

Appendix D: Guidelines for Visiting And Resident Animals In Schools

Animals are effective and valuable teaching aids, but safeguards are required to reduce the risk for infection and injury. These abbreviated recommendations are based on guidelines developed by the Alabama Department of Public Health* and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.† Recommendations are also available from the National Science Teachers Association§ and the National Association of Biology Teachers.¶

General Guidelines for School Settings**

- Wash hands after contact with animals, animal products, or their environment.
- Supervise human-animal contact, particularly for children aged <5 years.
- Handle and house animals humanely.
- Display animals in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraint.
- Designate areas for animal contact.
- Do not allow animals to roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals.
- Do not allow animals in areas where food or drink are consumed.
- Clean and disinfect all areas where animals have been present. This task should not be performed by children aged <5 years. Children aged >5 years should only perform this task while supervised by an adult, ideally when children aged <5 years are not present.
- Obtain appropriate veterinary care, a certificate of veterinary inspection, and/or proof of rabies vaccination for visiting animals according to local or state requirements.
- Keep animals clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites, and lice.
- Consult with parents to determine special considerations needed for children who are immunocompromised, who have allergies, or who have asthma.

Animal-Specific Guidelines

- Fish — Use disposable gloves when cleaning aquariums, and do not dispose of aquarium water in sinks used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water.
- Nonpsittacine birds — See General Guidelines.
- Psittacine birds (e.g., parrots, parakeets, and cockatiels)— Consult the psittacosis compendium,†† and seek veterinary advice. Ensure that staff clean cages when children are not present. Use birds treated or testing negative for psittacosis (chlamydiosis).
- Domestic dogs, cats, rabbits, and rodents (e.g., mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and chinchillas) —See General Guidelines.
- Baby chicks and ducks — To prevent *Salmonella* or *Campylobacter* infection, children aged <5 years should not have contact with baby chicks and ducks.
- Reptiles (including turtles, lizards, and nonvenomous snakes) and amphibians — To prevent *Salmonella* infection, children aged <5 years should not have contact with reptiles and amphibians.
- Ferrets — To prevent children aged <5 years from being bitten, they should not have direct contact with ferrets.

- Farm animals — See General Guidelines. Certain animals (e.g., young ruminants and young poultry) excrete *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and *Cryptosporidium* intermittently and in substantial numbers; therefore, meticulous attention to personal hygiene is essential or these animals might not be appropriate in some settings (e.g., particularly for children aged <5 years).

Animals Not Recommended in School Settings

- Wild or exotic animals (e.g., lions, tigers, ocelots, and bears).
- Nonhuman primates (e.g., monkeys and apes).
- Mammals at higher risk for transmitting rabies (e.g., bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes).
- Wolf-dog hybrids.
- Aggressive or unpredictable animals, wild or domestic.
- Stray animals with unknown health and vaccination history.
- Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians.

* W.B. Johnston, DVM, Alabama Department of Public Health, personal communication, 2002.

† Hansen GR. Animals in Kansas schools: guidelines for visiting and resident pets. Topeka, KA: Kansas Department of Health and Environment; 2004. Available at <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/pdf/hef/ab1007.pdf>.

§ National Science Teachers Association. Standards for Science Teacher Preparation. Arlington, VA: National Science Teachers Association; 2003. Available at <http://www.nsta.org/main/pdfs/NSTASTandards2003.pdf>.

¶ National Association of Biology Teachers. The use of animals in biology education. Reston, VA: National Association of Biology Teachers; 1995. Available at http://www.nabt.org/sub/position_statements/animals.asp.

** Guide, hearing, or other service animals and law enforcement animals can be used when they are under the control of a person familiar with the specific animal and in accordance with recommendations from the sponsoring organizations.

†† National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. Compendium of measures to control *Chlamydophila psittaci* (formerly *Chlamydia psittaci*) infection among humans (psittacosis) and pet birds, 2006. Available at <http://www.nasphv.org/83416/index.html>.