

## ANIMAL OR INSECT SPECIES IN SCHOOLS

### Background

Animals and insect species may have a supportive role in enhancing the value of educational programs for students. The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to provide guidelines and requirements for the inclusion of animal and insect species in schools for instructional purposes, short visits, or as pets. The value of integrating these species into educational programs must be balanced against the health and safety of the school community.

### Procedures

1. With the approval of the principal, teachers may bring animal or insect species into schools for instructional purposes for a one day visit or extended periods of time.
2. Instructional purposes for the presence of animal and insect species in schools may include:
  - 2.1 use as subjects for observation and data gathering on body characteristics, habits, movement, feeding behaviour, instinctive reactions;
  - 2.2 talking and writing stories about animal and insect species to support language development;
  - 2.3 supporting the development and learning of a sense of responsibility, kindness and concern for other living creatures;
  - 2.4 supporting the development and learning of a healthy respect for living creatures in our local environment.
  - 2.5 furthering awe and wonder for God's creation.
3. Prior to introducing an animal or insect species into a classroom, the teacher must ensure that the following conditions have been met:
  - 3.1 students and school personnel must not be afraid of or allergic to the animal or insect species;
  - 3.2 animal or insect species must be in good health, free of disease with no tendencies to bite, sting, or scratch;
  - 3.3 the owner of an animal must show proof of current vaccinations, licensing;
  - 3.4 the owner of controlled animals within the Provincial Wildlife Regulation Schedule 5, 1 – 4 will require proof of permits;

- 3.5 the teacher bringing an animal into the school must know the past history of the animal;
- 3.6 the state of the animal / insect species must not present aggressive behaviour towards the students or to school personnel;
- 3.7 parents must be informed.
4. An animal brought into the school for a visit must be leashed, caged, or contained humanely and under the control of a responsible adult.
5. Insects must always be presented in a contained environment to protect against proliferation or danger of biting and stinging students.
6. Animals are not permitted to roam freely in the school building or on the school grounds.
7. Withdrawal of approval of animals in school will occur if in the opinion of the principal, animal or class hygiene becomes a factor or the behavior of the animal adversely effects learning conditions within the classroom.
8. Withdrawal of approval of insects within the school will occur if in the opinion of the principal, environmental conditions of their controlled environment are neglected or causes proliferation of the species outside of the controlled environment.
9. Only relatively small animals which are easily confined or caged, maintained and handled, such as tropical fish and small mammals may be kept in classrooms.
10. Larger animals such as dogs and cats may not be kept in the school building beyond regular school hours.
11. The following are not permitted in schools either as visitors or as classroom animals:
  - 11.1 unescorted animals;
  - 11.2 poisonous animals;
  - 11.3 indigenous wild animals;
  - 11.4 salamanders;
  - 11.5 rats.
12. The teacher must ensure that:
  - 12.1 the ethical and humane treatment of animals is maintained and modeled;
  - 12.2 any animal that is kept in the classroom receives adequate care and is not abused or neglected in any way.

13. The teacher is responsible for:
  - 13.1 determining the care and feeding requirements for animals kept in the classroom;
  - 13.2 ensuring appropriate standards of hygiene and sanitation will be met;
  - 13.3 ensuring that animal care procedures are posted and reviewed with the students; and
  - 13.4 providing or coordinating for a suitable enclosure for the animal, feeding, cleaning and other duties connected to the accommodation of the animal.
14. The teacher must ensure that:
  - 14.1 any student who assists the teacher with the care of the animals in the classroom is properly trained by the teacher; and is under on-site supervision by the teacher with the teacher present but not necessarily constantly viewing the activity.

Additional management protocols are as follows:

15. The teacher must ensure that there is a plan in place to provide care to animals:
  - 15.1 After school hours, including weekends and holidays; and
  - 15.2 in a permanent home when classroom study is completed.
16. The teacher must be prepared to deal with the death, illness or injury to the animals kept in the classroom or animals brought to the class as visitors.
17. In the event of the death of an animal kept in the classroom, the animal must be disposed of safely and in a manner that is sensitive to student emotions and in accordance with current legislation.
18. All reptiles carry Salmonella bacteria. Therefore reptiles including turtles and iguanas are not appropriate animals for primary grades. Also, exotic animals such as ferrets or wild animals such as bats and skunks are to be avoided.
19. Animals are not to be allowed to roam free in the classroom.
20. Staff and students are to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals or animal items and before eating.
21. Students are to be taught how to behave around an animal. Animals are not to be provoked or teased.
22. Students are to be taught to keep their faces away from an animal's mouth, beak or claws and never to kiss an animal. Unsupervised handling of animals by any student is not to be permitted. The handling of animals by students should be appropriately

coordinated with access to hand washing stations. Handling of animals should be in an area free of student access to food or where student food consumption is taking place.

23. Persons with open cuts or sores are not to handle animals. Disposable gloves are recommended. If a person is scratched or bitten, immediately wash the wounds well with soap and water.
24. Animals are to be housed in appropriate cages or aquariums, etc.
25. A tray or drop sheet is to be kept under animal cages to capture animal wastes and material to prevent these materials from spilling onto floors and furnishings.
26. Animal living areas are to be cleaned at least once a week or as required to minimize odor and ensure appropriate sanitation. All animal waste is to be disposed of immediately. Animal waste boxes are not to be accessible to students. Feces and waste are to be placed in a plastic bag and then disposed in the outside trash bin.
27. Cages are never to be cleaned in kitchens or anywhere where food is prepared or eaten. Sinks, bathtubs or shower stalls for cleaning animal cages must be thoroughly disinfected before they can be used again.
28. Non-latex gloves must be worn when cleaning aquariums or animal cages and hands washed thoroughly when finished.
29. For an animal bite:
  - 29.1 Isolate the animal that has bitten the person.
  - 29.2 See Administrative Procedure 313 Appendix Task Hazard Analysis regarding Care of Human, Animal and Insect Bites.
  - 29.3 The Principal must be informed of the incident.
  - 29.4 An [Accident Report form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Occupational Health and Safety Department.
  - 29.5 The Principal must inform Alberta Health Services and Animal Control if a bite, from a canine, feline or ferret, breaks the skin. If the Principal contacts Alberta Health Services, the Principal must also contact the Superintendent.
30. For an animal illness:
  - 30.1 If possible, identify cause of animal illness.
  - 30.2 Do not allow individuals, other than the primary care teacher, to handle animal.
  - 30.3 If possible, remove from classroom to a quiet secure area.

- 30.4 If an animal has an apparent health issue or if an animal is in distress, contact a veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.
31. If the suitability of an animal for occupation within the school community cannot be appropriately determined despite the application of the parameters of this procedure, a risk assessment will be conducted by the Superintendent or designate. Factors within this assessment will include but will not be limited to awareness of generally accepted practices within the educational community and the perspective of insurers.

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