

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Background

Animals are only to be in schools for specific educational 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 an animal.

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 financial 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 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).

Procedures

1. The Principal must approve the entry of all animals on either a temporary or permanent basis into the school.
2. Teachers in classrooms that have individuals with compromised health status, asthma or allergies are not to allow animals. Parents are to be informed before they enroll their child that there are animals in the school. Animals may need to be removed to address health concerns.
3. All animals are to be in good health, show no evidence of disease and be friendly towards students and staff.
4. All reptiles carry Salmonella bacteria. Therefore reptiles including turtles and iguanas are not appropriate animals for primary grades. Also exotic animals such as ferrets or wild animals such as bats and skunks are to be avoided.
5. Animals are not to be allowed to roam free in the classroom.

6. Staff and students are to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals or animal items and before eating.
7. Students are to be taught how to behave around an animal. Animals are not to be provoked or teased.
8. Students are to be taught to keep their faces away from an animal's mouth, beak or claws and never to kiss an animal. Unsupervised handling of animals by any students is not to be permitted.
9. Persons with open cuts or sores are not to handle animals. If a person is scratched or bitten, the individual must immediately wash the wounds well with soap and water.
10. Animals are to be housed in appropriate cages or aquariums, etc.
11. A tray or drop sheet is to be kept under animal cages to capture animal wastes and material to prevent these materials from spilling onto floors and furnishings.
12. 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.
13. Cages are never to be cleaned in kitchens or anywhere where food is prepared or eaten. Sinks, bathtubs or shower stalls for cleaning animal cages must be thoroughly disinfected before they can be used again.
14. Non-latex gloves must be worn when cleaning aquariums or animal cages and hands washed thoroughly when finished.
15. For an Animal Bite
 - 15.1 Isolate the animal that has bitten the person.
 - 15.2 The Principal must be informed of the incident.
 - 15.3 An Accident Report must be completed and submitted to the Safety and Wellness Coordinator.
 - 15.4 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 Director of Learning Supports.
16. For an Animal Illness
 - 16.1 If possible, identify cause of animal illness.
 - 16.2 Do not allow individuals, other than the primary care teacher, to handle animal.
 - 16.3 If possible, remove from classroom to a quiet secure area.
 - 16.4 If an animal has an apparent health issue or if an animal is in distress, a veterinarian is to be contacted for diagnosis and treatment.

17. In the event of the death of 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.

Adopted/Revised: JUN 2016/JUN 2019/NOV 2019/JAN 2023

Reference: Section 11, 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225 Education Act
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Alberta Animal Protection Act
Alberta Wildlife Act
Criminal Code of Canada