

DES MOINES INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS GUIDELINES  
Maintaining Animals in the Classroom  
(Revised 9/18)

**Background:** Use of animals in classrooms can assist students to learn appropriate care of animals, enhance investigative and observational skills and reinforce curriculum objectives. These guidelines provide direction to staff in the healthy and safe management of animals maintained in classrooms.

**General Practices:**

1. Only domesticated (not from the wild) animals are allowed in the classroom unless brought by a qualified individual such as a conservation officer or zoo curator. Animals trained, or being trained, to assist persons who are physically impaired shall have access to district property and district provided transportation when being used for that purpose.
2. Prior to procuring or bringing animals into classrooms, teachers will:
  - a. carefully consider the purpose for maintaining the animal in the classroom
  - b. review these guidelines and sign the Acknowledgement Form (Appendix A)
  - c. notify the Building Principal of the intent to maintain the animal in the classroom. Provide the Principal with the Acknowledgement Form.
  - d. gain approval from the District Science Administrator
  - e. If approved, prepare a letter stating the intention of keeping the animal in the classroom. The letter should state the purpose and request the parent notify the teacher if their child is allergic to the type of animal to be maintained (example, Appendix B).
    - **If any parent responds in the affirmative, the animal cannot be maintained in the classroom.**
3. The teacher will be responsible to ensure that the animal is appropriately cared for at all times.
  - a. All cages must be able to be secured, especially on the weekends
  - b. Accommodations must be made for extreme room temperature fluctuations, especially during the winter months.
  - c. Food and water must be provided if the animal is left in the building over the weekend.
  - d. Cages will be cleaned on a regular basis utilizing universal precautions and blood borne pathogen guidelines for bagging and disposing of urine, feces and blood contaminated materials. Teachers will be responsible for cleaning cages/dens (this cannot be delegated to students).
  - e. If the animal cannot be properly cared for at all times, it should not be kept in the classroom.
  - f. Animals are to be located in approved containers away from water fountains, sinks where students and staff wash hands, areas where food is prepared, stored or served or areas

where first aid materials are stored or first aid is rendered. Animals are not to be allowed to roam loose in the classrooms.

- g. Educate children about harmful germs that can spread between animals and people and about proper handwashing technique.
- h. Wash hands right after contact with animals, animal products, or feed or after being around animal environments.
- i. Supervise human-animal contact, particularly involving children.

#### 4. Management of Animal Bites/Scratches

- a. Any animal bite/scratch should be washed with soap and water and the student examined by the nurse. Current tetanus status will be reviewed.
  - b. Mammal bites/scratches must be reported to Animal Control by calling 242-2720, (after hours number- 286-3333). Reptile bites do not need to be reported.
  - c. Animal Control will determine the need for and the method to quarantine the animal following a bite or scratch.
  - d. With respect to injuries and liability issues, Iowa Code 673 relates to domesticated animal activities. The Code requires that a domesticated animal professional (designated under the Code to include teachers) post and maintain a sign on the property where domesticated animal activities occur, (see text of sign in Appendix C). The sign must be clearly visible to a participant. The statute requires that such signs have black letters of a minimum of one inch.
5. Inappropriate care of the animal will be grounds to have the animal removed from the classroom.
  6. Background tutorial information about animals maintained in classrooms can be obtained from the District Science Administrator.

**Animals Not Recommended in School or Childcare Settings** •• Inherently dangerous animals (eg, lions, tigers, cougars, and bears).

•Nonhuman primates (eg, monkeys and apes).

•Mammals that pose a high risk for transmitting rabies (eg, bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes).

•Aggressive or unpredictable wild or domestic animals.

•Stray animals with unknown health and vaccination history.

•Venomous or toxin-producing spiders, insects, reptiles, and amphibians.

APPENDIX A  
Acknowledgement Statement

I \_\_\_\_\_ am interested in maintaining an animal in my classroom.

I have reviewed the guidelines for maintaining animals in the classroom and agree to follow the guidelines.

I understand that failure to comply with the guidelines will lead to the removal of the animal from my classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B  
Sample letter to Parents

We are considering keeping and caring for a \_\_\_\_\_ in your son or daughter's classroom. The purpose of keeping this animal is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

Please let me know if you have concerns about this or if your son or daughter is allergic to this type of animal. If we determine that anyone has an allergy we will not proceed as we do not want to create any difficulties for anyone in our classroom.

The District has guidelines for appropriate care and management of animals in the classroom and these will be followed.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this with me, please call \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teachers Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

APPENDIX C:

CLASSROOM SIGN TEXT

WARNING

UNDER IOWA LAW, A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL PROFESSIONAL IS NOT LIABLE FOR DAMAGES SUFFERED BY, AN INJURY TO, OR THE DEATH OF A PARTICIPANT RESULTING FROM THE INHERENT RISKS OF DOMESTICATED ANIMAL ACTIVITIES, PURSUANT TO IOWA CODE CHAPTER 673. YOU ARE ASSUMING INHERENT RISKS PARTICIPATING IN THIS DOMESTICATED ANIMAL ACTIVITY.