

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

I. Purpose

ACPS encourages the appropriate and safe inclusion of animals in our instructional program. Therefore, these regulations provide information and guidance to school administrators, teachers, staff members, and parents/guardians that will promote a healthy and safe learning environment for students to be exposed to animals at school. This document outlines general guidelines for animals in schools, specifies which animals should not be brought into schools/classrooms, describes procedures to prevent the transmission of animal-borne diseases to students, explains the proper handling of animal waste, and outlines the protocol for handling student injury caused by animal bites and scratches.

Animals and handlers in contracted shows must also meet the standards spelled out in this regulation.

II. General Guidelines

In order to protect students from zoonotic diseases, the following general guidelines should be followed:

- A. All animals that are brought into school will be clean and free of disease or parasites, including fleas, ticks, and mites.
- B. Evidence of current rabies vaccination will be required for all dogs, cats, and ferrets that are brought onto school property for instructional purposes. Dogs and cats under three months of age and not vaccinated against rabies cannot be brought into school.
- C. A current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian is required prior to bringing a dog into school. There should be proof of current vaccination against canine distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parovirus, bordetella, and rabies. Animals should have a negative fecal exam for internal parasites within the past six months. Dogs must be housebroken.
- D. A current health certificate for cats must be signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of current vaccination against feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, feline leukemia, and rabies.
- E. Principal/administrator must approve all animals visiting the school.
- F. Everyone will wash hands after contact with animals, their products, or their environment.
- G. All students should be supervised during human-animal contact.
- H. Animals should be handled humanely.
- I. Animals can be displayed in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraint (e.g., leash). Animals are not allowed to roam free in the classroom.
- J. Specific areas in the school must be designated for animal contact.
- K. Animals cannot roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals.
- L. Animals are not allowed in areas where food or drink is consumed.
- M. Food for animals must be stored in an air-tight closed container, preferably hard plastic, to prevent spills and attracting nuisance animals and insects.

- N. Areas where animals have been present must be cleaned and disinfected. All animal waste must be disposed of by a staff member using plastic bags and gloves. Under no circumstances can students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products. Any spills or “accidents” should be immediately handled by school custodial staff.
- O. Parents/guardians must be consulted to determine any special considerations needed for children who are immuno-compromised or have allergies or asthma. Written parental permission for all student-animal contact must be obtained. A responsible adult must accompany all animal visits in school.

II. Animals Which Can Not Be Brought Into Schools

- A. Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians
- B. Wild or exotic animals
- C. Mammals at higher risk for transmitting rabies (e.g., bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes)
- D. Nonhuman primates
- E. Stray animals
- F. Baby chicks and ducks
- G. Aggressive or unpredictable animals

III. Procedures

- A. 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.
- B. Psittacine birds – Because these birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, cockatiels) can carry disease, they cannot be handled by students. Staff members should clean cages when students are not present. Birds must be treated or test negative for psittacosis (chlamydiosis).
- C. Baby chicks and ducks – Because of the risk of Salmonella and Campylobacter infection, baby chicks and ducks should not be brought into schools.
- D. Reptiles and Amphibians – Because of the risk of Salmonella bacteria, special precautions must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with reptiles and amphibians. No turtles with a carapace length less than four inches are allowed in schools. Any child handling a reptile or amphibian must wash his/her hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- E. Hamsters, Guinea pigs, and Gerbils – Because these “pocket pets” can carry Salmonella bacteria and Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, special care must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 must not handle these animals. Any child handling a “pocket pet” should be instructed to wash his/her hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- F. Ferrets – Because these animals bite when startled, students should not handle ferrets in the classroom. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with ferrets.
- G. Farm animals – Because of the risk of E. coli 0157:H7, Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Cryptosporidium, careful hand hygiene must be used when coming in contact with farm

animals. These animals might not be appropriate with young children and in certain settings.

IV. Protocol for Animal-Related Injuries

- A. All bites, scratches, or other injuries acquired by students or staff members must be immediately washed well with soap and warm water for at least one minute and reported to the school nurse for first aid and recommendation for further medical evaluation and parental/guardian contact.
- B. Administrators will be notified immediately of the injury and an incident/accident report will be completed by the staff member responsible at the time of the injury and forwarded to the school nurse.
- C. If students receive a bite or scratch from a wild animal, animal control will be notified as well as the parents/guardians. Medical evaluation by the student's primary provider will be recommended for all injury sustained from wild animals.

V. References

- A. Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, North Carolina Division of Public Health Guidelines, Animals in Schools, April 2006
<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/vph/AnimalsinNorthCarolinaSchools.pdf>
- B. Virginia Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology, Division of Zoonotic and Environmental Epidemiology
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/dee/otherzoonosis/>
- C. MMWR, Recommendations and Reports, July 6, 2007/ 56(RR05); 18-19, Guidelines for Animals in School Settings,
<http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a5.htm>

Responsible Department: Office of Student Services

Responsible Person: Chief Student Services Officer

**ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FOR STUDENT EXPOSURE
TO ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

Name of Student: _____

School: _____ Grade/Teacher: _____

PART I: TO BE COMPLETED BY TEACHER/ STAFF

Dear Parents/Guardians,
ACPS guidelines require that we obtain parental permission prior to student contact with animals in school. We understand that allergies, asthma, immune problems, or other health concerns may make animal contact inappropriate for your child.

I would like to plan for the following animal to visit my classroom for academic purposes on _____.

- Cat Rabbit
- Dog Reptile or Amphibian
- Ferret Other (please explain: _____)

I verify that I will confirm that the animal (s) brought into school is clean and free of disease by inspecting documentation for a current rabies vaccination certification, health certificate from a licensed veterinarian, and proof of current vaccinations.

I also agree to supervise the entire human-animal contact session, have a clean and disinfected area for showing the animal (s), not allow food or drink in the animal showing area, and dispose of waste with the use of plastic bag and gloves.

Note: Under no circumstances will students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products. The following animals are not permitted in schools: venomous or toxin-producing animals (e.g., certain spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians), wild or exotic animals, mammals at high-risk for transmitting rabies (e.g., bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes), non-human primates, stray animals, baby chicks and ducks, turtles with a carapace length less than 4", or aggressive/unpredictable animals.

PART II: TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN:

I, _____, (circle one) **do/do not** permit the student identified above to be in
(parent/guardian's name)
contact with the animal listed below for academic purposes on _____
(date: mm/dd/yy)

PART III: TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

I, _____, permit the animal identified above to be brought into school
(principal/administrator's name)

for academic purposes on _____ .
(Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Teacher/Staff) (Date: mm/dd/yy)

(Signature of Principal/Administrator) (Date: mm/dd/yy)