

**DODGELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Board Policy Manual**

**383 - Rule**

**GUIDELINES FOR ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide information that promotes health and safety for the staff, students and animals when animals are used in classrooms or the school. Inadequate understanding of animal disease and behavior can lead to unnecessary risks for the staff, students and animals. These guidelines are designed to promote a better understanding of:

- animals that are not safe to bring into classroom situations;
- safety precautions for animals with the potential to transmit disease to people;
- safety precautions for introducing animals into classroom situations; and,
- proper handling of animal wastes to limit the spread of disease from animals to people.

**Animals Unacceptable for School Visits:**

1. Wild Animals: Wild animals pose a risk for transmitting rabies as well as other zoonotic diseases (diseases which can be transferred from animals to people) and, therefore, should not be brought to schools or handled by students. Wild animal behavior also tends to be unpredictable.

Exceptions to this prohibition include instances when wild animals are presented at schools by professionals who have experience handling wildlife, or the animals are displayed in enclosed cages which prevent contact between the animal and the students. Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, and wild carnivores, those animals should not be permitted on school grounds under any circumstances (including recently dead animals).

2. Poisonous Animals: Spiders, venomous insects, poisonous snakes, reptiles, and lizards are prohibited from being brought onto school grounds.

Exceptions to this prohibition include instances when such animals are presented at schools by professionals who have experience handling such animals, or the animals are displayed in cases which provide a physical barrier between the animal and the students (e.g., animal is enclosed behind sturdy glass or plastic).

3. Wolf-Hybrids: These animals are crosses between a wolf and a dog and have shown a propensity for aggression, especially toward young children. Therefore, these animals shall not be allowed on school premises.
4. Stray Animals: Stray animals shall not be brought onto school campuses because the health and vaccination status of these animals is seldom known.
5. Aggressive Animals: Animals which are bred or trained to demonstrate aggression toward humans and/or animals, or animals which have demonstrated aggression toward humans and/or animals in the past should not be permitted on school premises. Aggressive, unprovoked, or threatening behavior shall require the immediate removal of the animal.

Exceptions may be sentry or canine corps dogs for demonstration that are under the control of trained military or law enforcement officials.

## **Guidelines for Animals Permitted to Visit Schools:**

1. Clean and Healthy Animals: It is important that animals that are brought onto school premises be well groomed, clean and healthy so that the risk of their transmitting diseases to students is minimal. Children tend to be more susceptible to zoonotic diseases and parasites than do adults (lack of hand washing, more apt to put their hands in their mouths); therefore, animals that they handle shall be well-groomed and free of internal parasites. Animals that are brought to school shall be free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks, and mites.
3. Verified Rabies Vaccination: Evidence of current rabies vaccination is required for all dogs, cats, and ferrets which are brought onto school premises for instructional purposes. Kittens and puppies may only be appropriate for short classroom visits. Dogs and cats under three months of age and not vaccinated against rabies shall not be handled by students.
4. Health Certificates for Dogs: A current health certificate that is signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of current vaccination against canine distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus, bordetella, and rabies is required. Animals must have been dewormed for ascarids, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms within three weeks of the school visit. Dogs over four months of age shall be housebroken. Younger animals should be approved by the building principal or administrator before visiting.
5. Health Certificates for Cats: A current health certificate that is signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of current vaccination against feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, feline leukemia, and rabies is required. Animals must have been dewormed for ascarids, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms within three weeks of the school visit.
6. Prior Approval: Prior approval of the building principal and classroom teachers are required before any animal is brought into the school.
7. Parent/Guardian Notice: Teachers must notify parents/guardians of plans for a visiting animal and receive written approval or notification of a student's allergy or fear that would contraindicate exposure.
8. Allergies to Animals and Injuries by Animals: Students and teachers should immediately report to the school nurse all scratches, bites, and other injuries, including allergy reactions or illnesses. Supervised care by a teacher competent in caring for animals shall always be provided.
9. Special Precautions: Immunocompromised students may be especially susceptible to zoonotic diseases; therefore, special precautions may be needed to minimize the risk of disease transmission to these students. Consultation with the child's parent about precautionary measures is strongly advised. Recommendations for specific precautionary measures may be solicited from the Wisconsin Department of Public Health's Division of Epidemiology.

## **Proper Restraint of Animals:**

Because animals may react strangely to classroom situations, it is important to have an effective way to control them. Fear may cause an animal to attempt to escape or even act aggressively in unfamiliar situations. Appropriate restraint devices will allow the holder to react quickly and prevent harm to the students or escape of the animal.

1. Collars and Leashes: Dogs, cats, and ferrets shall be wearing a proper collar, harness, and/or leash when on school premises or in the classroom so that they can be easily controlled.

Household rope or string is not considered an appropriate restraint tool. The safety of a locked cage is required for all animals that cannot be collared or leashed. Dogs and ferrets are to have a collar or harness and a leash. Cats are to have a collar. The owner or person responsible for the animal is to stay with the animal during its visit to the school. No animal will be allowed to roam unrestrained on the school premises or in the classroom. No animal is to be allowed to roam the classroom at free will or stray for any extended period of time.

2. Pet Birds: Pet birds should be in a locked cage and never be allowed to fly free in a classroom.
3. Designated Areas: All animals should be restricted to the area designated by the building principal or administrator. In school facilities in which the common dining area is also used as an auditorium, gymnasium, or multi-purpose room, animals may be allowed in the area at times other than during meals if:
  - a. Effective partitioning or self-closing doors separate the area from food storage or food preparation areas.
  - b. Condiments, equipment, and utensils are stored in enclosed cabinets or removed from the area when animals are present; and
  - c. Dining areas, including tables, countertops, and similar surfaces, are effectively cleaned before the next meal service.
4. Estrus: Dogs and cats shall not to be in estrus ("heat") at the time of the visit.

#### **Specific Recommendations:**

The following recommendations should be observed for the specified animals because zoonotic diseases can be carried or because of certain tendencies of the animal:

1. Psittacine Birds: Because psittacine birds can carry zoonotic disease such as psittacosis, such birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels) should not be handled by students. Birds showing any signs of illness should not be brought to school. Psittacine birds may be brought to school as long as their cages are clean and the birds' wastes can be contained, such as within a cage. Psittacine birds permanently housed on school property in cages should be treated prophylactically for psittacosis for 45 days prior to entering the premises.
2. Ferrets: Ferrets can be allowed to visit classrooms, but must be handled by the person responsible for them. Because of their propensity to bite when startled, it is not recommended that students hold ferrets visiting the classroom.
3. Reptiles and Amphibians: Because all reptiles and amphibians can carry salmonellosis, even when reared as pets or for display, they are generally not appropriate for the school setting. Students under 12 years of age shall be prohibited from handling reptiles and amphibians. No turtles with a carapace (shell) length less than four inches are allowed in schools. Older students handling a reptile or amphibian shall be instructed to wash their hands thoroughly afterwards.

#### **Student Contact with Animals:**

Even very tame animals will react aggressively in strange situations. Therefore, student contact with animals shall always be supervised and regulated by a few basic rules:

1. Because increased activity and sudden movements can make animals feel threatened, all student contact with animals should be highly organized and supervised.
  - a. Animal bites can usually be avoided if students are kept in small groups.
  - b. Rough play or teasing should not be allowed.
2. It is not recommended that students be allowed to feed pets directly from their hands.
3. Small animals such as rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, and mice are not to be handled.
4. Students are not to be 'kissing' animals or having them in close contact with their faces. This statement is especially true for reptiles and amphibians.
5. Education with animals should be used to reemphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations. All older students who handle animals are to be instructed to wash their hands immediately after handling them.
6. Animals are not allowed in the vicinity of sinks where students wash their hands, or in any area where food is prepared, stored, or served, or in areas used for the cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes. Animals should also be restricted from nursing stations or sterile and clean supply rooms. Cats or dogs shall not be allowed in sandboxes where students play.

#### **Keeping Small Animals or Reptiles for Extended Periods of Time:**

1. Small animals like hamsters, rabbits, and reptiles that are going to stay in the school or classroom for an extended period of time are to be kept in a locked cage where access to the animal or reptile is limited to the teacher, administrator, or adult designee.
2. The cages are to be kept locked at all times except during feeding, cleaning, and when being studied.
3. Parent permission slips must be sent to all parents/guardians of students in the classroom indicating the intent of the teachers or administrators to keep the animal in the room. All parents/guardians of the students in the classroom must grant permission.

#### **Handling and Disposing of Animal Wastes While on School Premises:**

1. Clean-up of Animal Wastes: Students are not allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine, blood, etc.). Animal wastes are to be disposed of daily where students cannot come in contact with them, such as in a plastic bag or container with a lid or via the sewage system for feces. Food handlers are not to be involved in the clean-up of animal waste.
2. Prohibited Areas: Animal wastes should not be disposed of, and visiting animals should not be allowed to defecate in or near areas where students routinely play or congregate (i.e., sandboxes, school playgrounds, etc.).
3. Litter Boxes: Litter boxes for visiting animals shall not be allowed in classrooms.
4. Fish Aquariums: Disposable gloves should be worn when cleaning aquariums. Used tank water should be disposed of in sinks that are not used for food preparation, or for obtaining water for human consumption. Students under 12 shall not be allowed to clean up animal wastes.

## **Humane Treatment:**

To avoid the intentional or unintentional abuse, mistreatment, or neglect of animals, the humane care and husbandry recommendations of the National Science Teachers Association shall be adopted and implemented.

Approved: April 7, 1997  
Revised (WASB): February 23, 2015