

Guidelines for Visiting and Resident Pets in the Garden City Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide information to promote safety for instructors and students when animals are brought into the classroom. Animals are part of our daily lives; they can be used effectively as teaching aids, and the positive benefits of the human-animal bond are well established. However, the special situation of classrooms necessitates certain safeguards.

Animals that are Unacceptable for School Visits

1. Wild animals

Defining a “wild” animal is difficult and subjective. For the purpose of these guidelines, a wild animal is any mammal that is NOT one of the following:

- a. Domestic dog
- b. Domestic cat
- c. Domestic ferret
- d. Domestic unregulated (e.g., cow, sheep, goat, pig, horse)
- e. Pet rabbit
- f. Pet rodent (e.g., mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas)

Wild animals pose a risk for transmitting rabies as well as other zoonotic diseases (i.e., diseases which can be transferred from animals to humans) and should never be brought into schools or handled by children. In Kansas it is unlawful to possess skunks, foxes, raccoons, and coyotes as pets (K.A.R. 28-1-14).

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

2. Poisonous animals

Spiders, venomous insects, poisonous reptiles (including snakes), and poisonous amphibians are prohibited from being brought onto schools grounds. Exceptions to this include those instances when these animals are presented at schools by a professional who has experience handling them, and are displayed in cases which provide a physical barrier between the animal and the children (e.g., animal is enclosed behind a sturdy glass or plastic).

3. Wolf-dog hybrids

These animals are crosses between a wolf and a domestic dog and have shown a propensity for aggression, especially toward young children. Therefore, they are not allowed on school grounds.

4. Stray animals

Stray animals should never be brought into the school building because the health and vaccination status of these animals is unknown. If a stray animal is discovered on school

grounds notify Garden City Police Department and ask them to dispatch the Animal Control. Keep all children away from a stray animal.

5. Aggressive animals

Animals which are bred or trained to demonstrate aggression towards humans or other animals, or animals which have demonstrated such aggressive behavior in the past, should not be permitted on school grounds. Aggressive, unprovoked, or threatening behavior mandates the animal's immediate removal from school grounds.

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

Special Conditions for Specific Animals

Specific recommendations to be observed for the following animals because of their zoonotic diseases that they may carry or because of certain tendencies:

1. Reptiles (including non-poisonous snakes, lizards, and iguanas) and amphibians

Because of the risk of contracting salmonellosis from these animals even when they are reared in captivity, special precautions are necessary when handling them. These animals may intermittently shed salmonella, and negative cultures will not guarantee that the animals are not infected. Treatment of infected animals with antibiotics has not proven useful and may promote the development and spread of resistant bacteria.

When reptiles and amphibians are present at schools they must be under the direct responsibility of the assigned teacher who has training and experience handling them. The animals should be kept and displayed in cases which provide a physical barrier between the animal and the children.

The teacher must be responsible for clean-up of all waste and adhere to good hand washing techniques.

2. Psittacine birds

Because psittacine birds can carry zoonotic diseases such as psittacosis (*Chlamydia psittaci*, parrot fecer), such birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels) should not be handled by children. Birds showing any signs of illness should not be brought into school. Psittacine birds permanently housed on school property in cages must be treated prophylactically with appropriate tetracyclines for psittacosis for 45 days prior to entering the premises along with a current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian.

3. Ferrets

Ferrets can be allowed to visit school classrooms, but they must be handled by the person responsible for them. Because of their propensity to bite when startled, children should not be allowed to hold or pet ferrets.

4. Fish

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.

5. Guide, hearing, and other service animals and law enforcement animals

These animals should be allowed on school grounds or in classrooms. A current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof that the animal is clean and healthy so that risk of transmitting diseases is minimal. The animal is a service animal and should not be treated as a pet. Owner of the animal is responsible for proper care, feeding and restraint of animal. The owner is responsible for proper handling and disposal of animal wastes while on school grounds.

Suggested Animals for Use in Schools

The following is a list of animals that are appropriate pets to be housed in schools:

1. Small pet rodents (e.g., mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs chinchillas)
2. Pet rabbits
3. Aquarium fish (salt or fresh water)
4. Non-psittacine cage and aviary birds (e.g., canaries, finches, mynahs, diamonds doves)

All animals housed in schools must be provided an appropriate environment (e.g., secure housing, suitable temperature, adequate exercise) and a proper diet. There must be a plan for the continued care of these animals during the days that school is not in session. There must be a current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian on file in the principals office showing proof that the animal is clean, healthy, and properly vaccinated so that risk of transmitting diseases is minimal. The assigned teacher is responsible for proper waste clean-up.

Consultation with a veterinarian is advised to help with environmental and nutritional needs and provide care in the event of illness or injury to the animal.

Guidelines for Animals that are Permitted to Visit Schools

It is important that animals that are brought onto the school grounds be clean and healthy so that the risk of transmitting diseases is minimal. Visiting animals should be restricted to an area designated by the principal or administrator. Animals which are brought to school should be clean and free of disease and external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites. Therefore the following are specific guidelines for some common visiting animals:

1. Animal must be owned by current owner minimum of six months.
2. Current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian documented for all dogs, cats, and ferrets brought onto school grounds. Animals under six months of age and not vaccinated against rabies will not be allowed on school grounds.
3. Current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of:
 - a. Current appropriate vaccinations
 - b. Negative fecal exam or proof of successful treatment for internal parasites in the past year

- c. Animal is free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks, and mites and free of obvious skin lesions
4. Dogs must be housebroken (including puppies)

Proper Restraint of Animals

Because animals may react strangely to classroom situations, it is important to have an effective way to control them.

1. Collars and leashes

Dogs, cats and ferrets should be wearing a proper collar, harness, and/or leash when on the school grounds or in the classroom so they can be easily controlled. Household rope or string is not an appropriate restraint tool. The owner or responsible person should stay with the animal during its visit to the school. No animal should be allowed to roam unrestrained on the school grounds or in the classroom.

2. Pet birds

Pet birds should never be allowed to fly free in a classroom.

3. Designated areas

All animals must be restricted to the area designated by the 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 meals if:

- a. effective partitioning or self-closing doors separate the area from food storage and 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. Cleaning should be done with a 10% bleach solution or commercial disinfectant.

Animals should **not** be in dining areas during mealtimes.

4. Estrus

Female dogs and cats should be determined not to be in estrus (heat) at the time of the visit.

Student Contact with Animals

Increased activity and sudden movements can make animals feel threatened, so all student contact with animals should always be supervised and conform to a few basic rules. Even very tame animals may act aggressively in strange situations.

1. Animal bites can usually be avoided if students are kept in small groups.
2. Rough play or teasing absolutely will not be allowed.
3. Children should not be allowed to feed pets directly from their hands.

4. Small animals such as rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, and mice should be handled very gently. Rabbits rarely like to be held and will struggle to free themselves. Rodents may bite when they feel threatened.
5. Children should not be allowed “kissing” animals or having them in close contact with their faces. Viruses can spread through saliva (including rabies).
6. Education with animals should be used to reemphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations. All children who handle animals should be instructed to wash their hands immediately after handling them.
7. Animals should not be allowed in the vicinity of sinks where children wash their hands, or in any areas where food is prepared, stored, or served. Animals should not be kept in areas used for cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes.
8. Do not allow cats or dogs in sandboxes where children play.
9. Consideration of students with special health concerns.

Immunocompromised students (e.g., children with organ transplants, children currently receiving cancer chemotherapy or radiation therapy) may be especially susceptible to zoonotic diseases; therefore, special precautions may be needed to minimize the risk of disease transmission to these students.

Students with certain allergies may be susceptible to reactions from mild to severe.

Check with your school nurse prior to obtaining a resident pet or allowing a visiting pet.

10. In the event of an animal bite (skin is broken), contact your school nurse and the Garden City Police Department.

Handling and Disposal of Animal Wastes While on School Grounds

1. Clean up of animal wastes. Children should not handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine, blood, etc.). Animal wastes should be disposed of where children cannot come into contact with them, such as in a plastic bag or container with a well-fitted lid or via the sewage waste system for feces. Food handlers should not be involved in the clean-up of animal wastes.
2. Prohibited areas. Animal wastes should not be disposed of and visiting animals should not be allowed to defecate in or near areas where children routinely play or congregate (e.g., sandboxes, school playgrounds).
3. Litter boxes. Litter boxes for visiting animals will not be allowed in classrooms.

Embryology Studies in the Classroom

1. The purpose for embryology studies is to enhance instruction and learning by providing hands-on opportunities for students and increase their experiences that will promote increased student achievement.
2. Studies should be tied to the curriculum at their grade level.
3. Because of the high risk of salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis from baby chicks and ducks they are inappropriate in schools. Therefore, when using eggs of these animals for embryology studies there should be a plan for appropriate environment after the eggs hatch.
4. The animals should be kept and displayed in cases which provide a physical barrier between the animal and the children.
5. Assigned staff member would be responsible for proper care and feeding of these animals. Assigned staff member would be responsible for proper disposal of all wastes.
6. There should be a plan for the continued care of these animals off school grounds following the embryology study.

Animals can serve as excellent teaching tools, and students love to have them visit the classroom. When using animals as an instructional aid, the objective should always be well planned in advance. By following the above recommendations, the use of animals in the classroom can be made safe and enjoyable for both the animals and the children.

Hand Washing Instructions

Washing hands thoroughly and frequently avoids most contagious diseases.

Thoroughly means:

- ! Wet hands with running water
- ! Pump soap into palms
- ! Rub together to make a lather
- ! Scrub hands vigorously for 15 seconds
- ! Rinse soap off of hands
- ! Dry hands

Frequently means:

- ! After going to the toilet
- ! After petting or handling animals
- ! Before eating
- ! Before preparing foods

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