

Reading Early Years Schools Federation (REYS)



Animals in Nursery

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Date to be reviewed: March 2028

REYS federation believes that having animals in nursery can be an effective way of maximising the educational opportunity and attainment of our children.

Whilst keeping animals at our school is particularly beneficial to our children, we understand that we have a legal duty of care towards any animals we are responsible for, and that this must be a priority at all times. This policy has been created in order to outline the key responsibilities and procedures for children and staff when looking after our animals. A staff member will be nominated as the designated person to take overall responsibility for the animals on site.

Duty of care

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 places a duty on schools to make provision for the welfare of any animal that they are responsible for. Under this Act, the welfare of an animal includes the following criteria:

- Its need for a suitable environment
- Its need for a suitable diet (food and fresh water)
- Its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- Its need to be housed with, or away from, any other animals
- Its need to be protected from pain, suffering and disease.

The senior leader and the designated member of staff responsible for the animals, will conduct a risk assessment prior to the arrival of the animals to ensure that all risks are manageable and are controlled.

Where animals are brought in for a short period - for example, for a day - an appropriate and detailed protocol will be implemented that ensures the wellbeing of the animal, and the health and safety of others, for the duration of its visit. This will include the provision of assurances from the owner as to the means of transporting and housing the animal, and the responsibility to bring any equipment, food or water likely to be required during the day. Advice from parents will be sought whenever necessary.

The designated person will establish a rota for looking after the animals before, during and after the school day, as well as during holidays and weekends.

Food

The school will establish a care programme for each species of animal, which will be implemented by the designated member of staff, and will be communicated to all other members of staff.

The type and quantity of food required varies not only with species, but also with age, stage of production (e.g. lactating females have different requirements from other adults) and breed. The dietary requirements of each type of animal must be ascertained by consulting a vet or a livestock nutrition consultant.

A dry, vermin-proof container will be used to store the different animals' food, keeping it dry and preventing waste.

All animals must have continuous access to a supply of clean, fresh drinking water. Troughs and other containers must be suitable for the animals using them (e.g. the correct height and dimension to allow easy access) and must be easy to clean. The school will ensure that there is an adequate supply of food available at all times to avoid any drought of food.

Housing and environment

Each animal house will be designed, sited and constructed to provide a suitable environment, including any special requirement for exercise or social contact for the species to be housed, and will incorporate facilities sufficient for the activities carried out within it.

All animals must have access to a comfortable, solid-based lying area, with plenty of suitable bedding material. It must be replaced/replenished regularly to ensure that it remains dry.

Any fencing used must be strong enough to contain the species in question, must be frequently inspected and properly maintained, and must not have the potential to cause injury to the animals.

Poultry must have access to a suitable area for exercise, with enough space to ensure that they can move around freely and express their natural behaviour patterns.

Cleaning and maintenance

This is clearly important, both for the health of the animals and for those people looking after them. Hands will be washed before and, of course, after cleaning cages, tanks, etc. Rubber or plastic gloves will be worn whenever possible.

When carrying out cleaning duties, the designated member of staff will wear personal protective equipment, such as plastic gloves, at all times. After removing soiled litter material, cages must be scrubbed with hot water and liquid detergent. Solid litter will ideally be incinerated; more conveniently, it could be sealed in strong plastic bags and placed with other waste in dustbins. The school will purchase appropriate cleaning materials such as a shovel, bucket, stiff brush and detergent cleaner. The detergent cleaner, as well as any other chemicals purchased, will be checked in accordance with COSHH to ensure that they are not hazardous to the animals or to the members of staff using them.

All bedding will be removed and replaced, and all droppings will be scraped into the bucket provided. Both the bedding and droppings will be disposed of appropriately by the member of staff carrying out the cleaning duties.

The water and food feeders will be cleaned on a weekly basis to avoid any build-up of green algae which can be harmful to animals. When cleaning each animal house, the member of staff will ensure that it is weather- and predator-proof, and will check for any repairs that are needed.

Animal handling

Children may wish to handle animals, but the following considerations must be checked in advance of any such activities:

- The animal is used to being handled.
- The animal is not likely to be stressed by excitable children.
- Where there is a correct way to hold any animal, this is taught to children from the outset.
- If animals will be handled, the most important issue is the maintenance of good hygiene.

When handling animals:

- Do not consume food or drink.
- Cover any open cuts or abrasions on the exposed skin of hands and arms with waterproof adhesive dressings.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and directly after handling animals.
- Keep animals away from your face.
- Children must be taught by staff the correct way to hold each animal.

Careful handling of small mammals and other animals is most important; the animals will be sufficiently restrained, so that they cannot damage themselves or the handler.

Mammals will be handled daily if possible (unless breeding or nursing, when they will be disturbed as little as possible). In this way they will normally become quite tame and accustomed to being handled.

Gloves will not be worn unless it is known that an animal for one reason or another is likely to bite or scratch. In this situation: a pair of rubber gloves which does not particularly reduce dexterity, is a sensible precaution.

Handling small animals will always be carried out over a table or trough filled with a soft material such as sand/sawdust.

The handling of certain animals will be avoided altogether. Those which are nervous, nocturnal or prone to biting or scratching, will only be observed and not touched.

Other creatures, such as invertebrates, can be too fragile to be handled any more than absolutely necessary. Sometimes any handling of a pet should be limited to a designated member of staff, who will have the necessary expertise to do it properly. Animals will be given adequate rest periods away from disturbances.

Infestation and disease

All members of staff are responsible for identifying ill health of the animals and reporting any concerns to the designated staff member, who will then contact the attending vet and inform the senior leader. A veterinary health plan will be developed in conjunction with the attending vet in order to arrange the following:

- Any additional check-ups as required
- Treatment for prevention of external and internal parasites, including vaccinations
- Response to, and provision for, seriously ill or deceased animals
- Any other procedures necessary for the maintenance of the animals' health

The likelihood of diseases being passed on to humans from pet animals is low. In all cases, good hygiene practices will be observed to reduce the risks even further.

The designated member of staff, in conjunction with the attending vet, is responsible for the general health of animals, including keeping up with vaccinations and ensuring the appropriate animals have been treated for worms and fleas.

Children with known allergies to specific animals must, of course, have restricted access to those that may trigger a response. In most cases, an allergic reaction will subside once the animal and the affected person are kept apart; in extreme cases, medical advice will be sought.

In any case of infestation or disease, appropriate treatment will be sought immediately and the animal(s) will be moved into a separate enclosure away from the others until they are back to full health.

If the animals are found to have any disease which is contagious to humans, the senior leader will inform parents/carers immediately and the animal(s) will be removed from the premises for appropriate treatment

Injuries sustained to children and staff

Any injuries sustained to children or staff during the looking after of the animals will be reported to the senior leader immediately, and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's First Aid Policy and the Health and Safety Policy.

Bringing pets and other animals into school

In addition to the general guidance given above, it is important that suitable arrangements are made in advance for the well-being of animals for the short time they are to be on the premises.

When a variety of animals will be together, consider the possibility of unwanted interactions. Animals must be housed properly and separately whilst on the premises and any containers used to transport them must be appropriate and retain the animal securely.

Unsuitable animals

Animals that present unacceptable risks must not be brought into the school. Wild birds and mammals taken, even if legally, from the 'wild' will not be brought into the school directly as they may be harbouring diseases or parasites transmissible to humans.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed in line with REYS monitoring cycle but no later than March 2028.