

Animal care and welfare in schools, preschools and early childhood services procedure

This is a mandated procedure under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

1. Overview

This procedure provides direction for the proper use and care of animals in Department for Education schools, preschools and early childhood services.

Activities involving animals in schools are divided into 5 categories. There is a 6th category of prohibited procedures. These are outlined in full in this document.

The approval process for categories 1 to 5 is as follows:

- Category 1: no approval required.
- Category 2: approval is required by the Principal/Director or delegated Animal Ethics Focus Person or teacher.
- Category 3: approval is required by the Principal/Director.
- Categories 4 and 5: approval is required by the Animal Ethics Committee.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to government operated schools, preschools and early childhood services.



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4. Detail

4.1. Reporting to the Animal Ethics Committee

At the end of each year, sites must advise the department's Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) of the number of Category 2, 3, 4 and 5 animals kept for inclusion in the statistics of animals used for research and teaching reported to the Department for Environment and Water (DEW). The Nature Education Centre is not included in the statistics as data is provided directly. Category 1 animals are also not included as they are only observed by students.

Refer to form AEC 110 ([appendix 2: Animal Ethics Committee forms](#)).

4.2. Approving the use of animals in schools and preschools

4.2.1. Category 1

Approval level

No approval required if the activity is undertaken in accordance with departmental policies, procedures and guidelines (eg Animal care information sheets) endorsed by the department's AEC. Site leaders should be aware of these programs through local processes.

Student interaction, training or responsibility

None. The animals are only observed by students. The animals are not owned by the school/preschool and the students do not feed, handle or in any way interact with them. The teacher or the owner is responsible for all husbandry and care.

Reporting to the Animal Ethics Committee and statistics

None. These animals are not included in the statistics of animals used for research and teaching.

Activities included in this category

Category 1 activities are purely observational:

- Observation of animal behaviour.
- Observation of pets under the control of their owner.
- Excursions to observe animals in their natural surroundings or to zoos or wildlife parks.
- Excursions to farms for observation of animal behaviour and husbandry activities, appropriate to the age, prior experience and maturity of the students.

4.2.2. Category 2

Approval level

Approval by the site leader if the activity is undertaken in accordance with departmental policies, procedures and guidelines (eg Animal care information sheets) endorsed by the department's AEC. The Principal/Director **may delegate** the ability to approve to the Animal Ethics Focus Person, a senior biology teacher or other suitable staff member.

Student interaction, training or responsibility

Students may participate in the routine care of the animal (eg feeding, cleaning etc) if they are trained before doing so.

Activities included in this category

- Mustering, drafting (in crush or headbail), capture, restraint and handling of non-free-living domesticated animals (grooming or holding an animal, collecting a milk sample, non-invasive measurements, leading or riding an appropriately trained animal).
- Observation of particular animal behaviours, eg oestrus, parturition.
- School performance by outside agencies that have animals as part of their exhibits.
- Organisations bringing animals to school (such as Delta Society programs, RSPCA or AVA PetPep program).
- Breeding of mice or other appropriate animal in the classroom.
- The appropriate care of classroom pets.
- Non-invasive measurement of body weight, body condition by visual assessment or condition scoring, growth, body proportions, pulse or blood flow, respiration, skin temperature (non-invasive), age by dentition, scrotum and testicles (palpation).
- Familiarisation activities.
- Administering water as a treatment.
- Collection of wool, milk, faeces or urine samples (non-invasive).
- Administering a topical treatment to the udder.
- Coat care and grooming.
- Tail tagging.
- Animals on loan from the Nature Education Centre (NEC) (Note: the NEC will report directly to the department's AEC on the number of animals loaned so schools should not include them in their returns).

4.2.3. Category 3

Approval level

Approval by the site leader if the activity is undertaken in accordance with departmental policies, procedures and guidelines (eg Animal care information sheets) endorsed by the department's AEC. The site leader **cannot** delegate the ability to approve to another staff member.

Student interaction, training or responsibility

Students may participate in the routine care of the animal (eg feeding, cleaning etc) if they are trained before doing so and may have a level of responsibility for the maintenance and welfare of the animal.

Reporting to the Animal Ethics Committee and statistics

At the end of each year, the school/preschool must advise the department's AEC of the number of Category 3 animals used for inclusion in the statistics of animals used for research and teaching.

Activities included in this category

Category 3 comprises many routine techniques but none which requires the breaking of skin or any blood loss (eg blood samples, ear tagging etc):

- Non-invasive measurement of body condition by ultrasound.
- Measurement of mild dietary effects (provided the normal nutritional needs for the life stage of the animals are met), high/normal protein, high/normal energy, high/normal fat, palatability.
- Taming/gentling.
- Training for competition or showing.
- Tethering animals.
- Collection of saliva.
- Measurement of body temperature (invasive).
- Administering topical treatment by backline, spray or dip.
- Administering drench or capsules orally.
- Administering intramammary into teat of udder.
- Coat clipping.
- Hoof paring: sheep and goats.
- Hoof trimming: cattle.
- Shearing of sheep and goats.
- Dagging.
- Milking.
- Putting nose clips on cattle.

- Loading and unloading animals onto transporters.
- Showing animals at school and away.
- Foot bathing.
- Flystrike treatment.
- Jetting animals.
- Using sire harnesses.
- Restraining with ropes.
- Pregnancy detection by external ultrasound.
- Horn tipping.

4.2.4. Category 4

Approval level

Approval by the department's AEC using a standard template application form approved by the department's AEC for the procedure. The application will also require notification (but not approval) of any category 2 or 3 procedures being done in conjunction with the application. The department's AEC has designed a standard application which clearly defines parameters and conditions. If the proposal does not abide by the parameters a new application must be completed.

Student interaction, training or responsibility

Students may participate in these activities if they are trained before doing so and may have a level of responsibility for the maintenance and welfare of the animal.

Reporting to the Animal Ethics Committee and statistics

At the end of each year, the school must advise the department's AEC of the number of Category 4 animals used for inclusion in the statistics of animals used for research and teaching.

Activities included in this category

Category 4 comprises many routine husbandry techniques which have the potential to be painful or distressing to the animal:

- Breaking-in cattle or horses.
- Administering intraruminal, subcutaneous or intramuscular injections.
- Administering winged capsules orally.
- Administering intravenous injections or intrauterine pessaries.
- Ear marking/tagging of livestock.
- Tattoo application.
- Shearing of alpacas and llamas.

- Crutching.
- Castration of lambs.
- Castration of calves.
- Tail docking of lambs.
- Tail docking of piglets.
- Tooth trimming/removal in piglets.
- Beak trimming.
- Oestrus synchronisation.
- Microchip tagging.
- Dehorning cattle under six months of age.
- Detusking boars.
- Disbudding calves and kids.
- Aquaculture and related enterprises.
- Commercial activities (for example growing turkeys for commercial sale).
- Collecting and observing frog spawn and tadpoles (see the [additional information](#) section).

4.2.5. Category 5

Approval level

Approval by the department's AEC using an application form specifically prepared by the department's AEC for approval of the procedure. The application will also require notification (but not approval) of any category 2 or 3 procedures being done in conjunction with the application.

Student interaction, training or responsibility

Students may participate in these activities if they are trained before doing so and may have a level of responsibility for the maintenance and welfare of the animal.

Reporting to the Animal Ethics Committee and statistics

At the end of each year, the school must advise the department's AEC of the number of Category 5 animals used for inclusion in the statistics of animals used for research and teaching.

Activities included in this category

Category 5 comprises many husbandry techniques which have the potential to be painful or distressing to the animal and require a level of expertise or supervision to ensure that adverse events do not occur:

- Collection of faeces, ruminal fluid or blood (invasive).
- Nose ringing.
- Freeze branding of cattle and horses.

- Artificial insemination.
- Semen collection.

4.2.6. Prohibited procedures (category 6)

The following procedures may not be undertaken in schools unless done by a veterinarian:

- Pregnancy detection by rectal palpation.
- The surgical opening of any body cavity (eg cattle spaying).
- Performance of surgical procedures without anaesthesia, other than in the conduct of normal animal husbandry operations.

The following procedures may not be undertaken in schools at all:

- Induction of infectious diseases.
- Nutritional deficiencies.
- Administration of drugs or chemicals other than those recommended for a particular therapeutic purpose.
- Administration of ionising-radiation or other biohazardous material.
- Activities, other than approved activities, giving rise to distress.
- Imprinting eg simulated parenting.
- Animals used as prizes for raffles.
- Caustic debudding.
- Removal of pouch young marsupials for the purposes of hand-rearing (unless the mother is incapable of rearing the joey).
- Breeding animals for the purpose of dissection.
- Killing animals other than emergency euthanasia (see the [additional information](#) section). This does not prohibit sending animals to a slaughter house or market. Animal carcasses should be disposed of accordingly.
- Killing of animals by students.
- Fire branding horns of stud sheep.
- Fire branding of cattle and horses.
- Mulesing of sheep.

4.2.7. Additional information

- A staff member may euthanase animal(s) in an emergency situation only (eg dog attack of sheep or a kangaroo with a broken leg) if the staff member has the skills and appropriate equipment to do so in

a humane manner. If avoidable, students must not be present when the animal is euthanased. The euthanasia and reasons for it must be reported to the site leader and to the department's AEC.

- All activities must be in compliance with relevant Livestock Codes of Practice and Standards and Guidelines.
- Approvals given by the site leader or the Animal Ethics Committee may be subject to any conditions set down in the approval.
- Site visits may be conducted by member(s) of the Animal Ethics Committee with prior consultation.

4.2.8. Dissection of animals

All requests for dissection of animals require approval from the department's AEC. No dissections should take place without prior approval.

The [Dissection of Animals in Schools booklet \(PDF 267KB\)](#) is available on [EDi](#) (staff login required).

Contact the department's AEC Executive Officer for further information on telephone number 8463 5986 or email education.AnimalEthics@sa.gov.au.

4.2.9. Macropods

The keeping of macropods on sites requires approval from the department's AEC. Application form AEC 125 needs to be completed (see [Appendix 2](#)). Approval is granted for 1 year.

4.3. Animal use & daily health record (AEC 101)

Health records should be kept by sites for the ongoing monitoring of the health of the animal. Describe details of animal use (ie any intervention), preventative health treatments and health monitoring including observing for signs of ill-health, checking feed, water and environmental conditions.

This record must be retained by sites and be available during site visits by the department's AEC.

4.4. Adverse incidents

If there is an unexpected or adverse incident involving any animals on a site regardless of category it must be reported to the department immediately on the form [illness/injury, death or unexpected incident report form \(AEC 102\) \(DOC 78KB\)](#) (staff login required). A copy of [animal use and daily health record \(AEC 101\) \(DOC 151KB\)](#) (staff login required) should also be submitted. The department's AEC will only review incidents required under relevant codes or legislation.

4.5. Information sheets

Information related to the following topics can be found on EDi and PIRSA's website:

- [Acquiring animals for a school or preschool](#) (staff login required)
- [Animal ethics focus person](#) (staff login required)

- [Avian influenza](#)
- [Cane toads](#)
- [Caring for animals on weekends and during holiday periods](#) (staff login required)
- [Chicken coops \(DOCX 151KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Dogs](#) (staff login required)
- [Emergencies](#) (staff login required)
- [Equine influenza \(DOCX 120KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Finding a bird](#) (staff login required)
- [Frogs/tadpoles, Guidelines for collecting \(DOCX 117KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Handling animals \(DOCX 120KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Heat stress \(DOCX 119KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Rescuing and releasing native animals \(DOCX 116KB\)](#)
- [Security \(DOCX 117KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Snake season \(DOCX 120KB\)](#) (staff login required)
- [Two can be better than one \(DOCX 116KB\)](#) (staff login required).

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Director, Curriculum Programs

Make sure that this procedure, associated forms and processes are compliant with relevant legislation and directions as licensee under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*.

Make sure the Animal Ethics Committee is kept informed of any changes to departmental processes or procedures related to the use of animals.

Make sure that any approvals, updates or recommendations from the Animal Ethics Committee are consistent with departmental processes or procedures, and communicated to sites.

5.2. Site leader (Principal or Preschool Director)

Comply with the requirements of this procedure (approvals and reporting), any related guidelines, information sheets and lawful directions from the department's Animal Ethics Committee.

Delegate (where appropriate) approvals and reporting to relevant staff, consistent with this procedure.

5.3. Employees

Comply with the requirements of this procedure, any related guidelines, information sheets and lawful directions from the department's Animal Ethics Committee.

6. Definitions

6.1. Animal Ethics Committee

A statutory committee established under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* to approve, monitor, and inspect (where appropriate) the use of animals for teaching and research in educational settings, and maintain the Department for Education's compliance with the Act.

6.2. Animal ethics focus person

Responsible for keeping daily records related to the health and wellbeing of animals kept on site.

7. Appendices

[Appendix 1: Standard operating procedures \(Animal care information sheets\)](#)

[Appendix 2: Animal Ethics Committee forms](#)

8. Supporting information

The [Animal Welfare Regulations](#) contain a schedule of the codes of practice which apply to livestock, pets and to those people who own or manage them. The codes cover the minimum husbandry requirements of livestock species such as; basic welfare needs, intensive stocking systems, handling, mustering and yarding, management practices, health, feral stock control, humane destruction. Compliance with these Codes is mandatory. Copies are available from the [Department for Environment and Water \(DEW\)](#).

[Australian Veterinary Association](#)

[Department for Environment and Water: Wildlife permits](#)

[Department for Environment and Water: Fauna Permit Unit contact details](#)

8.1. Related legislation

[Animal Welfare Act 1985 \(SA\)](#)

[Animal Welfare Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#)

[Aquaculture Act 2001 \(SA\)](#)

[Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th edition 2013](#)

[Livestock Act 1997 \(SA\)](#)

[National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 \(SA\)](#)

[National Parks and Wildlife \(Wildlife\) Regulations 2019 \(SA\)](#)

8.2. Related policies

[Safety management procedure \(PDF 204KB\)](#) (staff login required)

9. Record history

Published date: August 2024

9.1. Approvals

OP number: 252

File number: DE20/10873

Status: approved

Version: 1.4

Policy Officer: Manager, Animal Care and Welfare Program

Policy sponsor: Director, Curriculum Programs

Responsible Executive Director: Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning

Approved by: Director, Curriculum Programs

Approved date: 17 January 2025

Next review date: 17 January 2028

9.2. Revision record

Version: 1.4

Approved by: Director, Curriculum Programs

Approved date: 17 January 2025

Review date: 17 January 2028

Amendment(s): Updated language to clarify incident reporting process. Updated hyperlinks to legislation.

Version: 1.3

Approved by: Director, Curriculum Programs

Approved date: 19 August 2024

Review date: 19 August 2027

Amendment(s): Update to procedure name, position titles, terminology and hyperlinks.

Version: 1.2

Approved by: Director, Curriculum Programs

Approved date: 28 July 2021

Review date: 28 July 2024

Amendment(s): Update to current department branding and updated hyperlinks.

Version: 1.1

Approved by: Director, Primary Learners

Approved date: 14 August 2020

Review date: 31 July 2021

Amendment(s): Content reviewed and is current. Review date extended until 31 July 2021 to allow time for edits to be completed.

Version: 1.0

Approved by: Chief Executive

Approved date: July 2013

Review date: July 2016

Amendment(s): New procedure implemented.

10. Contact

Animal Care and Welfare

Email: education.AnimalEthics@sa.gov.au

Phone: 8463 5986

11. Appendix 1: Standard operating procedures

SOP no.	Standard operating procedure (animal care information sheet) name
01	Alpacas (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
02	Aquaculture (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
03	Axolotls (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
04	Budgerigars and caged birds (DOCX 30KB) (staff login required)
05	Cattle (DOCX 30KB) (staff login required)
06	Domestic fowls (chickens) (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
07	Ducks and geese (DOCX 25KB) (staff login required)
08	Dunnart (fat tailed) (DOCX24 KB) (staff login required)
09	Fish (other than aquaculture programs) (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
10	Goats (DOCX 28KB) (staff login required)
11	Green tree frog (DOCX 28KB) (staff login required)
12	Guinea pigs (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
13	Hermit crabs (DOCX 24KB) (staff login required)
14	Horses (DOCX 28KB) (staff login required)
15	Invertebrates (DOCX 29KB) (staff login required)
16	Lizards (geckos and skinks, large and small dragons) (DOCX 29KB) (staff login required)
17	Mice (DOCX 68KB) (staff login required)
18	Pigs (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
19	Rabbits (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
20	Rats (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
21	Sheep (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
22	Snakes (DOCX 27KB) (staff login required)
23	Tortoises (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
24	Turkeys (DOCX 26KB) (staff login required)
25	Yabbies (DOCX 25KB) (staff login required)

12. Appendix 2: Animal Ethics Committee forms

Form no.	Form name
AEC 100	Application form for categories 4 and 5 activities or non-listed activities (DOC 290KB) (staff login required)
AEC 101	Animal use and daily health record (DOC 151KB) (staff login required)
AEC 102	Illness/injury, death or unexpected incident report form (DOC 78KB) (staff login required)
AEC 110	Annual report form (DOC 161KB) (staff login required)
AEC 120	Application for experiments/dissections (DOC 153KB) (staff login required)
AEC 125	Application to keep native animals on-site (DOC 283KB) (staff login required)
AEC 130	Holiday care form (DOC 97KB) (staff login required)