

Recommendations for Animals in Child Care Settings and Schools



Northeastern
PUBLIC HEALTH
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du Nord-Est

Animals in Child Care Centres

Animals can offer a valuable learning experience but can also expose children and staff to infections, injuries, and allergens.

Children are more likely than adults to get infections from animals. This is because they may not recognize the risk of disease transmission, are often curious about animals, and may have closer contact with them. Young children and infants are at greater risk of serious illness because their immune systems are still developing.

Animals Not Recommended for any Child Care Centres

- Stray animals with unknown health and vaccination history (e.g. stray dogs/cats)
- 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 (but otherwise raw) foods, chews, or treats of animal origin within the past 90 days
- Animals from shelters/pounds unless they have been in a stable home for at least 6 months
- Birthing or pregnant animals
- Inherently dangerous animals (e.g. lynx, lions, bears, cougars, tigers, etc.)
- Predatory birds (e.g. hawks, eagles, owls, etc.)
- Venomous or toxin-producing animals (e.g. venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles and amphibians)
- Aggressive animals (e.g. animals that have demonstrated aggressive behavior in the past)
- Animals in estrus (i.e. animals in heat)
- Exotic animals (e.g. hedgehogs, chinchillas, etc.) and non-human primates (e.g. monkeys, lemurs, etc.)

- Wild animals (e.g. squirrels, chipmunks)
- Rabies reservoir species (i.e. bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes)

Animals Not Recommended for Facilities with Children <5 years of age

- Exotic animals and non-human primates
- Reptiles (e.g. turtles, snakes and lizards such as bearded dragons and geckos)
- Amphibians (e.g. frogs, toads, salamanders)
- Live poultry, (e.g. chicks, ducklings, goslings), including hatchery equipment
- Ferrets
- Farm animals (e.g. calves, goats, sheep)

Preventing Infections

- Children should only handle animals under close adult supervision.
- Perform hand hygiene (wash hands or use alcohol-based hand rub) after touching or feeding animals.
- Animals should not be allowed into areas where food is being stored, prepared, served or consumed.
- Obtain informed consent from parents/guardians prior to animal activities.
- Report all animal bites/scratches to Northeastern Public Health immediately.

For more information

For more information in the management of animals and planning and implementation of infection prevention and control measures for child care settings, please refer to:

Recommendations for the Management of Animals in Child Care Settings, 2018 (available from <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-ophs-ref-recommendations-management-animals-child-care-settings-2018-en.pdf>)

Recommendations to Prevent Disease and Injury Associated with Petting Zoos in Ontario, 2011 (available from <https://files.ontario.ca/moh-ophs-ref-petting-zoos-2018-en.pdf>).