E-143 P-CDOP

# ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

The education and therapeutic value of animals in the school setting is widely recognized. However, to ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff, and animals, schools must follow the regulations set forth for this purpose by the Office of Catholic Schools.

Adopted: 7/2018

Reviewed: 6/2020, 7/2021, 7/2022

E-143 AR-OCS

# ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Any student exposure to animals at school should be with parent awareness and consent – it is entirely possible that a child may be allergic to animal dander, bedding, or foods. Further, children may have strong fear or anxiety to certain types of animals (e.g. snakes, mice). While daily exposure might reduce fear or anxiety, it should be the family’s choice. If an animal is brought into a classroom without parental knowledge, there is an increased risk of triggering an allergic reaction or anxiety attack.

Most animals are not suitable for handling in a classroom environment. The noise and commotion of the classroom can stress animals that are solitary and disturb their natural sleeping habits. Such stressors can cause typically docile animals to become aggressive. It should be noted that any animal that exhibits aggressive behavior must be immediately removed from the classroom and/or school. Such animals are not to be permitted on school grounds again.

If applicable, animals in schools must show proof of vaccinations.

In an effort to provide a healthy and safe environment for all, the following must be adhered to:

1. Live animals shall be brought into the classroom only as part of the written curriculum and with prior approval of the school administration.
2. There shall be a clear instructional or therapeutic purpose for keeping an animal in the classroom.
3. School administrators must inform parents of students in a classroom when an animal is being introduced and/or maintained. No animal shall be kept in a classroom if one or more parents object.
4. Exposure to feathered or furry animals must be carefully controlled, as they can exacerbate asthma and/or trigger severe allergic reactions.
5. If a heat lamp is required for the animal, it must be securely attached to the cage or tank containing the animal, have an electrical cord in good condition, be plugged into a surge protector, and have no combustible materials nearby (e.g. paper, plastics). In addition, an extension cord is not to be used for connecting a heat lamp to an electrical circuit.

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