



classroom pets



*Safely Caring for
Animals in the Classroom*



School Safe
Columbus Public Health developed the School Safe toolbox to educate and empower school teachers and faculty on important health and safety factors that are in schools today.

Components of this toolbox include information on laboratory safety, hazards relating to art classes, air quality issues in and around schools, and other physical hazards that may be in the school.

School Safe... Classroom Pets

This portion of the School Safe toolbox contains information on safely keeping and caring for classroom pets such as rodents and lizards.



resources and links

Below are resources and links that could provide you with more information on the topic of animal care.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/healthpets/

Columbus Academy of Veterinary Medicine
www.cavm-online.org

The Humane Society
www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/

United States Department of Agriculture - Animal Care Program
www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/

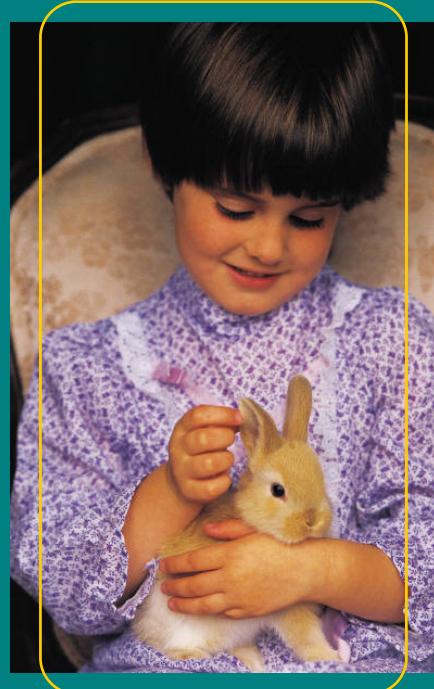




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A note to the reader...

Classroom pets can provide opportunities to achieve a variety of learning objectives. Due to the risk of allergies, injuries, and zoonotic diseases, however, schools must exercise restraint and take appropriate measures to limit the risks and liabilities associated with classroom pets.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 70,000 people get salmonellosis from contact with reptiles in the United States every year. Additionally, allergens shed by mammals and birds can be asthma triggers. The CDC also estimates that asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism. Each year, U.S. students miss about 14 million days because of asthma. These are just two of the possible risks that are associated with pets. This does not mean that animals must be completely excluded from all schools, but it does illustrate the importance of proper controls.

By exercising appropriate caution, and developing specific rules regarding classroom pets, you can limit the risks associated with classroom pets. This toolbox is presented as a guide for school administrators to assist in making decisions and assessing the risks associated with classroom pets.

Columbus Public Health hopes that this document provides you with the tools necessary to understand the risks, communicate effectively with classroom instructors, address questions and concerns from parents/legal guardians of students, and ultimately control the risks animals present in your facility.

before you get a classroom pet

Parental Notification Form

Included with this toolbox is a sample Parental Notification Form. Before you introduce a classroom pet to your students, send this form home and request that the student's parents read, fill out and sign.

Having a parent fill out a form like this could provide you with important information, such as allergic reactions that one or more students may have to a particular animal.

A sample Parental Notification Form can be found in the back of this toolbox.

Educational Purposes

Classroom pets should be limited to animals that are bred in captivity, and necessary to achieve the learning objectives. Wild animals can be a source of infectious agents, parasites, and are likely to bite.



Healthy Animals

All classroom pets should be examined by a veterinarian prior to being introduced to a classroom. The animals should be up to date on all vaccinations recommended by the veterinarian, and follow all of the veterinarian's guidance on proper handling, habitat, feeding, care, and other conditions for the particular type of pet.

Allergic Reactions

Allergies and sensitivities of students should be considered before getting any classroom pet, and students should be observed for signs that they are becoming sensitive to a pet (allergies can develop at any time). Please communicate with parents to determine what allergies and sensitivities are known.

Exotic Animals



Some animals require a written permission from the Health Commissioner or an authorized representative to be kept within the city of Columbus. These include hogs, equine, cattle, alligators, crocodiles, caimans, sheep, goats, llamas, captive wild fowl, and all domestic fowl. Please contact the

public health veterinarian before attempting to keep any of the animals mentioned above.

Food in the Classroom

Pets are inappropriate for classrooms where meals or snacks are served, and animals should never be allowed to roam in areas where food is served or stored.

Fill Out a Classroom Pet Form

Provided in the back of this workbook is a Classroom Pet Form. It will help you think through some necessary planning measures such as animal enclosure options, how the enclosure will be cleaned, and weekend, holiday and summer care arrangements.

housing and caring for your classroom pet

Constant Proper Care

Ensure that a proper habitat can be kept for the pet(s) (free of drafts and harsh sunlight). Also consider what type of care the animal will receive over weekends, and during school breaks (paying close attention to building heat and air conditioning status during times when school is not in session).

Enclosure Materials

Pets should be housed in an enclosure constructed from a nonporous material that is easily cleanable.

Keep Enclosures Clean

Cleaning of pet enclosures should be done as often as necessary to keep the animal healthy, prevent odors from building up, and eliminate any unsanitary conditions. It should be noted that cleaning and disinfection may be necessary as often as daily, however it should be done weekly at a minimum.

Sanitizing Enclosures

Enclosures should be sanitized after each cleaning with a fresh bleach solution (4oz of 5.25% unscented chlorine bleach to one gallon of water) OR a quaternary ammonia solution at a dilution suggested by the manufacturer for food service uses (NEVER MIX CHEMICALS!!!). Food and water bowls should be thoroughly scrubbed and rinsed with hot soapy water. As animals can be sensitive to sanitizers, care should be taken in adequately rinsing and drying the enclosure before putting the animal back in the enclosure. Some pathogens will not be killed by the sanitizers, but may be removed by rinsing thoroughly with water (this will also remove residual amounts of sanitizers). An animal's sensitivity is not an adequate reason to avoid the use of sanitizers.

Where to Wash Animal Enclosures

Animal enclosures must never be cleaned in plumbing fixtures used for food service, drinking water, or handwashing purposes. After cleaning the enclosure, the fixtures used to clean the enclosure should also be cleaned and sanitized.

CLEANING PRODUCT GUIDELINES

Chlorine should never be used on metal

Chlorine is corrosive and should not be used on metal surfaces. It can result in pitting and producing uncleanable surfaces that can harbor bacteria that could be deadly to your pet. If you have metal enclosures or surfaces you should use a quaternary ammonia sanitizer or ask your veterinarian for advice on other available sanitizers.

Quats

Quaternary Ammonia sanitizers are available at most restaurant supply stores. They may be more expensive than bleach, but will also have a longer shelf life.

Bleach

Chlorine sanitizers have a very short shelf life. You will need to mix a fresh solution each time you clean the enclosure, but they are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at any grocery store.

Do not use fragrant sanitizers

When purchasing sanitizers it is important to select the unscented types. Fragrances could be harmful to your pet.

once you have a classroom pet

Obtain Parental Notification Forms

It is not recommended that students be permitted to handle any pet or be given caring or cleaning duties without prior parental/legal guardian consent.

Educate on Handwashing

If anyone does handle an animal, they should wash their hands with hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds (instant hand sanitizers should only be used in addition to proper hand washing).

LIVE FOOD

The health of crickets and other live food is also important.

Sick crickets can lead to sick pets. Keep cricket enclosures clean and do not let crickets eat moldy or otherwise spoiled food.

Keep Pets Healthy

Pets that are injured or in poor health should be removed from the classroom immediately and given proper care. It should be noted, however that even animals that are or appear to be in good health can still shed potential pathogens.

Monitor Pet's Behavior

It should be noted that any animal may behave aggressively, however naturally aggressive species, and animals that are unusually aggressive or those displaying odd or uncharacteristic behaviors for their species should be removed immediately. Animals capable of causing substantial injury through aggressive or defensive reflexes should also be avoided (i.e. snapping turtles, venomous snakes, poisonous frogs, large birds).

Secure Enclosures to Protect Students

All pet enclosures should be securely covered and locked if possible. This will help protect the students and animals from one another by discouraging unsupervised handling and reducing potential of escape.

Animal Food Storage

Store all animal food in rigid containers with tight fitting lids to prevent access to food by pests. Also, some animals require fresh foods that may require refrigeration, or live foods. Should this be the case, make sure you have necessary equipment before bringing the animal in to the classroom.

Report Bites and Scratches Immediately

Report all animal bites or scratches to the school nurse immediately, and have a qualified person clean and disinfect such injuries. Parents/Legal guardians should also be informed, and, if necessary, consult with a physician.

classroom pet form

To be completed by the primary classroom instructor

Type and quantity of animal proposed:

Provide a brief explanation of how the animal will be used to achieve learning objectives in your classroom:

Primary veterinarian who has examined proposed animal...

Name: _____

Clinic Address: _____

Phone: _____

Are the animal(s) up to date on vaccines recommended by primary veterinarian? Yes or No

What type of enclosure will be used to house the animal(s)?

How often will the animal(s)' enclosure be cleaned and sanitized?

What type of sanitizer will be used when sanitizing the enclosure?

Is food properly stored in a rigid sealed container? Yes or No

Will students be permitted to handle animal(s), and will students be given care or cleaning responsibilities for animal(s)?

Yes or No

If so, have parents signed permission slips for such activities?

Yes or No

What arrangements have been made for the animal(s) care over weekends, holidays, and summer recess?

What arrangements have been made if the animal needs to be removed from the classroom permanently?

School: _____
Classroom: _____
Instructor Name: _____

classroom pet form

To be completed by the primary classroom instructor

School: _____

Classroom: _____ **Instructor Name:** _____

Type and quantity of animal proposed: _____

Provide a brief explanation of how the animal will be used to achieve learning objectives in your classroom: _____

Primary veterinarian who has examined proposed animal...

Name: _____

Clinic Address: _____

Phone: _____

Are the animal(s) up to date on vaccines recommended by primary veterinarian?

Yes or No (*circle one*)

What type of enclosure will be used to house the animal(s)? _____

How often will the animal(s)' enclosure be cleaned and sanitized? _____

What type of sanitizer will be used when sanitizing the enclosure? _____

Is food properly stored in a rigid sealed container? Yes or No (*circle one*)

Will students be permitted to handle animal(s), and will students be given care or cleaning responsibilities for animal(s)? Yes or No (*circle one*)

If so, have parents signed permission slips for such activities? Yes or No (*circle one*)

What arrangements have been made for the animal(s) care over weekends, holidays, and summer recess? _____

What arrangements have been made if the animal needs to be removed from the classroom permanently? _____

parental notice form

To notify you of pets in your student's classroom.

THIS FORM IS TO NOTIFY YOU THAT YOUR STUDENT'S CLASSROOM PLANS TO KEEP A CLASSROOM PET.

The specific animal(s) planned are: _____

The pet for your student's classroom may aid in achieving the following learning objectives: _____

Should you have any concerns regarding this animal (ex. student allergies, other medical sensitivities, sanitation practices, etc.) you may contact: _____

INFORMATION BELOW TO BE COMPLETED BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN
In addition to this notification, we would like to ask whether you would like your student to participate in any of the following activities (check all that apply):

- Handling of animal(s)
- Providing care for animal(s)
- Given cleaning responsibilities for animal(s)

I, _____, acknowledge that I have Parent/Legal Guardian Name
been informed of plans for my student, (_____)'s, Student Name
classroom to house a classroom pet as specified above.
Furthermore I consent to my student's participation in activities specified above.

Note: As a sign of good faith, we have included an informational brochure and animal complaint form provided by Columbus Public Health. Should you have any concerns regarding this situation you may contact either the school's principal directly at _____, or file a complaint or inquiry with Columbus Public Health (see form for details).

School: _____
Classroom: _____
Instructor Name: _____

parental notice form

To notify you of pets in your student's classroom

School: _____

Classroom: _____ **Instructor Name:** _____

The specific animal(s) planned are: _____

The pet for your student's classroom may aid in achieving the following learning objectives: _____

Should you have any concerns regarding this animal (ex. student allergies, other medical sensitivities, sanitation practices, etc.) you may contact: _____

INFORMATION BELOW TO BE COMPLETED BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN

In addition to this notification, we would like to ask whether you would like your student to participate in any of the following activities (check all that apply):

- Handling of animal(s)**
- Providing care for animal(s)**
- Given cleaning responsibilities for animal(s)**

I, _____ Parent/Legal Guardian Name acknowledge that I have been informed of plans for my student, (_____ Student Name)'s, classroom to house a classroom pet as specified above. Furthermore I consent to my student's participation in activities specified above.

Note: As a sign of good faith, we have included an informational brochure and animal complaint form provided by Columbus Public Health. Should you have any concerns regarding this situation you may contact either the school's principal directly at _____, or file a complaint or inquiry with Columbus Public Health (see form for details).

evaluation

Columbus Public Health
Attn: Healthy Schools Program
240 Parsons Ave N110
Columbus, OH 43215-5331

Help us improve the quality of our publication by taking a moment to fill out this brief evaluation and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided or fax this evaluation to the Healthy Schools Program (614)645-7155.

School Name (optional): _____

Before receiving this publication, did your school have an active plan to control the risks associated with classroom pets?: Y N

As a result of this publication, will your school be developing a plan or re-evaluating current plans regarding classroom pets?: Y N

Is your school likely to use the "classroom pet form" for instructors planning to house animals in the classroom?: Y N

Is your school likely to use the "parental notice form" for students in classrooms that house animals?: Y N

How many classroom pets are in your school? _____

Was there any information provided in this publication that needs clarification, more information, or is otherwise in need of improvement?: _____

Do you have any questions regarding classroom pets that were not addressed in this publication?: _____

Please provide any additional comments or questions that you have regarding this publication, or any challenges or concerns presented during implementation of rules or procedures regarding classroom pets: _____



City of Columbus
Mayor Michael B. Coleman