

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.

- 47 N. Areas where animals have been present must be cleaned and disinfected. All animal
 48 waste must be disposed of by a staff member using plastic bags and gloves. Under no
 49 circumstances can students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products.
 50 Any spills or “accidents” should be immediately handled by school custodial staff.
 51 O. Parents/guardians must be consulted to determine any special considerations needed for
 52 children who are immuno-compromised or have allergies or asthma. Written parental
 53 permission for all student-animal contact must be obtained. A responsible adult must
 54 accompany all animal visits in school.
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56 II. Animals Which Can Not Be Brought Into Schools

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

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 69 A. Fish – use disposable gloves when cleaning aquariums, and do not dispose of aquarium
 70 water in sinks used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water.
 71 B. Psittacine birds – Because these birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, cockatiels) can carry
 72 disease, they cannot be handled by students. Staff members should clean cages when
 73 students are not present. Birds must be treated or test negative for psittacosis
 74 (chlamydiosis).
 75 C. Baby chicks and ducks – Because of the risk of Salmonella and Campylobacter infection,
 76 baby chicks and ducks should not be brought into schools.
 77 D. Reptiles and Amphibians – Because of the risk of Salmonella bacteria, special
 78 precautions must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of
 79 5 should not have contact with reptiles and amphibians. No turtles with a carapace length
 80 less than four inches are allowed in schools. Any child handling a reptile or amphibian
 81 must wash his/her hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand
 82 sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
 83 E. Hamsters, Guinea pigs, and Gerbils – Because these “pocket pets” can carry Salmonella
 84 bacteria and Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, special care must be taken when
 85 students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 must not handle these animals.
 86 Any child handling a “pocket pet” should be instructed to wash his/her hands thoroughly
 87 with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as
 88 an adjunct to soap and water.
 89 F. Ferrets – Because these animals bite when startled, students should not handle ferrets in
 90 the classroom. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with ferrets.
 91 G. Farm animals – Because of the risk of E. coli 0157:H7, Salmonella, Campylobacter, and
 92 Cryptosporidium, careful hand hygiene must be used when coming in contact with farm

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

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96 **IV. Protocol for Animal-Related Injuries**

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98 A. All bites, scratches, or other injuries acquired by students or staff members must be
99 immediately washed well with soap and warm water for at least one minute and reported
100 to the school nurse for first aid and recommendation for further medical evaluation and
101 parental/guardian contact.

102 B. Administrators will be notified immediately of the injury and an incident/accident report
103 will be completed by the staff member responsible at the time of the injury and forwarded
104 to the school nurse.

105 C. If students receive a bite or scratch from a wild animal, animal control will be notified as
106 well as the parents/guardians. Medical evaluation by the student's primary provider will
107 be recommended for all injury sustained from wild animals.

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109 **V. References**

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111 A. Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, North Carolina Division of Public
112 Health Guidelines, Animals in Schools, April 2006

113 <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/vph/AnimalsinNorthCarolinaSchools.pdf>

114 B. Virginia Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology, Division of Zoonotic and
115 Environmental Epidemiology

116 <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/dee/otherzoonosis/>

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118 C. MMWR, Recommendations and Reports, July 6, 2007/ 56(RR05); 18-19, Guidelines for
119 Animals in School Settings,

120 <http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a5.htm>

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122 **Responsible Department:** Office of Student Services

123 **Responsible Person:** Chief Student Services Officer

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**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
- Dog
- Ferret
- Rabbit
- Reptile or Amphibian
- 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)