

## ORANGE WINDSOR SUPERVISORY UNION

### ROYALTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

#### ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

The Royalton School District bases its policy concerning animals in school on the Vermont Department of Health School Animal Policy. The school nurse and/or school principal reserves the right to allow an animal to be present at school or at school functions based on educational, medical or law enforcement need.

Proper documentation of all required immunizations must be provided prior to the animal being on school grounds or at a function. Rabies vaccination documentation must accompany the animal on the day of the visit. Arrangements for the animal visit must be made at least 24 hours in advance of time with the school nurse or the principal.

#### Animals Prohibited from School

Rabies is now endemic in Vermont's raccoon and fox populations. Any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this fatal disease and, if infected, can transmit it to students and staff. The risk in a school is that a single wild animal or unvaccinated pet carrying rabies has the potential to expose a large number of children.

Accordingly, The following animals are prohibited from school:

**Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals** - including: bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores. These animals are not permitted on school grounds under any circumstances (including dead animals).

**Pet Dogs, Cats, Wolf-Hybrids, Ferrets and Farm Animals** - These pets do not belong in the school. They may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas and other diseases and injuries. The school nurse or the principal has the right to allow an animal to be present at school based on educational, medical or law enforcement need.

**Bats** - Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should *not* be installed on school grounds.

**Poisonous Animals** - Spiders, venomous insects, and poisonous snakes, poisonous reptiles and poisonous lizards are prohibited from school and school grounds for safety reasons.

## Guidelines for Other Animals

Any animal that is allowed in the school must be clean and healthy in order that the risk of their transmitting disease to students and teachers is minimal. Any education with animals should also be used to re-emphasize proper hygiene and hand washing recommendations.

No animals should be allowed in food preparations areas at any time. Food handlers should not be responsible for clean-up of animal waste. Cages and tanks should not be cleaned in food handling areas.

Animal cages or tanks should be cleaned thoroughly on a regular basis. Students should not be allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine or blood), and wastes should be disposed of in a plastic bag. Anyone who cleans a cage or tank should wash his/her hands thoroughly immediately after completing the task.

Children with allergies or those with immune deficiencies may be especially susceptible to diseases transmitted by animals or allergic reactions; therefore, special precautions may be needed to minimize risks. Consultation with the school nurse and the child's parents as well as appropriate precautionary measures is strongly advised.

**Birds** - Psittacosis is a serious disease that infected birds can transmit to humans. Even birds that appear healthy can be carriers of this disease. Because of the risk of psittacosis, birds (especially parrots, parakeets, macaws, pigeons, doves, etc.) should not be handled by children and should never be allowed to fly free in the classroom.

**Reptiles and Amphibians** - Reptiles (iguanas, snakes, lizards and turtles) and amphibians (frogs, salamanders and toads) can spread salmonella to humans, resulting in diarrhea and fever. This disease can be life-threatening in very young children. Children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home should not handle these animals. Anyone handling a reptile or amphibian should wash his/her hands thoroughly, immediately following contact.

**Chicks and Ducks** - Chicks and ducks can spread salmonella to humans. Children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home should not handle these animals. Anyone handling chicks or ducks should wash their hands thoroughly, immediately following contact.

Guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils and rabbits - Healthy guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils and rabbits pose a limited health risk. Such animals may be allowed as classroom pets or as occasional visitors with advance notification to the school nurse or principal. Even tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations; therefore, student contact with animals should always be closely supervised, and animals should not be allowed to run loose in the classroom.

**Fish** - Fish pose a very limited health risk and may be allowed in the classroom. Disposable gloves should be worn when cleaning aquariums, and tank water should not be disposed of in sinks that are used for food preparation or drinking water.

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References: Vermont Department of Health: State of Vermont Animals in School Policy and NASN Guidelines

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