

Project CENTS Guidelines for keeping Animals in the Classroom

If a teacher wants to host a live animal in the classroom, it is important to buy it from a reputable source. Native Tennessee wildlife cannot be kept in a classroom. Neither are turtles of ANY kind.

Principals and teachers need to know that there is a law protecting native wildlife in Tennessee. It is illegal to **harm, kill, remove from the wild, or possess** native wildlife taken from the wild without the proper permits. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) asks all Tennesseans to help protect our native wildlife by not removing animals from the wild or releasing captive animals into the wild. Wild animals that students are able to catch generally are very young, sick, or injured. They may be carrying a disease (i.e. rabies) harmful to humans and/or domestic pets. Releasing captive wild animals into the wild causes problems as they often don't survive in the wild. Also they can introduce harmful diseases and parasites that were picked up during captivity into wild populations.

In the state of Tennessee, it is illegal to keep a turtle of any species in captivity. The reason for this law is to protect public health. Turtles are known to harbor Salmonella bacteria that can be easily passed to anyone who touches them. Salmonellosis is an infection of the intestines that causes diarrhea, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fever and headache. Anyone can get Salmonella infection, but the risk is highest in infants, the elderly and anyone with a compromised immune system.

Penalties: Any adult found to be in possession of native Tennessee wildlife or turtles of any species may be charged with a Class A Misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2500 and/or eleven months, twenty-nine days in jail.

Recommendations for keeping a live animal in the classroom: Consider the health and safety of the animal and the students who will share the space. As the adult, the teacher must take responsibility for providing the best possible life for the animal, and protecting the health of the students. This includes teaching students to respect and properly care for the animal. All animals, especially mammals and birds, are a source of allergens that adversely affect people with asthma and allergies. If an animal is kept in the classroom, consider these guidelines:

1. Keep the animals caged, do not let them roam.
2. Clean cages and surrounding area regularly and thoroughly. Use disposable gloves when cleaning.
3. Locate animal cages away from ventilation system vents to avoid circulating allergens throughout the room or building.
4. Keep animals away from upholstered furniture, carpets and stuffed toys.

If an unaware student brings a wild animal to school, the animal should be returned to its habitat as soon as possible. If this cannot be done safely, call your regional TWRA

office and ask them for advice.

TWRA Region 1 Office

(West Tennessee)

200 Lowell Thomas Drive

Jackson, TN 38301

7314235725

Toll Free (In State) 18003723928

TWRA Region 2 Office

(Middle Tennessee)

Ellington Agricultural Center

P.O. Box 41489

Nashville, TN 37204

6157816622

Toll Free (In State) 18006247406

TWRA Region 3 Office

(Cumberland Plateau)

464 Industrial Blvd.

Crossville, TN 38555

9314849571

Toll Free (In State) 18002626704

TWRA Region 4 Office

(East Tennessee)

3030 Wildlife Way

Morristown, TN 37814

4235877037

Toll Free (In State) 18003320900