

Policy Title: Animals at MSPA

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Effective Date:	8/1/2024
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Description:

Recommends the following be **prohibited** from schools:

Wild animals stray and domestic animals – rabies is found regularly in wildlife populations. Any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease and, if infected, can transmit it to students and staff. A single wild animal or unvaccinated pet carrying rabies has the potential to expose a large number of children.

Wild animals and stray domestic animals pose a risk for transmitting rabies and other zoonotic diseases. They should not be allowed in schools or handled. These include bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes and other wild animals (either live or dead) as well as any stray domestic animal, such as a stray cat or dog, including kittens and puppies. Wolf-dog hybrids are also prohibited from schools.

Exceptions can be made when a wild animal is part of demonstration and is handled by someone experienced in wildlife handling. However, there should be no contact between the students and the animals, and the animals should be safely enclosed in a cage or other appropriate container. However, because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, fox, and other carnivores, such animals should never be allowed on school grounds.

Poisonous animals – Venomous or toxin- producing spiders, insects, reptiles and amphibians should be prohibited for safety reasons.

Bats- Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed at schools.

Guidelines for other animals –Each school will determine whether the following animals are allowed or prohibited.

Chicks and ducklings- Chicks and ducklings, even if they appear healthy, can spread Salmonella bacteria to people. Salmonella infections can be life-threatening in young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems, but anyone can become seriously ill. These animals should not be handled by children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home. Anyone handling chicks or ducklings should wash their hands thoroughly, immediately following contact. There have been many outbreaks of illness after contact with chicks and ducklings, and they may not be appropriate in schools, especially if young children are in attendance.

Dogs and Cats- Puppies and kittens too young to be vaccinated for rabies should not be brought into a school unless they were born to a vaccinated mother, and they have been housed in a way that makes rabies exposure highly unlikely. Young animals are more likely to shed harmful bacteria and parasites in their stools, and may pose an unacceptably high risk for young children.

Adult dogs and cats could be occasional visitors to a school but must be under the control of their owner or handler. Before allowing a dog or cat on the school premises, it is important to make sure the animal has the proper temperature for the setting. They should be under care of a veterinarian, with proof of current rabies vaccination made available to the school staff. Cats and dogs should also be on a program of proper flea, tick, and intestinal parasite control.

Ferrets – Ferrets can be allowed to visit a classroom but should be handled by the person responsible for them. Ferrets should be under the care of a veterinarian, with proof of current rabies vaccination made Morning Star Preparatory Academy available to the school staff. Because that startle easily and may bite, school children should not be allowed to hold ferrets.

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Reptiles and Amphibians – Reptiles (iguanas, snakes, lizards, and turtles) and amphibians (frogs, salamanders, and toads) are common carriers of Salmonella bacteria. Even healthy animals may carry these bacteria. There are many confirmed reports of transmission of Salmonella from these animals to people. Reptiles and amphibians may not be appropriate in schools, especially if young children are in attendance.

In people; infection with salmonella usually causes diarrhea and fever. The illness can be life threatening in very young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems, but anybody can become seriously ill. These animals should not be handled by children, pregnant women or individuals with infants at home. They should be housed in cages that will provide a physical barrier between the animal and the children (such as glass or plastic). Anyone handling a reptile or amphibian should wash their hands thoroughly immediately following contact.

Guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, rabbits as a visitor – healthy guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils and rabbits pose a limited health risk. Such animals may be allowed as classroom pets or as occasional visitors. However, even tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations, so students when in contact with animals should not be allowed to “kiss” these animals. Students and staff must wash their hands after handling these animals.

Fish – fish pose a very limited health risk and may be allowed in the classroom as a visitor. Tank water should not be disposed of in sinks that are used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water. Gloves should be worn when cleaning the tank, and hands should be washed thoroughly afterwards.

Students, parents, teachers, and staff at Morning Star, must obtain prior permission from the administration before bringing any animal to Morning Star.

Animals that have been approved to come to Morning Star must be kept in a clean cage or box and must be clean.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to schools about the safest way to handle animals in a school setting. The goal is to reduce human exposures to rabies and other zoonotic diseases (those transmitted from animals to people).
