

Ohio School Asthma Initiative



Model School Animal Policy

It is the intent of _____ (School) to provide a healthy learning environment for all students. The school recognizes that animals have been part of the learning experience at school for many years and they have beneficial and therapeutic effects for some students including acceptance, bonding, caring and teaching of responsibility. However, for students with asthma, animals can trigger a respiratory reaction that in some cases can be severe. Other potential consequences include allergic reactions, scratches and bites, infections, and infestations.

Student health issues will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom. Prior to the consideration of the introduction of an animal to the classroom, the teacher will confer with the school nurse and review the student health records to assure that there is no conflict. Conflicts or concerns with animals and children with medical reactions to those animals will be referred to the school nurse. It is the policy of the school to consider the safety, health and well-being of each and every student when making decisions regarding the introduction of animals to the classroom. When there is a conflict in this area, the Principal is responsible for resolving the matter in consultation with the involved parties, the school health officer (nurse) and others as the administration deems appropriate.

Animals brought to school for short term/day visits

During school hours, no animal will be brought to school without prior authorization. Students must obtain permission from their teacher; staff will obtain authorization from the principal. Arrangements for animal visits should be made 24 hours in advance. Animals brought to school at pick up and drop off times will be leashed.

Proof (from a veterinarian) of compliance with immunizations for any disease that can be transmitted to humans shall be filed with the office in advance. All mammals will be properly vaccinated. Rabies vaccination is required for any mammal.

Any animal brought to school must remain under control of the responsible adult at all times. The animal will be contained on a leash or in a suitable carrier. This applies to days when school is in session, prior to the start of school and for an hour after school is dismissed. Transportation to and from school will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian or other adult. Animals are not to be transported on school buses.

No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on school grounds by anyone other than an authorized or licensed animal handler. There will be no physical contact between the animal and students unless it is an integral part of the objectives for the program with prior approval received from the Principal.

Animals considered as resident class pets

The teacher will communicate with the nurse before seeking permission from the Principal. Permission of the Principal is required prior to establishing resident animals in the classroom. Classroom pets that are of an unknown origin/history are not permitted in school. Teachers assume primary responsibility for the humane and proper treatment of any animal in their classroom. Animals within the school will be handled, treated, and housed in a humane manner. Animals will be kept in an environment appropriate to the species. Habitats will be maintained and cleaned regularly by staff not students.

Hand washing facilities must be available and immediately used following any kind of animal handling. Additionally, animals must not be allowed on or near any surface used for eating or preparation of food.

When the school is not in session for more than three days, the teacher must make arrangements for any resident animal's care and safety. Should any student or adult be bitten by an animal at school, a health care provider and the local health officer shall be immediately notified. In addition, in the case of a child, parents will be called. A copy of the incident report (signed by the principal) will be sent to the involved family with personally identifiable information involving other children redacted as needed.

The following animals are not permitted in the classroom:

- (i) Nonhuman primates;
- (ii) Rabies vector species, including raccoons, bats, skunks, coyotes or fox;
- (iii) Wolves or wolf-dog hybrids;
- (iv) Aggressive or unpredictable animals;
- (v) Stray animals with unknown health and vaccination history;
- (vi) Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles and amphibians;
- (vii) Dogs, cats, and ferrets under sixteen weeks of age; and
- (viii) Dogs, cats, and ferrets that are not current on rabies vaccinations.

In addition to the animals listed above, the following animals are not permitted in classrooms with children under five years of age.

- (i) Ferrets
- (ii) Reptiles and amphibians; and
- (iii) Chicks, ducklings, and hatching eggs

Service Animals

The use of service animals is not subject to the restrictions of this policy. Restricting the presence of service animals on campus is subject only to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, its regulations, and corresponding provisions of State law. The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. It is not necessary for a service dog to be licensed or certified by a state or local governmental agency as a service dog to be considered one by the ADA.

Service dogs are not pets and are permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where children normally go. The school reserves the right to restrict a service animal from its premises when it is determined that the dog's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. When a service animal is introduced to the classroom, a team, including the teacher, administrator, and family, will be formed to develop a comprehensive plan. This plan will include a detailed description of implementation strategies as well as a communication plan. Determination of threat is the responsibility of the principal. Determination of threat will be made in consultation with the school's child protection team (including the school nurse, counselor, and principal).

Principal or Superintendent

Effective Date