



# Risk Management Guidelines

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Subject:  Pets in the Classroom
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## Board Guideline: Sample Only

AR 6163.2

### Animals at School

#### Use of Animals for Instructional Purposes

Before any student or employee brings an animal to school for an instructional purpose, he/she shall receive written permission from the principal or designee. The principal or designee shall give such permission only after he/she has provided written notification to all parents/guardians of students in the affected class, asking them to verify whether their child has any known allergies, asthma, or other health condition that may be aggravated by the animal's presence. When a parent/guardian has provided notification that his/her child has an allergy, asthma, or other health condition that may be aggravated by the animal, the principal shall take appropriate measures to protect the student from exposure to the health risk posed by the animal and its habitat.

*(cf. 3514 - Environmental Safety)*

*(cf. 5141.21 - Administering Medication and Monitoring Health Conditions)*

*(cf. 5141.23 - Asthma Management)*

All animals brought to school must be in good physical condition and must be appropriately immunized. The teacher shall ensure that the species of animal is appropriate for the instructional purpose and age and maturity of the students.

All animals brought to school shall be adequately fed, effectively controlled, humanely treated, and properly housed in cages or containers suitable for the species. The teacher shall ensure that cages and containers are cleaned regularly and that waste materials are removed and disposed of in an appropriate manner.

*(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)*

*(cf. 5142 - Safety)*

The teacher shall ensure that students receive instructions regarding the proper handling of and personal hygiene around animals.

*(cf. 5141.22 - Infectious Diseases)*

Except for service animals, as defined below, all animals are prohibited on school transportation services. (Education Code 39839; 13 CCR 1216)

*(cf. 3541.2 – Transportation for Students with Disabilities)*

*(cf. 5131.1 – Bus Conduct)*

## Use of Service Animals by Individuals with Disabilities

For an individual with a disability, service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks related to the individual's disability and for his/her benefit. For example, for an individual who is blind or has low vision, a service animal would mean a dog AR 6163.2 (b) that helps him/her with vision, navigation, and other tasks; for an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, a service animal would mean a dog that alerts him/her to the presence of people or sounds; and for an individual with psychiatric or neurological disabilities, a service animal would mean a dog that assists him/her by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. (28 CFR 35.104)

Individuals with disabilities may be accompanied on school premises and on school transportation by service animals, including specially trained guide dogs, signal dogs, or service dogs. (Education Code 39839; Civil Code 54.2; 28 CFR 35.136)

*(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)*

*(cf. 3541.2 - Transportation for Students with Disabilities)*

*(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)*

*(cf. 6164.6 - Identification and Education Under Section 504)*

### **Background**

This guideline is to provide information to promote safety for faculty and students when animals are brought into the school and into the classroom, and to provide guidance about which animals pose a public health threat in a school setting.

Any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to rabies, which can be a very serious fatal disease and, if infected, can be transmitted to students and staff. A single wild animal or unvaccinated pet carrying rabies has the potential to expose many children and adults.

### **Guideline**

**Wild animals and domestic stray animals** pose a risk for transmitting rabies as well as other zoonotic diseases (a disease which can be transmitted from animals to people) and, therefore, will not be allowed in the school or allowed to be handled by staff or children. These include, but are not limited to, bats, raccoons, chipmunks, squirrels, skunks, foxes, constricting snakes, non-venomous snakes, venomous snakes, bobcats, fisher cats, bears, deer and other wild animals (either live or dead).

**Poisonous Animals** — Venomous insects, spiders, snakes, reptiles and lizards will not be permitted in the school.

**Bats and Bat Houses** — Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies and for this reason bat houses will not be installed on school grounds.

**Birds** — Psittacosis, a serious disease that infects birds, can be transmitted to humans. Even birds that appear healthy can be carriers of this disease. Because of the risk of psittacosis, birds (especially parrots, parakeets, macaws, pigeons, doves, etc.) should not be handled by children and should never be allowed to fly free in the classroom, or in the school. If a wild bird enters the

school, the janitorial staff will be responsible for its removal. An exception would be a trained professional environmentalist/botanist who is showing and handling the bird for educational purposes who will have control of the bird at all times.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** — Reptiles (iguanas, non-poisonous snakes, lizards and turtles) and amphibians (frogs, salamanders and toads) can spread salmonella to humans, resulting in diarrhea and fever. This disease can be life-threatening in very young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. These animals should not be handled by children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home. Anyone handling a reptile or amphibian should wash his/her hands thoroughly, immediately following contact.

**Chicks and Ducks** — Chicks and ducks can also spread salmonella to humans. This disease can be life threatening in very young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. These animals should not be handled by children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home. Anyone handling chicks or ducks should wash their hands thoroughly, immediately following contact.

**Guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, rabbits** — Healthy guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils and rabbits pose a limited health risk. Such animals may be allowed as classroom pets or as occasional visitors with advance notification to the principal and teacher under the strict supervision of an adult. Even tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations; therefore, student contact with the animal(s) should always be closely supervised and animals should not be allowed to run loose in the classroom. Students should not be allowed to "kiss" these animals.

**Fish** — Fish pose very limited health risk and may be allowed in the classroom. Disposable gloves should be worn when cleaning aquariums and tank water should not be disposed of in sinks that are used for food preparation or drinking water.

**Pets, Dogs, Cats, Wolf-Hybrids, Ferrets and Farm Animals** — These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies (if not vaccinated), as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and may cause harm to students and staff. They, therefore, should not be regularly permitted in the school. Guide, hearing and other service dogs or animals will be allowed in the school and on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination and with approval from the administrator. Law enforcement dogs may be allowed in the school and on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination and with approval from the administrator.

### **Zoonotic Illnesses (Diseases Transmitted from Animals to Humans)**

- Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which you can get from a tick bite.
- West Nile virus, which you can get from a mosquito bite.
- Dengue, malaria, and chikungunya, which you can get if you travel to areas where these diseases are common, such as the Caribbean, and are bitten by an infected mosquito.
- Salmonella infection, which you can get after handling a baby chick, chicken, duck, turtle, or snake.

- E. coli infection, which you can catch if you touch areas in a petting zoo or animal exhibit where some of the animals are infected. You can also catch E. coli infection if you work at a dairy because cows can have E. coli germs on their udders.
- Coccidia, disease that lives in the intestine of animals, handle animals with care, and always discard any fecal matter prominently.

### **Protection Methods to Minimize Diseases**

- Keeping hands clean through improved hand hygiene is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.
  - Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water.
  - If clean, running water is not accessible, as is common in many parts of the world, use soap and available water.
  - If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.
- Always wash your hands and follow proper hygiene after being around animals, even if you didn't touch the animal.
- Know the simple things you can do to stay safe around your pets.
- Prevent bites from mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas.
- Learn more about ways to handle food safely—whether it's for yourself or your family, your pet, or other animals.
- Be aware of zoonotic diseases both at home, away from home (such as at petting zoos or other animal exhibits), and when you travel.
- Avoid bites and scratches from animals.

### **When Allowed Animals are Brought onto School Property:**

- Any animal present in the school or on school grounds must be clean and healthy so the risk of its transmitting disease to students and teachers is minimal. Any education with animals should also be used to re-emphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations.
- In the event of an animal bite or scratch, procedures for first aid and notification of the parents or legal guardians should be followed.
- No permitted animal will be allowed in food preparation areas at any time.
- Animal cages or tanks should be cleaned thoroughly on a regular basis. Students should not be allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine, blood, etc.) and wastes should be disposed of in a plastic bag or container with a lid. Anyone who cleans a cage or tank should wash his/her hands immediately after completing the task.
- Children with allergies or those with immune deficiencies may be especially susceptible to diseases transmitted by animals or allergic reactions; therefore, special precautions may be

needed to minimize risks. Consultation with the school nurse and the child's parents or legal guardians about precautionary measures is strongly advised.

- The administrator and a specific classroom teacher may accept a child's pet for "show and tell" with proof of current rabies vaccination. The parent or guardian must bring the pet, stay for the "show and tell", and take the pet from the school during this time-limited activity.
- Educational organizations, may from time to time bring animals to the school for educational purposes with approval from the administrator, with stringent guidelines for control of the animals and compliance with the overall provisions of the School Animal Guideline.

### **Implementing and Communicating the Animal Guideline**

To effectively protect students and staff, the entire school community must follow this Animal Guideline. Parents, teachers, school nurses and other staff must be reminded of this guideline on a regular basis and know of its provisions.