Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Safety and Suitability of Premises, Environment and Equipment

Providers must keep premises and equipment clean, and be aware of, and comply with, requirements of health and safety legislation (including hygiene requirements)

4.6 Animals in the setting

Policy statement

Children learn about the natural world, its animals and other living creatures, as part of the Learning and Development Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This may include contact with animals, or other living creatures, either in the setting or on visits. We aim to ensure that this is in accordance with sensible hygiene and safety controls.

This policy also reflects current requirements in England and Wales relating to prohibited dog types under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, including XL Bully-type dogs, and the Early Years Foundation Stage requirement that childcare must not take place where banned dog breeds are present.

Procedures

Animals in the setting as pets

Dogs and banned dog breeds

- We do not allow prohibited dog types, including XL Bully-type dogs, Pit Bull Terrier types, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino or Fila Brasileiro, to be kept, brought into, or present in any area where childcare is taking place.
- Where childcare takes place in a domestic or other private setting, we ensure that no banned dog breed is present on the premises during childcare hours, including in rooms, gardens, vehicles or any other area accessible to children.
- Visitors, staff, volunteers, parents and carers must not bring any banned dog breed onto the premises or to any organised setting activity. If there is any doubt about a dog's type, we will not allow the dog to be present while childcare is taking place.
- Any permitted dog visiting the setting must be risk assessed in advance, kept under the control of a responsible adult, and separated from children unless a planned, supervised activity has been authorised by the manager.
- Children are never left unsupervised with any dog. From 1 November 2026, children under 12 must not be left in close proximity to an exempted banned-breed dog in a domestic or private setting without adult supervision; however, our setting applies the stricter rule that banned dog breeds are not permitted where childcare takes place.

- We take account of the views of parents and children when selecting an animal or creature to keep as a pet in the setting, as well as any allergies or issues that individual children may have any animals or creatures.
- We carry out a risk assessment with a knowledgeable person accounting for any hygiene or safety risks posed by the animal or creature.
- We provide suitable housing for the animal or creature and ensure this is cleaned out regularly and is kept safely.
- Our staff are knowledgeable of the pet's welfare and dietary needs and ensure that the correct food is offered, at the right times.
- We make arrangements for weekend and holiday care for the animal or creature.
- We register with the local vet and take out appropriate pet care health insurance.

- We make sure all vaccinations and other regular health measures, such as de-worming, are up-to-date and recorded.
- We teach children the correct handling and care of the animal or creature and supervise them at all times.
- We ensure that children wash their hands after handling the animal or creature and do not have contact with animal soil or soiled bedding.
- We wear disposable gloves when cleaning housing or handling soiled bedding.
- If animals or creatures are brought in by visitors to show the children, they are the responsibility of their owner.
- The owner carries out a risk assessment, detailing how the animal or creature is to be handled and how any safety or hygiene issues will be addressed.

Visits to farms

- Before a visit to a farm, we carry out a risk assessment - this may take account of safety factors listed in the farm's own risk assessment, which should be viewed.
- We contact the venue in advance of the visit to ensure that there has been no recent outbreak of E.coli or other infections. If there has been an outbreak, we will review the visit and may decide to postpone it.
- We follow our outings procedure.
- Children wash and dry their hands thoroughly after contact with animals.
- Outdoor footwear worn to visit farms is cleaned of mud and debris as soon as possible on departure and should not be worn indoors.
- We advise staff and volunteers who are, or may be, pregnant to avoid contact with ewes and to consult their GP before the visit.

Legal framework

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)

- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and related legislation designating prohibited dog types, including XL Bully-type dogs in England and Wales
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, including safeguarding and welfare requirements on premises, safety and banned dog breeds

Further guidance

- Health and Safety Regulation…A Short Guide (HSE 2003)

- GOV.UK guidance on banned dog breeds and XL Bully-type dogs
- UK Health Security Agency guidance on health protection in children and young people's settings, including hygiene and infection prevention

This policy was adopted by		
On		(date)
Date to be reviewed	Review annually	(date)
Signed on behalf of the management committee	*Rachel Penny*	
Name of signatory	Julia Jameson	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)	Chairperson	