



ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Safety & Security Fact Sheet

When choosing an animal to be housed in a classroom, its educational value must be weighed against the potential for a bite, sting, or a health hazard created by its presence. Consideration should also be given to the well being of the animal. Follow these simple guidelines before making a choice:

- Wild, exotic, or vicious animals as defined as defined in Chapter 41, Code of the County of Fairfax, poisonous animals, and insects that sting or bite shall be prohibited.
- Parrots, parakeets, and other psittacine birds may be carriers of human respiratory diseases and are prohibited from being kept in schools, unless they have been tested and certified as Psittacosis free or if their complete life history is known to have precluded exposure to the infectious organism.
- Fur-bearing animals (mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, rabbits) may easily sensitize an allergic child or may cause allergic symptoms in already sensitized children. The animal may not be housed in a classroom where there is a child with such an allergy.
- Wild animals shall not be brought into the classroom, unless they are under the direct supervision of a trained representative of a conservation agency or public zoo. Prior permission is required from the building principal.
- Assume that even healthy animals harbor disease-causing organisms. Rodents including hamsters and mice have recently been implicated in the transmission of multidrug-resistant Salmonella Typhimurium. All rodents must be isolated for 30 days prior to allowing contact with students. Always emphasize the importance of proper hand washing immediately after the handling of any animal. The use of latex or vinyl gloves will provide an additional barrier to the transmission of disease.
- Handling of the animals should be limited to that which is necessary, such as teacher-supervised instructional activities, feeding and watering, and cleaning of the housing. Unless the animal or insect is part of a specific activity, it shall remain in its cage or housing. Animals or insects shall not be allowed to roam in the classroom.
- Plans must be made for food, housing, and general comfort before an animal is brought into the classroom. Consideration must also be given to the care required during weekends, long holiday breaks, and during emergency closings.
- The animal housing must be kept in clean sanitary condition, free of odor. Waste should be disposed of in a tied, plastic bag.
- All animal bites, stings, or scratches should be reported immediately to the principal, and a local health authority should be consulted. Call the Fairfax County Health Department at 246-2444 or Animal Control at 838-3680 for advice. Inform the parent or guardian of the injury. A Student Accident Report Form (SAF-1) should be completed.

If you need assistance, call the safety section at 571-423-2010.