



AP 2 – 23 Animals in Schools

Related Policies:	Initial Approval: 2017 October 11
Related Procedures:	Last Amended:
Exhibits:	Last Reviewed: 2019 November 26

BACKGROUND

The inclusion of animals in schools is recognized as an opportunity for significant, motivational experiences that enhance learning. However, the inclusion must take into consideration the health and safety of students, staff and animals.

Animals are only to be in schools for specific education purposes. Animals may be in the classroom for observation only, not for experimentation. The purpose for keeping the animals needs to include, but not be limited to, The Alberta Program of Studies. The life expectancy of an animal is to be considered before committing to long term care of animals.

Animals may cause allergic or asthmatic reactions. Animals can carry and pass harmful organisms, via touching or biting which may cause illness to humans. Animals may have an adverse effect on indoor air quality and possibly impact on school resources due to required veterinary care due to illness. Animals may not be appropriate for all learning environments.

Responsibility for the humane and proper care of the animals is the legal obligation and moral responsibility of those who have assumed stewardship of the animals. The teacher accepts full responsibility for and must closely supervise and monitor care and use of animals in the classroom. The keeping of animals is governed by various pieces of legislation including: Alberta Wildlife Act, Alberta Animal Protection Act and the Criminal Code of Canada. Student caregivers must be supervised and are to be taught proper methods of animals' care and handling.

It is against the law to hold indigenous wild animals captive (e.g., gophers, crows).

GUIDELINES

This administrative procedure applies to all schools, at all times during the year and in all areas of the school.

DEFINITIONS

Indigenous wild animals: means wild local species

PROCEDURES

1. The principal must approve the entry of all animals on either a temporary or permanent basis into the school.
2. If, in the opinion of the principal, animal hygiene becomes a factor, or if conditions change (animal, student, or environment), withdrawal of the animal can be made at the discretion of the principal.
3. Instructional purposes for the presence of animals in schools may include:
 - a. As subjects for observation and data gathering on body characteristics, habits movement, feeding behaviour, instinctive reactions.
 - b. Talking and writing stories about animals to support language development.
 - c. Supporting the development and learning of a sense of responsibility, kindness and concern for other living beings.

- d. Supporting and development of learning of a healthy respect for the animals in our local environment.
4. Teachers in classrooms that have individuals with compromised health status, asthma or allergies are not to allow animals. Parents/legal guardians are to be informed before they enroll their child that there are animals in the schools. Animals may need to be removed to address health concerns.
5. The owner of a cat/dog must show proof of current vaccinations and licensing.
6. The owner / trainer of a dog must provide evidence that the dog has received formal training and the staff member / trainer bringing the dog on the premise will provide a statement in writing with the following information:
 - a. The dog has successfully completed a formal training program.
 - b. The dog will act appropriately around students, staff and other members of the public.
 - c. The owner will be responsible for any liability claims or costs arising from bringing the dog to school.
 - d. Proof of a minimum \$2,000,000 general liability coverage should the dog attack or bite a student, staff member or member of the public.
7. All animals are to be in good health, show no evidence of disease and be friendly towards students and staff.
8. Reptiles and amphibians can carry salmonella bacteria. Therefore, animals such as turtles, iguanas, salamanders, snakes and frogs are not appropriate for younger grades.
9. The following are not permitted in the schools either as visitors or as classroom animals:
 - a. Unescorted animals
 - b. Poisonous animals
 - c. Indigenous wild animals
 - d. Rats
10. Animals are not to roam free in the classroom or school. An animal brought into a school must be leashed and under the control of a responsible adult.
11. Staff and students are to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals or animal items and before eating.
12. Students are to be taught how to behave around an animal. Animals are not to be provoked or teased.
13. Students are to be taught to keep their faces away from an animal's mouth, beak, claws and never to kiss an animal. Unsupervised handling of animals by any students is not to be permitted.
14. Persons with open cuts or sores are not to handle animals. If a person is scratched or bitten, immediately wash the wounds well with soap and water.
15. Animals are to be housed in appropriate cages or aquariums, etc.
16. Feeding and care of the animals are the responsibility of the teacher in charge. Custodians and other school staff will not be responsible for feeding or cleaning of animals in classrooms or the school at any time, including non-school days or over extended breaks.
17. A tray or drop sheet is to be kept under animal cages to capture animal waste and material to prevent these materials from spilling onto floors and furnishings.
18. 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.
19. Cages are never to be cleaned in kitchens or anywhere food is prepared or eaten. Sinks, bathtubs or shower stalls used for cleaning animal cages must be thoroughly disinfected before they can be used again.
20. Non-latex gloves must be worn when cleaning aquariums or animal cages and hands washed thoroughly when finished.
21. For an Animal Bite:
 - a. Isolate the animal that has bitten the person.
 - b. The principal must be informed of the incident.
 - c. An Accident/Injury/Illness Report must be completed and submitted.

- d. 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 contact the Superintendent.
22. For an animal illness:
- a. If possible, identify the cause of animal illness.
 - b. Do not allow any individuals, other than the primary care teacher, to handle the animal.
 - c. If possible, remove from the classroom to a quiet secure area.
 - d. If an animal has an apparent health issue or in an animal is in distress contact a veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.
23. 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 as per local by-laws.
24. Some community and town by-laws do not allow dogs on school grounds with the exception of accredited service dogs. Principals and teachers must ensure they are in compliance with any local by-laws.

REFERENCE AND LINKS

Education Act, section 197, 53
Wildlife Act Alberta
Alberta Animal Protection Act

HISTORY

Reviewed: 2019 Nov 26