

## ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

### A. Purpose

This document outlines general guidelines for animals in schools, specifies which animals should not be brought into schools/classrooms, describes procedures to prevent the transmission of animal-borne diseases to students, explains the proper handling of animals (including procedures for care, waste, dissection, consumption, and release) and outlines the protocol for handling student injury caused by animals.

Animals and handlers in contracted shows must also meet the standards of this policy. Refer to the service animal policy if the animal is a dog or miniature horse individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

### B. General Guidelines

In order to protect students from injury or exposure to zoonotic diseases, the following general guidelines should be followed:

1. No staff member may bring an animal onto school property without first completing the Animal Management Plan, Parent Animal Form, and Animal Request Form.
2. For a staff member to bring an animal on school property, they must first complete the Animal Management Plan (Appendix A) and be approved by the principal/administrator.
3. When the Animal Management Plan is approved by the principal/administrator, the responsible staff member must then send out parent information form (Appendix B) to students' parents/guardians informing them of the planned animal coming to school property.
4. Once the parent animal forms have been signed and returned for each participating student, the responsible teacher must fill out the Animal Request Form (Appendix C) and given to the principal/administrator for final approval.
5. Parents/guardians must be consulted to determine any special considerations needed for children who are immuno-compromised or have allergies or asthma.
6. All animals that are brought into school will be clean and free of disease or parasites, including fleas, ticks, and mites as certified by execution of Appendix D.
7. Evidence of current rabies vaccination will be required for all dogs, cats, and ferrets that are brought onto school property. Dogs and cats under three months of age and not vaccinated against rabies cannot be brought into school.
8. A current health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian is required prior to bringing a dog into school. There should be proof of current vaccination against canine distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parovirus, bordetella, and rabies.
9. A current health certificate for cats must be signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of current vaccination against feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, feline leukemia, and rabies.
10. An animal handler, who has executed Appendix D and provided any required attachments, must accompany all animal visits in school.
11. Everyone will wash hands or use hand sanitizer after contact with animals, their products, and their environment.
12. All students should be closely supervised by the staff member during human-animal contact and whenever an animal is in the room with students, regardless of its caging or restraint.
13. Animals must be handled humanely. No staff or students may cause harm or death to animals unless in the most extreme moments of danger. This does not apply to insects such as worms and fruit flies used for school approved scientific instruction.
14. Animals must be displayed in enclosed cages or under appropriate restraint (e.g., leash).
15. Specific areas in the school must be designated for animal contact.
16. Animals cannot roam, fly free, or have contact with wild animals.
17. Animals are not allowed in areas where food or drink is consumed.

18. Food for animals must be stored in an air-tight closed container, preferably hard plastic, to prevent spills and attracting nuisance animals and insects.
19. 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.

### **C. Animals Which Can Not Be Brought Into Schools**

1. Wild animals
2. Stray animals
3. Animals known to be aggressive or unpredictable

### **D. Procedures**

1. 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.
2. Birds – (parrots, parakeets, budgies, cockatiels), Students must wash their hands after interaction with soap or hand sanitizer. Birds must test negative for psittacosis (chlamydiosis). Hatching birds (ex: chickens) are allowed with proper handling and supervision.
3. 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. Children handling a reptile or amphibian must wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap or hand sanitizer afterwards.
4. Hamsters, Guinea pigs, Gerbils, other Rodents, rabbits– Because these 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 these kinds of animals should be instructed to wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap or hand sanitizer afterwards.
5. Ferrets –Students should not handle ferrets.
6. Farm animals – Because of the risk of E. coli, Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Cryptosporidium, careful hand hygiene must be used when coming in contact with farm animals. Students must be closely supervised and instructed in interacting with farm animals.
7. Insects- Students must wash their hands after interaction with soap or hand sanitizer. Insects brought into the classroom should have proper containment.
8. Toxin-producing animals- Due to the risk of harm to students and staff, strong precaution should be taken in having any toxin-producing animal on school property. Permission must be given by both the principal and the Director of Health and Safety prior to bringing the animal(s) to the property.

### **E. Protocol for Animal-Related Injuries**

1. All bites, scratches, or other injuries acquired by students or staff members must be immediately washed well with soap and warm water and reported to the school nurse for first aid and recommendation for further medical evaluation and parental/guardian contact.
2. Administrators will 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.

### **F. Animal Care**

1. The care of an animal must meet all guidelines as set by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (ASPCA)
2. It is the responsibility of the teacher to research and apply the specific care guide by the ASPCA for their animal.
3. Requesting teacher must assume responsibility for care of animal.
4. The teacher is financially responsible for all animal care for classroom animals, including but not limited to:

containment, food, toys, animal accessories, medicines, and veterinary care.

5. No invasive medical procedures can be done to animals on school grounds.
6. Animals must be properly housed. The cage/containment must meet the guidelines set by the ASPCA.
7. Locking mechanisms must be on all exit points of the cage/containment (as applicable) as well as on parts where the animal could escape.
8. Animals must have adequate food and water at all times.
9. Habitats must be kept thoroughly clean on a regular basis.
10. Care of animals is not the responsibility of custodial staff.
11. Teacher must have plan for adequate care of animal over evenings, weekends, holiday breaks, summer break, and emergency school evacuations.

### **G. Animal Dissection**

1. Any animal that are to be dissected are to be free of disease or parasite.
2. No wild animals may be used for dissection.
3. Teacher is responsible for all animals being dissected.
4. Chemicals and dissected animals are to be properly disposed of only by the teacher. If the teacher is unsure of disposal procedure, contact the ACPS Safety and Wellness Coordinator.
- 4.5. At the request of the student and parent, alternatives to animal dissection techniques relevant to the curriculum or course will be provided.

### **H. Animal Consumption**

1. All meats and animal products to be consumed by students must be approved by the Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) if applicable.
2. Honey and Chicken eggs produced from animals raised on school grounds are not required to be inspected as long as meeting the requirements of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).
3. Honey and Chicken eggs from animals raised on school grounds may be sold or given publicly as long as meeting the requirements of the VDACS. The principal shall be responsible for making sure these requirements are met.
4. Other products by or from animals raised on school property such as dairy and meat are not allowed to be consumed or sold.

### **I. Animal Release**

1. Only properly permitted and approved animals may be released into the wild. Approval is determined by a reputable dealer of the supplied animal or by the principal if not applicable. Domesticated animals may not be released into the wild.
2. No invasive species that is known to hurt the local ecosystem can be released. Any animal planned for release must be researched and confirmed as nonhazardous to the local ecosystem.
3. Hatched birds that are not being kept must be given to a farm or family that has the appropriate accommodations for the animal within two weeks. Parent/Guardian permission and releases (see Appendix E) must be provided and executed if applicable.
4. Other class pets that are in good health may be released to a family that has appropriate accommodations. Parent/Guardian permission and releases must be provided and executed (see Appendix E)
5. Teachers may allow students to take classroom animals home over breaks. Parent/Guardian permission and releases must be provided and executed (see Appendix E).

### **J. Outdoor Animals**

1. Animals appropriate for the outdoors may be kept outside with permission from the principal, Director of Health and Safety, ACPS Building Services, and Department of Health.

2. Proper housing, food, and water must be provided at all times. Proper housing includes containment and protection from weather and predators. It must meet the guidelines set by the ASPCA.
3. Teacher is responsible for all care of the animal and its environment.

### **K. Other Policies**

1. Nothing in this policy overrides other existing policies.

### **L. References**

1. Guidelines for Animals in North Carolina Schools, North Carolina Division of Public Health Guidelines, Animals in Schools, April 2006 <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/vph/AnimalsinNorthCarolinaSchools.pdf>
2. Virginia Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology, Division of Zoonotic and Environmental Epidemiology
3. <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/dee/otherzoonosis/>
4. 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>
5. Resources to Support Raising Chickens in District School Gardens, Office of the State Superintendent of Education, August 2, 2016 <https://osse.dc.gov/node/1153896>
6. Animals in School, Alexandria Public Schools, [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi onMDVm\\_LTAhUCOyYKHVgYAUgQFghBMAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Falexan.schoolwires.net%2Fcms%2Flib010%2FVA01918616%2FCentricity%2FShared%2Fdocuments%2Fschool-board-policies%2Fjhc-r.pdf&usq=AFQjCNH6c4cHIIkeM90SuTX5bHiUC5-fEA&sig2=IG4ykCcvallUtnIWHXzgYbw](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi onMDVm_LTAhUCOyYKHVgYAUgQFghBMAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Falexan.schoolwires.net%2Fcms%2Flib010%2FVA01918616%2FCentricity%2FShared%2Fdocuments%2Fschool-board-policies%2Fjhc-r.pdf&usq=AFQjCNH6c4cHIIkeM90SuTX5bHiUC5-fEA&sig2=IG4ykCcvallUtnIWHXzgYbw)
7. Going to Market, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/pdf/goingmarket.pdf>

Adopted: February 8, 2018

**Appendix A**

**Animal Management Plan for Albemarle County Public Schools**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Animal Care-taker Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation with School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Animal Descriptor**

Species: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Type and Location of containment: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested start date of animal on school property: \_\_\_\_\_

End date of animal on school property: \_\_\_\_\_

The animal management plan should address the following questions:

1. What procedures are in place to ensure that students are clean before/after handling the animal(s)?
2. What procedures are in place to ensure that students have been properly trained to handle the animal(s)?
3. How will you care for the animal(s) in the event of school closings or extreme weather?
4. How do you ensure that the animal containment is secure?
5. Describe the feeding and watering schedule including:
  - a. What watering and feeding systems will be used?
  - b. What type of food will be provided?
  - c. How frequently will food be given?
6. Describe the day-to-day care and cleaning of the animal(s) as well as the containment area. Include frequency of cleaning as well as who will be responsible.
7. What procedures are in place to ensure the animal(s) are properly cared for over extended breaks of three or more days?
8. Describe how the animal containment ensures the animal(s) and humans' safety/health.
9. What is the exit plan in the event that the animal no longer lives at school or if you stop working at the school?

10. Provide evidence and documentation by completing Appendix D that the animal is in good health and has been evaluated for any relevant diseases, conditions, and parasites.
  
11. If an animal handler is bringing the animal to school, have you obtained the necessary release from the handler?
  
12. Describe the health care and disposal of the animal that will be provided.
  
13. What provisions have you made for the capture and destruction of the animal, should the animal escape and/or pose a threat to persons?

**Appendix B**

**ALBEMARLE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
PARENT/GUARDIAN FORM FOR STUDENT EXPOSURE TO ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART I: TO BE COMPLETED BY TEACHER/ STAFF**

Dear Parents/Guardians,  
ACPS policy requires that we contact parents/guardians prior to student contact with animals in school. We understand that allergies, asthma, immune problems, or other health concerns may make animal contact inappropriate for your child.

I am planning for the following animal to visit my classroom for academic purposes on

\_\_\_\_\_ (Dates or School Year)

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cat    | <input type="checkbox"/> Rabbit               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog    | <input type="checkbox"/> Reptile or Amphibian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ferret | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |

I verify that I will confirm that the animal(s) brought into school is clean and free of disease by inspecting documentation for a current rabies vaccination certification, health certificate from a licensed veterinarian, and proof of current vaccinations.

I also agree to supervise the entire human-animal contact session, have a clean and disinfected area for showing the animal (s), not allow food or drink in the animal showing area, and dispose of waste with the use of plastic bag and gloves.

**PART II: TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN:**

My student's name:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent of \_\_\_\_\_, a student of \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge and agree to the following:

1. I agree to allow my above-referenced child to participate in the activities involving live animals as described above;
2. I acknowledge that if my student has any known allergies or sensitivities or any other reason that my student should not be handling or in close proximity to a live animal as described above, it is my responsibility to withhold permission or to make arrangements in advance with the school to safeguard my student;
3. I have carefully considered any such risks and have acted accordingly in giving my permission; and
4. As evinced by my signature below, I hereby release and hold harmless the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia, its officers, agents, volunteers, servants, and employees from any and all liability for any injury or losses to persons or property in connection with the activities involving live animals as described above. I understand that the School Board, its employees and agents shall not be responsible or legally liable for any losses of personal property or for bodily injuries, or the result thereof, incurred or suffered by my student on the property of the school or in connection with any activities related to participation in the activities involving

live animals as described herein.

5. I hereby give my consent to have school personnel, physician, EMT, or hospital staff administer emergency medical treatment in case of sudden illness or injury while participating in activities involving live animals. I understand that all reasonable efforts will be made to contact me in the event of such an emergency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Emergency Contact Information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(phone)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(alternate phone)



**Appendix C**

**Animal Request Form**

1. **School** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Teacher** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Classroom** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Type Animal Requested**  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. **Visiting or Resident** \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Expected start date and end date of animal visit/residency**  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. **Any student(s) with animal-related allergies in classroom? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

8. **If so, Names of Student(s)**

9. **Vaccinations or health records available for animal(s)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Teacher's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Principal's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**\*\*\*Keep this record for at least 2 years\*\*\***

**Appendix D**

**Animal Handler Certification and Release**

(Form must be completed for each animal that will be brought onto Albemarle County School Board property.)

**Certification**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have been approved to bring \_\_\_\_\_ (animal, individual description/name) on school property. I certify the following:

- I own the animal or have permission to handle the animal while on the property of the Albemarle County School Board. I have the authority to execute this form and make the required certification release contained herein;
- I have read the Albemarle County School Board Policy, “Animals in School.” To the extent it applies to me as the owner or handler of the animal, I am able to comply with the policy, and I hereby expressly agree to abide by its provisions;
- If applicable, I have provided **proof of insurance** covering my handling of the animal;
- I have provided or provide with this executed Certification **evidence of current rabies vaccinations** if the animal is a dog, cat, or ferret (circle one);
- I have provided or provide with this executed Certification a **current health certificate** signed by a licensed veterinarian, evincing current vaccinations for:
  - Dogs: canine distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parovirus, bordetella, and rabies; or
  - Cats: feline panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, feline leukemia, and rabies;
- I have personally examined the animal in the last forty-eight (48) hours and certify that the animal is clean and free of disease or parasites, including fleas, ticks, and mites. If I am unqualified to make this certification or uncertain how to make the examination, I have taken the animal to a veterinarian’s office for the examination and provide **written verification** with this executed Certification;
- I have sufficient containment, restraints, or other means to control the animal;
- My care of the animal meets or exceeds the guidelines as determined by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (ASPCA).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

(Appendix D, cont.)

**Release and Indemnification**

As evinced by my signature below, I hereby release and hold harmless the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia, its officers, agents, volunteers, servants, and employees from any and all liability for any injury or losses to persons or property in connection with the activities involving live animals as described above. I understand that the School Board, its employees and agents shall not be responsible or legally liable for any losses of personal property or for bodily injuries, or the result thereof, incurred or suffered in connection with participation in the activities involving live animals as described herein.

I indemnify and hold harmless the School Board's agents, volunteers, servants, employees, and officials from and against any and all claims, losses, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees and litigation expenses suffered by any party or entity as a result of my activities or participation in bringing an animal onto School Board property.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

STATE OF VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE, to wit:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a Notary Public in and for the County and State aforesaid, do hereby certify that \_\_\_\_\_, whose name as such is signed to the foregoing **Certification and Release and Indemnification**, has acknowledged the same before me in my County and State aforesaid.

Given under my hand this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

My Commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E**

**Release of Liability**

(Form must be completed for each animal that will be received.)

I am receiving an animal from the School Board of Albemarle County. Specifically, I am taking possession or ownership of (select one only):

- A classroom animal, namely a \_\_\_\_\_, temporarily;
- A classroom animal, namely a \_\_\_\_\_, permanently;
- A hatched bird, permanently.

I have sufficient accommodations to support the health and welfare of the animal. I agree to care for the animal by meeting or exceeding the guidelines as determined by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (ASPCA). \_\_\_\_\_(initials)

As evinced by my signature below, I hereby release and hold harmless the School Board of Albemarle County, Virginia, its officers, agents, volunteers, servants, and employees from any and all liability for any injury or losses to persons or property in connection with the animal as described above. I understand that the School Board, its employees and agents shall not be responsible or legally liable for any losses of personal property or for bodily injuries, or the result thereof, incurred or suffered in connection with this animal after I take possession.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name