

**PETS AND ANIMALS IN THE CARE
ENVIRONMENT**

AUTHORISATION

POLICY TYPE: <i>(Council or Operational)</i>	Operational
POLICY LOCATION: <i>(eg. Corporate, Engineering, etc.)</i>	Community Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: <i>(by position title)</i>	Children Services Unit Coordinator
AUTHORISED BY: <i>(GM or Director Title)</i>	Director Corporate and Community Services
DATE ADOPTED:	5 July 2021
ADOPTED BY: <i>(Manex or Council)</i>	Council
MINUTE NO: <i>(If required)</i>	
REVIEW DUE DATE: <i>(Four years unless statutorily required sooner)</i>	June 2023
REVISION NUMBER:	

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS <i>Include names of former policies that this policy will replace if applicable</i>	AMENDED BY <i>(Where required)</i>
		Pets – Originally adopted February 2002	

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed within two (2) years from the date of adoption or as required in the event of legislative changes. The Policy may also be changed as a result of other amendment that are to the advantage that Council and in the spirit of this Policy. Any amendment to the Policy must be by way of a Council Resolution or the approval of the General Manager.

1. Purpose:

Staff/Educators will minimise health risks for children from contact with pets and animals, such as injuries, infections and allergies. Direct supervision is to be maintained at all times during the interaction between animals and children.

2. Scope:

This policy document applies to all staff and Educators of the Bland Shire Council Children Services Unit and Bland Temora Family Day Care, along with children and families enrolled with Bland Shire Council Children Services Unit.

3. Outcomes:

Observing, interacting with and learning to care for an animal can be a valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children build empathy. Providing children with access to animals in an education and care service can help them learn about the life cycle and relationships, and improve communication (keeping pets and animals in education and care services, ACECQA 2018).

Maintaining pet health and supervising contact between pets and children is necessary for the health and safety of Educators, staff and children. Animals can become a source of infection and injury, and children under 4 years old are most at risk of dog bites.

Directly supervising children's interactions with pets is important, and unless the interaction between the children and the animal can be directly supervised by an adult, the animal should be kept separate from the children's play areas.

4. Roles and Responsibilities:

Staff/Educators will:

- Inform families prior to enrolment of any pets or domestic animals on the premises and/or prior to obtaining new pets.
- Be aware of any known allergies or illnesses that children may suffer from as a result of coming into contact with animals and domestic pets or their byproducts.
- Be sensitive to the fears and anxieties of the children and parents when any animal or bird is introduced to children.
- Have in place a risk assessment that considers the accessibility of animals to children and the interactions that may take place to avoid potential harm to a child or animal.
- Supervise children interacting with animals. Children are not to play with animals at any time without adult supervision.
- If the animal poses a risk to the safety of children, keep the animal out of children's play area while children are present.
- Ensure that children wash their hands after interaction with pets.
- Ensure that children treat animals and birds with care and respect.
- Offer positive modelling for children in relation to the care of, and interaction with, animals.
- Maintain and model a high standard of personal hygiene in relation to the care of animals.
- Notify parents of any animals temporarily visiting service premises.
- Ensure that any animal (including livestock) or domesticated bird that enters or is kept on the premises of their service does not constitute a health or safety risk to children.
- Keep unsafe pet food and pet drinking water and their containers out of reach of children and away from play areas.
- Be aware that some animals may cause an allergic reaction or infection in children.
- Keep pet litter, bedding used for animals and animal toys in a way that is safe for children.
- Keep all pets in a clean and healthy condition including regular worming and immunisation.
- Keep animals (including cats) separated from children's sleeping areas.

- Keep play areas free of animal droppings, bones and holes dug by animals.
- Ensure that animals do not have access to bedding, toys, equipment, food areas, eating surfaces or utensils used by children.
- Maintain adequate supervision of children if children are taken on an excursion involving animals.
- Put in place provisions to ensure the animal is properly fed and space is sufficiently cleaned.
- Ensure the animal is properly cared for when the service is closed.

In addition Family Day Care Educators will:

- Ensure that animals which have been cited as 'Dangerous' (by Council or by FDC Coordination Unit staff) by no means be allowed to interact with children under any circumstances.
- Ensure that specific animals, including certain breeds of dogs which are identified from time to time as dangerous to children are kept in an enclosed area separate and apart from any area used by the children in care. Children must have no access and no ability of contact at any time to these animals.
- Ensure that animals are NOT present when, nor have access to the same area in which a child is sleeping.
- Ensure that they have an area where the animal can be kept that is separate and apart from any area used by the children for the animal to retire or retreat to should it require its own space.
- Notify the Coordination Unit, in writing, that they have a new pet or domestic animal on their premises in which the FDC children will be in direct contact with. They must also complete a risk assessment when a new pet or animal is obtained.
- Provide parents with information about any pets they may have and the arrangements they have made in relation to housing, supervision and care of animals kept on the family day care premises.
- Ensure that no animal travels unrestrained in a motor vehicle with a child during the child's time in care.

5. Legislation and Supporting Documents:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Education and Care Services National Law
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018
- Keeping pets and animals in education and care settings ACECQA; 2018

6. Relationship to Community Strategic Plan:

This Policy supports Council's Delivery Program Strategy *DP4.2 Provide quality, accredited and affordable Education and Care Services within Bland Shire and surrounds (Bland Preschool, Family Day Care, Mobile Resource Unit, Vacation Care and Toy Library services).*

7. Attachments:

N/A