



Student Welfare Animals at School Policy

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Student Welfare – Animals at School Policy

Animals in schools

Teachers and students using animals in schools are subject to the provisions of the following acts and regulations:

- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and its regulations of 1997.
- Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes.
- Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits.
- *Wildlife Act 1975* and its regulations of 2002.
- *Environment Protection Act 1970*, as amended.

Use of animals

The Department of Education Ethics Committee has been established to help all West Australian schools comply with relevant legislation in the responsible care for animals used in teaching. The Committee has responsibility for determining what activities involving the use of animals are permissible in schools and in determining these activities; it is guided by the principles of **replacement**, **reduction** and **refinement**. Schools are also required to go through the process of deciding whether the use of animals is justified when applying for approval to use animals in teaching.

Animals are not to be used for teaching purposes unless there are no suitable alternatives for teaching all of the educational objectives. Techniques that totally or partially replace the use of animals are to be sought and used wherever possible. When using animals, invertebrates rather than vertebrates are to be preferred, where possible. However, all animals should be treated with respect and consideration for their welfare. When animals are held captive and used for observation and simple behavioural studies, the number should be kept to a minimum. The school principal is responsible for ensuring that school activities involving animals comply with relevant codes. Teachers have personal responsibility for all matters related to the welfare of animals they use and are to act in accordance with the requirements of the relevant codes.

Animal care and welfare

Teachers must have approval from the College before animals are used in teaching and must maintain records of their care and use. Sample forms can be found at www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/animalethics/detcms/portal/ Schools must ensure they maintain records of the care and use of animals as these records may be requested during inspections. Teachers should be aware that when using animals in scientific activities, individual animals must not be used in more than one scientific activity, either in the same or different projects, without approval. If the appropriate level of care and welfare cannot be provided, animals should not be kept in schools. The question of weekend and holiday care is a sensitive community issue and adequate provision must be made. Normally, students should not be permitted to take animals home. However, if there is no other suitable alternative, it may be allowed after discussion with parents/guardians and with their written agreement.

Euthanasia and disposal

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* is of relevance in the disposal of waste (animal droppings or carcasses). Contact should be made with the local municipal council for disposal locations. Students occasionally bring sick, injured and orphaned animals from the wild to school. It is essential that teachers recognise that normally a veterinary practitioner should treat and, when necessary, dispose of vertebrate animals. If veterinary assistance cannot be obtained, advice should be sought from the RSPCA. Humane euthanasia requires the skilled application of the most appropriate technique for the animal concerned. The type of animal and its age and size are relevant in the choice of method. Only skilled and experienced teachers should consider using euthanasia, and even then only after discussion with a veterinary practitioner and if veterinary attendance is not possible. When an animal dies unexpectedly, or is euthanised due to unforeseen complications, this should be reported promptly.

Communicable diseases

It should be noted that a variety of diseases are communicable between animals and humans. Care must be taken to prevent the spread of disease. At all times personal hygiene is of utmost importance. Animals should be handled as little as possible so as to avoid injuries to the animals and their handlers.

Farm animals

Acts, guidelines and codes of practice relating to farm animals are available on the following website at:

www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/animalethics/detcms/navigation/resources

Animals in the laboratory

Schools must ensure they have a Scientific Procedures Premises Licence before using animals for scientific procedures. Schools that use guinea pigs, rats, mice or rabbits in their scientific procedures must not cause or allow these animals to be bred on the premises without a Specified Animals Breeding License. Teachers using animals in the laboratory need to be familiar with relevant codes and regulations:

- *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Procedures*: (parts are relevant to schools, e.g. housing, handling and transportation, euthanasia of animals)

<http://nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ea16syn.htm>

Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits

www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/animalethics/detcms/navigation/resources

Schools are also required to maintain appropriate record keeping and recording of animal activity.

Wildlife

Teachers and students wishing to study wild animals, or remove them from their habitat, need to be familiar with relevant acts and regulations. For example, a permit is needed to keep certain wild animals in captivity and in some situations restrictions apply to removal of animals from their natural environment and to disturbance of the habitat of wild animals.

Teachers should seek advice from the Department of Primary Industries.

Wildlife permits

All use of wildlife is subject to the provisions of the *Wildlife Act 1975* and the Wildlife Regulations 2002. The Department of Education has produced a booklet *Guidelines for the care and use of animals in West Australian Schools and Agricultural and TAFEWA Colleges*. It is available at www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/animalethics/detcms/navigation/resources

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Approved by: [Executive Principal]

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