

ANIMALS IN QUESTAR FACILITIES

I. Intent

On occasion live animals may be brought into Questar III classroom as part of the curriculum of study or for classroom therapeutic purposes. This policy provides information and guidance to school administrators, teachers, staff and parents about live animals in the classroom in order to promote a healthy and safe learning environment for students. This policy does not apply to service animals required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This policy also does not apply to service animals assigned to law enforcement or fire protection entities.

II. Approval Required

- A. Animals will be allowed in any Questar program, facility, or school grounds only if there is a direct connection to the academic program or demonstrated therapeutic purpose. Prior written approval must be obtained from the building administrator(s), the Director of Health and Safety and the Assistant Superintendent overseeing the program.
- B. Handlers under contract with Questar III must be provided with a copy of this policy and are expected to comply with standards herein. Contractors must provide evidence of insurance; and evidence that animals have appropriate vaccinations including, where relevant, rabies and distemper.
- C. Therapy dog handlers must provide evidence that the therapy dog is certified as such by a recognized national association and that the handler is qualified as a therapy dog handler.

III. General Guidelines

- A. Parents must be consulted to determine any special considerations needed for children who are immuno-compromised, have allergies, or asthma. Written parental permission for all student-animal contact must be obtained.
- B. All animals which are brought into school will be clean and free of disease or parasites, including fleas, ticks and mites.
- C. Proper holding containers must be in good working order. Any cages, tanks, etc. utilizing electricity must be preapproved by the H&S Office. Use of an overcurrent protection device is required. A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFI) may be

required if located within six feet of a water source. Heat lamps are not permissible.

- D. Anyone in contact with animals, their products or their environment must wash hands.
- E. All students must be supervised during student-animal contact.
- F. Animals should be handled humanely.
- G. Specific areas in the school must be designated for animal contact.
- H. Animals can be displayed in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraint (e.g. leash).
- I. Animals are not allowed to roam or fly free in the classroom at any time.
- J. Animals are not allowed in areas where food or drink is consumed.
- K. Food for animals must be stored in an air tight closed container, preferably hard plastic, to prevent spills and attracting nuisance animals and insects.
- L. Areas where animals have been present must be cleaned and disinfected. All animal waste must be disposed of by a staff member using plastic bags and gloves. Under no circumstances can students be allowed to clean cages or handle animal waste products. Any spills or "accidents" should be immediately handled by the animal handler, where there is one, or school staff.

III. Prohibited Animals

The following animals will not be allowed in any Questar program, facility, or school grounds:

- A. Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles and amphibians
- B. Wild or exotic animals
- C. Mammals at higher risk for transmitting rabies (e.g. bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes)
- D. Nonhuman primates
- E. Stray animals
- F. Baby chicks and ducks
- G. Aggressive or unpredictable animals

IV. Additional Safety Procedures

- A. Fish – use disposable gloves when cleaning aquariums, and do not dispose of aquarium water in sinks used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water.
- B. Psittacine birds – Because these birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, cockatiels) can carry disease, they cannot be handled by students. Staff should clean cages when students are not present. Birds must be treated or test negative for psittacosis (chlamydiosis).
- C. Reptiles and Amphibians – Because of the risk of Salmonella bacteria, special precautions must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with reptiles and amphibians. No turtles with a carapace length less than four inches are allowed in schools. Any child handling a reptile or amphibian must wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- D. Hamsters, Guinea pigs and Gerbils – Because these “pocket pets” can carry Salmonella bacteria and Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, special care must be taken when students handle these animals. Students under the age of 5 must not handle these animals. Any child handling a “pocket pet” should be instructed to wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap afterwards. Hand sanitizer or “wet wipes” can only be used as an adjunct to soap and water.
- E. Ferrets – Because these animals bite when startled, students should not handle ferrets in the classroom. Students under the age of 5 should not have contact with ferrets.
- F. Farm animals – Because of the risk of E. coli 0157:H7, Salmonella, Campylobacter and Cryptosporidium, careful hand hygiene must be used when coming in contact with farm animals. These animals might not be appropriate with young children and in certain settings.

V. Protocol for Animal-Related Injuries

- A. All bites, scratches or other injuries acquired by students or staff must be immediately and thoroughly washed with soap and warm water for at least one minute and reported to the school nurse for first aid and recommendation for further medical evaluation and parental contact.
- B. Administrators must be notified immediately of the injury and an incident/accident report will be completed by the staff member responsible at the time of the injury and forwarded to the school nurse.

- C. If students receive a bite or scratch from a wild animal, animal control will be notified as well as the parents. Medical evaluation by the student's primary provider will be recommended for all injury sustained from wild animals.

VI. Therapy Dogs

- A. A therapy dog is a dog that is trained to aid the emotional and physical health of patients in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and other settings and is actually used for such purpose. A therapy dog must be maintained under the care and supervision of a qualified therapy dog handler while at Questar III.
- B. In order to be approved to visit any Questar III program, facility or school grounds, Questar III must be provided with a copy of the dog licensure; certificate of rabies, distemper, other vaccinations, and a certificate of good health provided by a licensed veterinarian; documentation of the dog's training and certification as a therapy dog; and documentation of the handler's training and certification as a therapy dog handler.

Approved: 12-12-13

References:

New York Agriculture and Markets Law, section 108(21)

Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, North Carolina Division of Public Health Guidelines, Animals in Schools, April 2006,
<http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/vet/pdf/AnimalsinNorthCarolinaSchools.pdf>

Virginia Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology, Division of Zoonotic and Environmental Epidemiology,
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DZEE/otherzoonosis/>

MMWR, Recommendations and Reports, July 6, 2007/ 56(RR05); 18-19, Guidelines for Animals in School Settings,
<http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a5.htm>