

Animals in Child Care Centres



Animals can offer a valuable learning experience but can also expose children and staff to infections, injuries and be a source of allergens. Children are vulnerable to develop infections from animals due to their lack of awareness of disease transmission. Younger children under 5 years of age have an increased risk of developing infections such as *Salmonella*, due to their immune system not being fully mature.

Animals Not Recommended for all Child Care Centres

- × Stray animals with unknown health and vaccination history
- × Ill animals or animals under medical treatment
- × Young animals (e.g. puppies and kittens less than 1 year old)
- × Animals fed raw / dehydrated foods, chews, or treats of animal origin within the past 90 days
- × Animals from shelters / pounds (within 6 months)
- × Birthing or pregnant animals
- × Inherently dangerous animals (e.g. lynx, lions, bears, cougars, tigers)
- × Predatory birds (e.g. hawks, eagles, owls)
- × Venomous / toxin-producing animals (e.g. spiders, insects, reptiles, 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); non-human primates (e.g. monkeys, lemurs)
- × 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

- × All animals listed above
- × 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)

Protecting Children and Staff from Infection

- ✓ Children should only handle animals under close adult supervision.
- ✓ Wash hands before and after handling or feeding animals.
- ✓ Keep animals inside their enclosures and never allow animals to run at large.
- ✓ Animals must not be located in food preparation, storage, eating or sleeping areas.
- ✓ Remove sick animals from the centre immediately.
- ✓ Report all animal bites/scratches to the Health Department immediately.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Animal Enclosures

1. Assemble all required cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
2. Put on gloves and protective outer garments (i.e. apron).
3. Remove animal to a temporary holding area.
4. Dispose of food, droppings, bedding material, etc., into a garbage bag.
5. Clean animal enclosures, food containers, toys, etc., with soap and water, using a scrub brush to remove dirt. Rinse thoroughly with fresh water. Food preparation sinks for cleaning animal enclosures and related items are not recommended.
6. Disinfect items with appropriate product, following manufacturer's instructions.
7. Rinse items thoroughly, if needed, to remove chemical residue and dry.
8. Use fresh bedding material, food, water, etc., when preparing enclosure and before returning animal.
9. Clean and disinfect areas surrounding enclosure and the animal's temporary holding area.
10. Cleaning sinks must also be cleaned and disinfected after use.
11. Discard single-use gloves or clean and disinfect reusable rubber gloves.
12. Wash hands.

Resource: *Recommendations for the Management of Animals in Child Care Settings, 2018, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.*



Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
[durham.ca/childcare](https://www.durham.ca/childcare)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

