

ANIMAL AND PET POLICY

Having a relationship with a pet and/or animal can help children develop a caring approach and skills such as nurturing, responsibility, empathy and improved communication. Having a pet in an early childhood environment enables children who are not otherwise exposed to animals learn these skills. The pet becomes part of the daily educational program and leads to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Our centre will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, staff or visitors of the centre.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed

PURPOSE

Having pets at our Highland Grove can be a valuable part of children's education, enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy. Providing children with access to animals helps them learn about the life cycle and relationships and improves communication. Our centre aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at HGP, which will educate children in the proper care of animals.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, students, volunteers, management and visitors of the centre.

IMPLEMENTATION

Pets help children from a young age learn to care for other living things. They can teach a sense of responsibility, caring and tolerance. They can offer many opportunities for developing observational skills and provide basic natural science experiences. If the educators wish to have a pet in the Service, they must make all the decisions in consultation with the nominated supervisor and families.

Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals, there are also a range of concerns which educators need to consider when maintaining the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals.

Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy.

Providing children with access to animals within our Service will help them learn about life cycles and relationships and improve communication skills. We feel role modelling of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals are beneficial for children.

Questions to consider prior to having a pet. (Staff meetings provide a forum for discussion).

- How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during service closure periods?
- What physical space is available? Is it adequate for the animal you are thinking of?
- 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 who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes in policies and procedures need to be considered?
- What are the health and safety risks? (See playground Risk Assessment in part).

ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISKS

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the Service, there are issues that approved providers and educators need to consider for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned prior to choosing a pet or having an animal visit the Service.

A comprehensive risk assessment should therefore be conducted when deciding the type of animal and the way the children engage with it.

Potential risks may include:

- diseases- from birds (Parrot fever -psittacosis) and other animals
- injury due to biting, kicking or pushing a child over (e.g., farm animals)
- scratching (e.g., chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs)
- pests and vermin (snakes, rats, mice)
- allergies (e.g., bees, wasps, ants)

Disease

Access to animals at Highland Grove requires special consideration to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. To minimize the possibility of the spread of disease, the following procedures have been implemented.

- Children and adults use effective handwashing after handling pets/animals, or handling bedding, cages or enclosures.
- Pets will receive all injections required by a vet.
- The areas where pets/animals live and stay will be cleaned regularly (gloves will be used).

Appropriate Supervision

Children are appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal.

Be aware of children who may have allergies to insects such as bees, wasps and ants that may be more apparent when animals are kept in an educational setting.

Service Pets

- All pets and their enclosures are to be kept clean and hygienic with appropriate bedding and water.
- Food will be made available for all pets and animals but kept out of reach of children at all times.
- Any animal or pet kept at HGP are regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, and checked for fleas, diseases and wormed.
- Animals including pets will not be allowed in the sand pit, children's eating or sleeping area.
- Anyone who has handled the animal will immediately wash their hands after they have finished handling the animal or pet.
- We will include in the program how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.

Animal Visit

There are situations that may spontaneously occur, involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into Highland Grove. Educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times they will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect or bird to be approached or touched by Educators, children or families.

If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous, such as a snake or spider, educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance. In NSW this authority is the National Parks and Wildlife Service - 1300 361 967 (8.30am – 5.00pm) or NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc. on 13 000 WIRES - 13 00 094 737.

A professional should monitor the animal's movements to ensure a speedy and efficient capture, but priority is to be given to child, staff and family safety.

It is important for management or educators to complete a risk assessment prior to animals being brought to the Service.

VISITS FROM CHILDREN'S PETS

Occasionally a child may have a new pet such as a puppy or kitten that they wish to bring to preschool

to show their peers and educators. Whilst this provides a wonderful learning experience for children, families must be advised to seek permission from the Director or Educational Leader prior to bringing in the pet, enabling staff to plan effectively for the visit.

Pests & Vermin

- Pest control will occur at the service on a twice annual basis.
- Educators will monitor any occurrences in the centre to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and vermin are seen, educators will advise the Nominated Supervisor.
- The Approved Provider is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits.
- Where appropriate, educators will discuss with the children safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects.
- If the remains of animal or animal faeces have been found, the remains will be disposed of according to the local Council guidelines and the area where the remains were found will be thoroughly disinfected.

Date: 6/5/26

Sources:

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). [*Guide to the National Quality Framework*](#)
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulation
- ECA Code of Ethics.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- Kidsafe NSW Inc. – www.kidsafensw.org.au
- NSW Department of Health - www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/general/pettingzoo_fs.html
- Guide to the National Quality Standard (3) ACECQA (2011)
- Health and Safety in Children's Services Model Policies and Practices – 2nd Ed. revised (2003) www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/childcare_model_policies.pdf
- Kidsafe NSW Inc. – www.kidsafensw.org.au
- Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing Infectious Diseases in Child Care – 5th Edition.
- Bone, J. (2013) The animals as the fourth educator: A literature review of animals and young children in pedagogical relationships Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 38(2) Deakin West ACT: Early Childhood Australia.
- Thompson, K. & Gullone, E. (2003) Promotion of empathy and prosocial behaviour in children through humane education. Australian Psychologist, 38 (3). Department of Psychology, Monash University: Victoria, Australia.
- Revised National Quality Standard