

CHICKENS AT WOODRIDGE

Quality Area 3

1. PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- ensure safety and wellbeing of children, educators, parents/guardians and chickens at Woodridge Pre-school
- ensure that all necessary information for the effective management of chickens at Woodridge Pre-school is recorded so that they receive appropriate attention when required.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Woodridge Pre-school is committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, early childhood teachers, educators, staff and others attending the service
- providing a safe and healthy environment for all chickens housed at the service
- providing an environment in which all children have the opportunity to observe, interact and learn about animals - enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships
- supporting children who may have allergies to feathers, mites, eggs and other things associated with the keeping of chickens and ensuring their safety at all times
- providing a clear set of guidelines and procedures to be followed with regard to the chickens at Woodridge Pre-school.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, other staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Woodridge Pre-school.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Observing, interacting with and learning to care for an animal can be a valuable part of a child's education and care experience, enriching their learning. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals, can help children build empathy (Thompson and Gullone, 2003, p.175). Providing children with access to animals in an education and care service can help them learn about the life cycle and relationships, and improve communication.

Contemporary thinkers, such as Bone (2013), put forward the notion of 'animals as the fourth teacher' building on the work of Malaguzzi in the town of Reggio Emilia. Malaguzzi's ideology positions the parent as the child's first teacher, the educator as the second and the environment as the third teacher, emphasising the crucial role they all play in supporting children's learning. With this in mind, consider ways that including animals in your service's program can support children's learning, particularly in relation to:

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity: Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.
- Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world: Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

(Early Years Learning Framework, Framework For School Age Care)

Bone, J. (2013) The animals as the fourth educator: A literature review of animals and young children in pedagogical relationships Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 38(2) Deakin West ACT: Early Childhood Australia.

Elliott, S. (2012) Sustainable outdoor playspaces in early childhood centres Investigating perceptions, facilitating change and generating theory. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New England, Armidale NSW.

Thompson, K. & Gullone, E. (2003) Promotion of empathy and prosocial behaviour in children through humane education.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition, 2013
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986)
- Code of Practice for the Housing of Caged Birds
- Nillumbik Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021

4. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Keeping Pets and Animals in Education and Care Services

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/QA3_InfoSheetKeepingPetsAndAnimalsInEducationAndCareServices.pdf

Nillumbik Animals and Local Laws <https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Living-in/Animals/Animals-and-Local-Laws>

RELATED POLICIES

- Hygiene Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

5. PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider or Persons with Management and Control is responsible for:

- Sourcing Duclay breed chickens, as this are known to be gentle and child-friendly
- Providing a watertight coop with good ventilation with a roosting and nesting space inside for the chickens
- Providing nesting boxes that both adults and children can easily reach in and check
- Providing a secure area where the hens can walk about during the day and be safe from predators like foxes, snakes and goannas
- Providing containers for ample food and water, which are 'self-serve' style as the chickens are left alone on weekends

- Provide a dry bedding material like straw or wood shavings (not using lycan as this encourages mites)
- Provide good quality feed to suit the age of the hens
- Provide timely access to a vet in case of injuries
- Provide education – for the educators and children – about food, handling and basic healthcare like administering worming mixes
- Immediately communicate any concerns with parents/guardians regarding the management of chickens at the service
- The day to day care of the chickens which includes providing them with adequate time to free range in the environment.
- Providing adequate food and water for the chickens
- Regular cleaning of the chicken coop and maintaining it to ensure the safety of the chickens and children
- Clearing away chicken droppings and cleaning where necessary to ensure a safe/clean environment for the children. This includes but is not limited to hosing down the paved area daily once the chickens have been placed in their coop at the end of the day.
- Generating helper rosters to allow parents to volunteer their time to come to kinder over the weekend period to release the chickens to allow them to free range and return to lock the chickens in before dusk. A playground key and keys for the chicken coop are given to families participating on this roster to enable them to access the chickens.
- Seeking veterinarian services for the chickens to maintain their health and wellbeing
- Scaffolding the children's knowledge about animals/pets, building their confidence to engage with the chickens safely and to help educators to take care of the chickens e.g. feeding, collecting eggs and replenishing bedding.
- Educating the children about the life cycle of a chicken and sustainability
- Scaffolding their own knowledge about keeping chickens and how to care for them e.g. attending workshops at Edendale farm about housing chickens
- Ensuring educators and children follow hygiene practices when engaging with the chickens i.e. washing hands after touching the chickens, collecting eggs, feeding the chickens and when cleaning the coop

The Nominated Supervisor or Person in Day to Day Control is responsible for:

- The day to day care of the chickens which includes providing them with adequate time to free range in the environment.
- Providing adequate food and water for the chickens
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Parents/guardians are responsible for:

Looking after the chickens from Friday – Sunday and during the school holidays.

- On Friday and Saturday let out the chickens and feed them and make sure that they have adequate water. Collect any eggs and take them home. Return the chickens to the coop before dusk.
- On Sunday, the chickens aren't to be let out as families come to do the yard cleanup. The chicken's food and water are to be topped up.
- If there are any issues whilst looking after the chickens, the parents can use the mobile number provided to contact a member of staff.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

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EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was updated and approved by the Approved Provider of Woodridge Pre-school on 30 July 2025.

REVIEW DATE: APRIL 2027