

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

NO. 290

SUBJECT: ANIMAL VISITORS, CLASSROOM PETS, AND ANIMAL OBSERVATION/EXPERIMENTATION

Legal References: *R.R.O. Reg. 298 Operation of Schools, Section 11 Duties of Principals; Animals for Research Act; Criminal Code of Canada; Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act; Dead Animals Disposal Act; Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 161; Canadian Council on Animal Care*

Related References: *Administrative Procedure (AP) 146 Use of Service Animals by the General Public; AP314 Supporting Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions in Schools*

1.0 Overview

- 1.1 The Director of Education has developed this administrative procedure to articulate system expectations related to care for animals housed in classrooms and/or care of animals/humans involved in experimentation in the classroom.
- 1.2 The district shall have an Animal Care Committee that consists of a superintendent, a principal, a science teacher, the science coordinator, and a veterinarian.

2.0 General Philosophy

Live animals, when maintained in the classroom, are an effective source of learning and curricular enrichment. Experimentation can add an important learning dimension to the classroom.

3.0 The Source and Type of Animals Used

- 3.1 A teacher must receive permission from his/her principal before an animal is permitted in the classroom. Teachers will need to be sensitive to student allergies when choosing a classroom animal/pet or when allowing animal visitors in any learning space where the student may visit.
- 3.2 Only relatively small animals which are easily confined, maintained and handled should be kept in the classroom. Common examples are tropical fish, small mammals and some reptiles and amphibians such as gerbils, hamsters, mice, rats, lizards and salamanders. Larger animals such as rabbits, dogs and cats should not be kept in the classroom. As well, for health reasons, turtles and birds are not to be permitted in the classroom as class pets. When in doubt, please contact the board's science coordinator for advice.

Newborn chicks may be hatched in the classroom if the supplying farm/barn have a salmonella-free certification. This certification must be confirmed by the teacher before the eggs are brought into a classroom.

- 3.3 Only animals known to be in good health and free of disease should be brought into the classroom as animal visitors. It is important that principals and teachers know the past history of potential animal visitors.
- 3.4 The health of an animal is normally assured when the animal is supplied by a reputable pet store or breeder. Well-managed house pets are also presumed to be healthy and safe. For example, in the case of mammals, it should be confirmed that they are not inclined to bite or scratch when they are handled.

Under no circumstances should wild vertebrate animals or domestic animals of unknown origin be brought into the classroom. For example, raccoons and skunks.

- 3.5 Please note that the use of Service Animals may supersede specific provisions in this procedure. Refer to Administrative Procedure 146: Use of Service Animals by the General Public for information on the procedure for service animals in schools.

4.0 General Animal Care Procedures

- 4.1 Animals housed in classrooms are subject to the environmental conditions outlined in the *Canadian Council on Animal Care*. This means, for example, that there shall be sufficient food and water available, that the animal's habitat is kept clean, and that the animal is handled in the proper fashion. Knowledge of animal care is the responsibility of the teacher.
- 4.2 Animal care procedures should be posted and reviewed with the students. Detailed animal care procedures should be readily available to the principal and occasional teacher(s).

5.0 Precautions and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Prior to granting permission to a teacher to allow an animal into the learning space, the principal must take into consideration students with prevalent medical/health conditions and their triggers, and other allergies.
- 5.2 Bites and Scratches
To guard against bites and scratches, it is wise to use gloves when handling any animal. However, accidents do occur and the teacher and the school principal must be prepared to deal with bites and scratches that students might receive while handling the animals. Superficial wounds that do not break the skin are not normally a problem as long as the animal involved is healthy. Significant wounds must be checked by a doctor. In all cases, the animal involved should be kept for several days after a wounding incident in case medical or veterinary officials wish to observe or test the animal.
- 5.3 Death of, or Injury to, an Animal
The teacher must be prepared to deal with unexpected death or injury to the animals kept in the classroom. In the event of an animal's death, the animal should be disposed of appropriately, safely and in a manner that is sensitive to student emotions. The procedure to dispose of a dead animal is included within the Dead Animals Disposal Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter D.3:
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90d03>

5.4 Removal of Unwanted Animals

Before an animal is permitted in the classroom as a pet, the teacher shall ensure that a plan is in place to provide care on weekends, extended weekends and holiday periods. When the time for classroom study has ended, a permanent home for the animal must be ensured.

5.5 Transportation

Animal visitors to the classroom are to be transported by parents, not on the school bus.

6.0 Animal Experimentation

All animal experimentation must follow the procedures developed for animal experimentation by the Youth Science Foundation Canada (YSF). The most current procedures can be found at <http://www.ysf-fsj.ca>.

Invertebrates:

- All classroom experiments involving invertebrates shall be performed under the supervision of a qualified teacher who has read and follows this procedure.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the students involved have the necessary skills and understanding to carry out the experiment safely and humanely.
- Experimental procedures, involving live invertebrates, shall not cause the animal any undue stress.

Vertebrates:

- Most vertebrate experimentation takes place during science fairs.
- Any classroom experiments involving vertebrates shall be performed under the supervision of a qualified teacher who has read and follows this procedure.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the students involved have the necessary skills and understanding to carry out the experiment safely and humanely.
- No experimental procedures shall be attempted on a live vertebrate animal which will cause it pain, distinct discomfort or will interfere with its health (e.g., electrical shock, exercise until exhaustion, or other distressing stimuli, etc.).
- Students shall not perform surgery on vertebrate animals.
- Behavioural studies involving training shall use only reward (positive reinforcement) and not punishment.

7.0 Appropriate Learning Experiences

7.1 Teachers should have a definite purpose for permitting live animals into the classroom, for housing animals in the classroom, and/or for performing experimentation on animals. Corresponding curriculum expectations should be described within his/her teaching plans.

7.2 Animals can be used as highly motivational avenues to a variety of significant learnings. The following are offered for consideration:

- 7.2.1 Live animals are excellent subjects for observation and data gathering. Body characteristics, habits, movement, feeding behavior, instinctive reactions, etc., can be observed and described. Adaptive characteristics can be studied directly.
- 7.2.2 Live animals are interesting subjects to use in language development. Most students eagerly become involved in talking and writing stories about animals that can be seen and/or touched.

- 7.2.3 A very important learning that naturally results from keeping live animals in the classroom is the development of a sense of responsibility, kindness and concern for other living things.

Note: This administrative procedure is based largely on the Live Animals in the Classroom procedure developed by the Thames Valley District School Board.