinks bathtubs or shower stalls for cleaning pet cages unless thoroughly disinfected afterwards.
- Wear vinyl or household cleaning gloves when cleaning aquariums or animal cages. Wash hands well when finished.

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