

LIVE ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Background

Live animals contribute much to the learning environment of a school classroom. Students are able to directly study the life cycle and care and needs of animals as well as benefit from the unconditional love that many animals offer. Thus the use of live animals in schools is recognized as a highly motivational avenue for a variety of significant learning experiences, and an effective source of learning and curricular enhancement. On the other hand, the use of live animals must also be balanced against the health and safety concerns of students and staff.

Procedures

1. With approval of the school principal, teachers are permitted to bring live animals into schools if required for instructional purposes.
2. With the approval of the school principal and the Director of Student Support Services, special education teachers may bring animals into schools for therapeutic purposes – commonly referred to as “pet therapy”.
3. Teachers must have a definite teaching purpose for bringing live animals into the classroom. Such curriculum connections for the use of animals in schools may include but are not limited to:
 - a. the use of live animals as subjects for observation and data gathering on body characteristics, habits, movement, feeding behaviour, instinctive reactions;
 - b. direct observation of adaptive characteristics;
 - c. subjects to use in language development, talking and writing stories about animals;
 - d. development of a sense of responsibility, kindness and concern for other living beings; and
 - e. development of a healthy respect for the animals in our local environment.
4. Prior to introducing an animal into a classroom, the teacher must ensure that the following conditions have been met:
 - a. students and school personnel are not afraid of or allergic to that type of animal;
 - b. the animal is healthy and free of disease;
 - c. the animal does not present aggressive behaviour towards the students or to school personnel; and
 - d. appropriate standards of hygiene and sanitation will be met.
5. The teacher bringing the animal into the school must know the past history of the animal.

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6. Only relatively small animals, which are easily confined or caged, maintained and handled, may be kept in the classroom, such as tropical fish and small mammals such as gerbils, hamsters, mice, rabbits and guinea pigs. Larger animals such as dogs and cats may not be kept in the school.
7. The following types of animals are not permitted in schools either as visitors or as classroom animals:
 - a. poisonous insects such as bees or wasps,
 - b. poisonous arachnids such as black widow spiders,
 - c. poisonous reptiles such as gila monsters,
 - d. dangerous animals or reptiles, or
 - e. rats.
8. The teacher must ensure that any animal that is kept in the classroom receives adequate care and is not abused or neglected in any way. The teacher is responsible for determining the care and feeding requirements for animals kept in the classroom, and ensuring that animal care procedures are posted and reviewed with the students.
9. The teacher is responsible for providing a suitable cage for the animal, feeding, cleaning and other duties connected to the accommodation of the animal. Students who assist the teacher with the care of animals in the classroom must be properly trained by the teacher and under on-site supervision by the teacher with the teacher present but not necessarily constantly viewing the activity.
10. The teacher must ensure that there is a plan in place to provide care to animals during weekends and holidays, and provide a permanent home for the animal when classroom study is completed.
11. If, in the opinion of the principal, animal hygiene becomes a factor, approval to keep the animal in the school is withdrawn and the animal must be taken from the school at the end of the school day.
12. The teacher must be prepared to deal with the death of or injury to the animals kept in the classroom or animals brought to the class as visitors. 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.
13. If special animals are brought to a school to meet students, they must be on a leash and under control of a responsible adult.
14. Wild or dangerous animals are not permitted in schools whether leashed or caged. This includes birds.

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15. Large birds such as parrots and macaws are unsuited to the classroom environment. The acquisition of such animals by schools is ill-advised and prohibited.

16. Stray animals, usually dogs and cats, are not permitted to be on school grounds or admitted into the building. These matters should be referred to the municipal animal control authority.

17. This Administrative Procedure does not apply to service animals such as “seeing-eye” dogs, or “sniffer” dogs.

References: Legal References: • School Act R.S.A. 2000, c. S-3, section 45(8)

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