



# *Cloncurry Shire Council*

**PROCEDURE  
NO.**  
CKP – QA2004-01

## **ANIMALS IN CENTRES PROCEDURE**

### **1. INFORMATION**

Pets and animals can help children learn about nature, the world around them, and the importance of caring for other living beings. Engaging with animals can teach a sense of responsibility, caring, and patience, and can help build observational skills.

There are several benefits to having a centre pet, or engaging with animals as part of the learning program, however, there are also a range of issues that must be considered and addressed before bringing children into contact with animals.

This procedure outlines the expectations, opportunities and requirements for a centre in regards to having a centre pet, engaging with animals as part of an excursion / incursion, managing requests from families to bring a child's pet to the centre, and responding to a wild / non-domestic animal entering the centre premises.

### **2. RESPONSIBILITY**

All team members, families, students, volunteers, and visitors must comply with this procedure.

### **3. PROCEDURE**

#### **3.1. CENTRE PETS**

##### Important points when considering having a centre pet

- 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 the Service.
- Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals. Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for the Service may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, mice or rats, as these animals are relatively low maintenance and can be left safely over a weekend if they are provided with enough food and water.

##### Requesting the inclusion of a centre pet in the service

- The request for the inclusion of a pet in the centre must include a risk management plan that has been developed in consultation with the centre team, ensuring families are invited to contribute to the process.
- The risk management process needs to consider the following:
  - What are the health and safety risks? And what are the mitigations to address these risks?
  - Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care, vet care, and cleaning?
  - How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during service closure periods?

- What physical space is available in the centre? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- Are all educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at the centre?
- What time will be available throughout the day to care for the animal or will educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
- Are there any children or educators at your centre who are allergic to, or have phobias of animals?
- What changes to your centre's policies and procedures need to be considered?
- The request must also show how the inclusion of a pet will become a part of the educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals.
- The request may be approved by the centre manager, but the centre manager must notify the Director of Community Services and Economic Development that the centre has a pet.

#### Having a centre pet

- If approved, the centre manager will need to coordinate the development of a risk minimisation and communication plan that relates to the outcomes of the risk management process.
- A sign will be displayed in the foyer, and at the entrance of rooms, where pets are housed, informing all who enter of the existence of the animal.
- A supervision plan will need to be developed and implemented to cover when the animal is in their enclosure, and when they are out of their enclosure (if applicable).
- Staff members may require specific training in regards to the handling and care of the pet. If so, only trained staff should interact with and manage the animal.
- At any time that anyone, including visitors and family members, wishes to interact with the animal, a staff member must be present and must be in control of the handling and engagement with the animal.

### **3.2. VISITING ANIMALS**

Whether this involves going on an excursion to a zoo, or having animals come to the centre as part of an incursion, the centre manager must follow the risk management and planning processes from the Excursion procedure, and the requirements for visitors under the *Students, volunteers and visitors procedure*.

### **3.3. REQUESTS FOR VISITS FROM A CHILD'S PET**

- Occasionally a child may have a new pet such as a puppy or kitten that they wish to bring to the centre to show their peers and educators.
- Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must first seek permission from the Nominated Supervisor prior to bringing in the pet.
- A risk assessment should be completed before giving permission to the family.

- No pet of a family will be left at the centre - it must be accompanied at all times by the parent/guardian.

### 3.4. WILD & NON-DOMESTIC ANIMALS

- Some situations may spontaneously occur involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the centre.
- Depending upon the type of animal or bird, educators 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.
- Securing the area and ensuring signage is displayed to alert people to the situation is important.
- 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.
- Helpful organisations can include:
  - [Wildlife Rescue Australia](#) 1300 596 457
  - [RSPCA](#)
  - Your local vet
  - Your local snake catcher

### 4. RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS

- QA 2 Children's Health and Safety Policy
- QA 2 Snake bite procedure
- QA 2 Administration of first aid procedure
- QA 2 Incidents and serious incidents and illnesses procedure
- QA 2 Child safe environment procedure
- QA 2 Fire and emergency evacuation procedure
- QA 2 Supervision procedure

### 5. REFERENCES

ACECQA. (2018). Keeping animals and pets in education and care services. Accessed 17 November 2023 from [KEEPING PETS AND ANIMALS IN EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES](#)

Aussie Childcare Network. (2023). Having a pet in an early childhood service. Accessed 17 November 2023 from [Having A Pet In An Early Childhood Service - Aussie Childcare Network](#)

Care for Kids. (2019). Animals in early learning settings - what you need to know. Accessed 17 November 2023 from [Animals in early learning settings - What you need to know | CareforKids.com.au](https://www.careforkids.com.au/animals-in-early-learning-settings-what-you-need-to-know/)

#### **POLICY VERSION AND REVISION INFORMATION**

<b>Version No.</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
1	Chief Executive Officer	24 October 2024	October 2027

*Procedure Approved by: Philip Keirle*



*Title: Chief Executive Officer*