

CENTRAL EGLINTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE

VISITING ANIMALS POLICY

Date Policy and Procedures Established: July 27, 2023

Date Policy and Procedures Updated: February 27, 2024

Purpose:

Interactions with animals can provide a valuable learning experience for children. When children have opportunities to spend time with animals, it activates their senses, builds empathy, sparks curiosity, increases their sense of connection, and supports an overall positive learning experience.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure children and educators stay safe and healthy during these interactions.

Potential risks:

"Infants and children, particularly those less than 5 years of age, have an increased risk of infection that can cause serious illness. This is due to their developing immune systems and frequent hand-to-mouth activities. Childcare operators and other adults may also be at increased risk. These risks include exposure to zoonotic diseases (e.g., Salmonella and E. coli), injuries (e.g., bites, bruises, and scratches), and allergies. Zoonotic diseases are transmitted from animals to humans through direct and indirect contact. Visiting and resident animals may be a source of a number of zoonotic diseases from pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi." (Recommendations For the Management of Animals in Child Care Settings, 2018)

Infection Prevention and Control Measures for Visiting Animals

Prior to an animal visiting CECC:

- All Educators will be notified of the animals visiting and hand hygiene measures related to animal contact.
- CECC will collect and record the following information for visiting animals: (e.g., indoor/outdoor travelling animal shows)
 - Date of visit
 - Name of animal owner(s)
 - Owner contact information
 - Animal(s) name and species
 - Description of the group of children/room(s) visited
 - Any additional guests in attendance (e.g., volunteers, students) These records should be kept on-site for one year and made available to Public Health Inspectors or parents/guardians who may request them.
 - Proof of animal health documentation ([see appendix 2.B Veterinary Care Statement for Animals Visiting Child Care Centres in Ministry of Health and Long-term Care Recommendations for the Management of Animals in Child Care Settings, \(2018\)](#))

In order to prevent injury or illness to children and staff:

- All Educators and children must wash their hands before and after interacting with animals and/or their environment.
- Keep animal enclosures and equipment away from children's sleeping areas, food preparation and children's eating areas.
- Dogs and cats shall be fully immunized against rabies.
- Dogs and cats must be up to date with any other applicable vaccinations and medications and be on a flea, tick, and intestinal parasite control program.
- Animals must be trained and be in good health.
- Animals must have an appropriate temperament to be around children and show no signs of disease.

Child and Animal Interactions

CECC will take the following steps to prevent injury or illness, and ensure safe interactions between children and animals:

- All children and educators who handle animals must practice hand hygiene (wash hands or use alcohol-based hand-rub) after contact with animals.
- Educators will be familiar with the animals that are permitted at the centre.
- Educators will supervise all contact between animals and children.
- Educators will teach and model humane and safe procedures to follow when in close proximity to animals. These include:
 - Treating animals gently and calmly. Never hurting, teasing, frightening, surprising, or cornering an animals
 - Avoid chasing and/or kissing animals.
 - Never disturb an animal that is eating or sleeping.
- Children should avoid touching animal food and feces.
- Children should avoid eating or touching their face during and after animal contact.
- Animals must be housed within some barrier (e.g., enclosure) that protects the children.
- Animals must be prohibited from entering a food preparation area.

Animal Bites, Scratches or Other Exposures

- If a child or educator is bitten or scratched by a visiting animal, CECC will ensure the person seeks medical attention.
- If a child has been bitten or scratched, CECC will contact the child's parent or guardian immediately and inform them that you will be reporting the incident to Toronto Public Health and that their child should see a physician. CECC will report animal bites immediately to TPH by calling: 416-338-7600 during business hours or 311 after hours.

*For more information, visit Toronto Public Health's [Rabies Prevention and Control](#) webpage.

Animals Permitted in Childcare Centres:

Dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, rodents (e.g., mice, hamsters, rats, gerbils, guinea pigs) and fish.

***Note: Animals Not Recommended for Child Care Centres will not be permitted at CECC**

The following animals are not recommended for children and will not be allowed to visit CECC:

- Exotic animals (e.g., hedgehogs, monkeys)
 - Wild/stray animals (e.g., bats, raccoons, stray dogs or cats, squirrels)
 - Inherently dangerous animals (e.g., lions, cougars, bears)
 - Venomous or toxin-producing animals (e.g., venomous or toxin producing spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians)
 - Ill animals or animals under medical treatment
 - Young animals (e.g., puppies and kittens less than 1 year old)
 - Animals that have been fed raw or dehydrated foods, chews, or treats of animal origin within the past 90 days
 - Birthing or pregnant animals
 - Animals from shelters or pounds unless they have been in a stable home for at least 6 months •
- Aggressive animals
- Animals in estrus (i.e., animals in heat)
 - Rabies reservoir species (i.e., bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes)

The following animals are not recommended for children less than five years of age and will not visit CECC:

- Reptiles (e.g., turtles, snakes, and lizards)
- Amphibians (e.g., frogs, toads, and salamanders)
- Live poultry (e.g., chicks, ducklings, and goslings) including hatchery equipment
- Ferrets
- Farm animals (e.g., calves, goats, and sheep)

REFERENCES

[The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care- Guidance Document for the Management of Animals in Child Care Centres, 2016](#)

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/reference/Recommendations_For_The_Management_Of_Animals_In_Child_Care_Settings_2018_en.pdf

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/early-learning-child-care-partners/infection-prevention-control-for-child-care-centre-operators/infection-prevention-control-measures-for-child-care-centres/>