



MMWR

Recommendations and Reports

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Appendix D

Guidelines for Animals in School and Child-Care Settings

Animals are effective and valuable teaching aids, but safeguards are required to reduce the risk for infection and injury. The following guidelines are a summary of guidelines developed by the Alabama Department of Public Health,* the Kansas Department of Health and Environment,[†] and CDC (75,76). Recommendations also are 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 feed, or animal environments.
- Supervise human-animal contact, particularly involving children aged <5 years.
- Display animals in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraints.
- Do not allow animals to roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals.
- Designate specific areas for animal contact.
- Do not allow food in animal contact areas; do not allow animals in areas where food and drink are prepared or consumed.
- Clean and disinfect all areas where animals have been present. Children should only perform this task under adult supervision.
- Do not clean animal cages or enclosures in sinks or other areas used to prepare food and drinks.
- Obtain appropriate veterinary care, a certificate of veterinary inspection, or proof of rabies vaccination (or all of these) according to local or state requirements.
- Keep animals clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites, and lice.
- Parents should be informed of the benefits and potential risks associated with animals in school classrooms. Consult with parents to determine special considerations needed for children who are immunocompromised, have allergies, or have asthma.
- Ensure that personnel providing animals for educational purposes are knowledgeable regarding animal handling and zoonotic disease issues. Persons or facilities that display animals to the public should be licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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.
- **Psittacine birds (e.g., parrots, parakeets, and cockatiels):** Consult the psittacosis compendium,^{††} and seek veterinary advice. Use birds treated or that test negative for avian chlamydiosis.

- **Nonpsittacine birds:** See General Guidelines for School Settings.
- **Domestic dogs, cats, rabbits, and rodents (e.g., mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and chinchillas):** See General Guidelines for School Settings.
- **Reptiles (e.g., turtles, snakes, and lizards):** Should not be kept in facilities with children aged <5 years, nor should children aged <5 years be allowed to have direct contact with these animals.
- **Amphibians (e.g., frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts):** To prevent *Salmonella* infection, children aged <5 years should not have direct contact with amphibians.
- **Baby poultry (e.g., chicks, ducklings, and goslings):** Should not be kept in facilities with children aged <5 years, nor should children aged <5 years be allowed to have direct contact with these animals.
- **Ferrets:** To prevent bites, children aged <5 years should not have direct contact with ferrets.
- **Farm animals:** See General Guidelines for School Settings. Certain animals (e.g., young ruminants and baby poultry) intermittently excrete substantial numbers of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella* organisms, *Campylobacter* organisms, and *Cryptosporidium* organisms; therefore, these farm animals are not appropriate in school or child-care settings unless meticulous attention to personal hygiene can be ensured.
- **Owl pellets:** Assume that owl pellets are contaminated with *Salmonella* organisms. Pellets should not be dissected in areas where food is consumed. Thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces that contact pellets. Wash hands after contact.

Animals Not Recommended in School or Child-Care Settings

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

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

† Hansen GR. Animals in Kansas schools: guidelines for visiting and resident pets. Topeka, KS: 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; 2008. Available at <http://www.nabt.org/websites/institution/File/docs/use%20of%20animals.pdf>.

** Guide, hearing, or other service animals and law enforcement animals may 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 *Chlamydomytila psittaci* infection among humans (psittacosis) and pet birds (avian chlamydiosis), 2008. Available at <http://www.nasphv.org/documents/psittacosis.pdf>.

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