

ANIMAL AND PET 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. The pet will become part of the daily educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Our Family Day Care Service will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, adults or visitors in approved family day care residences or venues.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

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
170	Policies and procedures to be followed

Victorian Child Safe Standards	
Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued

Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Standard 11	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

RELATED POLICIES

Assessment, approval and re-assessment of approved family day care residence and/or venue policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Hand Washing Policy	Physical Environment Policy Snake Awareness Policy Supervision Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Having a pet at Dalas Family Day Care can be a valuable part of children's education enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships. Our Family Day Care Service aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at the Service, educating children in the proper care of animals.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Coordinators, Educators, Educator Assistants, children, families, and visitors of the Family Day Care Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

The National Quality Standard encourages educators to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. Pets help children from a young age learn to care for other living things. They can teach a sense of responsibility, caring and tolerance. They can offer many opportunities for developing observational

skills and provide basic natural science experiences. If the educator wishes to have a pet in their Family Day Care Service, they must make all the decisions in consultation with the approved provider/ coordinator and families. An assessment of each residence 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. Regulation 116 includes ensuring the risk posed by any animals at the residence/or venue.

Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals within a family day care service, there are also a range of concerns which need to be considered to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy. Providing children with access to animals within our service will help them learn about life cycles and relationships and improve communication skills. We feel role modelling of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals are beneficial for children.

Questions to consider prior to having a pet at the FDC approved residence or venue

- Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?
- What physical space is available in the Family Day Care residence? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- Is the FDC educator and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the service?
- What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal?
- Are there any children or adults residing at the family day care residence who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes to Service's policies and procedures need to be considered? For example, hand washing policy will need to be updated to include washing hands after having contact with the animal.
- What are the health and safety risks?

Other things to consider include

- Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders and tropical fish may not be an appropriate choice. 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 family day care services/residences. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.

- Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for family day care may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, mice or rats. All these animals are relatively low maintenance and can be left safely over a weekend if they are provided with enough food and water.

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 matters that management and educators need to consider for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned prior to choosing a pet or having an animal visit the Service.

A risk assessment should therefore be conducted when deciding the type of animal and the way the children engage with it.

Potential risks may include:

- 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 family day care residence requires special consideration to prevent this. Health authorities identify that germs can be present on the skin, hair, feathers and 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 family day care residence.

Service Pets

- 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.
- Any animal or pet kept at the family day care residence will be regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, and wormed (as appropriate), and checked for fleas and diseases.
- Animals including pets will not be allowed in the sand pit or any other play area. In event that this happens, educators will refer to and adhere to the *Sand Pit Policy*.
- 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.
- Children's animal or pets will only be allowed in the educator's residence with granted permission from the coordinator and educator.
- The educational program will include how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.

Uninvited Animal Visit

There are situations that may spontaneously occur, involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the Family Day Care Service. Depending upon the type of animal or bird the educator may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times the highest priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.

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

Victoria: [Wildlife Victoria](#): Australian Wildlife Emergency Response 03 8400 7300

WIRES - 13 00 094 737

National Parks and Wildlife Service - 1300 361 967 (8.30am – 5.00pm)

A professional should monitor the animal's movements to ensure a speedy and efficient capture, but priority is to be given to educator, child and family safety. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect or bird to be approached or touched by educators, children or families.

If an unidentified dog enters the family day care residence or property, the educator/educator assistant will refer to the *Managing Unidentified Dogs Policy*.

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 peers and educator. Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must be advised to seek permission from the educator 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.

Pests and Vermin

- Pest control will occur at the family day care residence on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Pest control certificates are required as part of the annual assessment of a family day care residence.
- The coordinator or approved provider will monitor any occurrences at the family day care residence to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and/or vermin are seen, or evidence of pests and/or vermin such as droppings, the educator must take the necessary action to arrange for an inspection
- The Educator is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits for their home as required.
- Where appropriate, the educator will discuss safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects with the children.
- 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.
- Educators are responsible for assessing any situation where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

SOURCE

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REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	August 2022	NEXT REVIEW DATE	August 2023
MODIFICATIONS	• additional regulations added re: assessments of residence • risk assessment inclusions • pest control certificates • links added to state/territory contacts for wildlife assistance • policy more relevant to family day care educators		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
August 2020	• Sentences reworded/refined. • Additional information added. • New section added – Visits from children's pets. • Sources/references corrected, updated, and alphabetised. • Related policies alphabetised. • New policy created for Family Day Care Services • Policy purchased from Child Care desk top		August 2021