



*Environmental Public Health Division
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Live Animals in Schools

This information does not apply to Service Animals. For information on service animals visit [Service Animals: Resources: ADA-Indiana: Americans with Disabilities Act \(ada.indiana.org\)](http://ada.indiana.org).

Additional information regarding animals in the classroom can be found at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a5.htm>.

EPA states that animals can be a source of allergens, asthma triggers and microorganisms that may cause infectious diseases. If the school decides animals are a useful educational tool, and allows them in the school building, there are certain steps that should be taken to minimize students' risk of asthma, allergy attacks or exposure to pathogens.

- 1) Notify parents of the plan to have an animal in the classroom. Inquire if the animal is an asthma or allergy trigger for their child. If any parent confirms this is an issue, reconsider having the animal in the classroom that year.
- 2) Keep animals in cages or localized areas as much as possible; do not let them roam.
- 3) Clean cages regularly. Consider using disposable gloves when cleaning.
- 4) Locate animals away from ventilation system vents to avoid circulating allergens throughout the room or building.
- 5) Locate sensitive students as far away from animals and habitats as possible.
- 6) Keep animals away from upholstered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys.
- 7) Store food and bedding materials in sealed containers to avoid attracting pests.

410 IAC 33-4-7 (d) states:

Schools allowing animals in the classroom shall have a written policy addressing the following:

- 1) What animals are allowed
- 2) When animals are allowed in classrooms for educational purposes
- 3) The duration of the animal's stay in a classroom
- 4) Housekeeping requirements
- 5) How issues with students or staff allergic to the animal will be addressed

Below is an example policy that schools can adopt or use as a template for their own policy.

EXAMPLE POLICY STATEMENT:

Live animals with the exception of fish in aquariums are only to be in the school for educational purposes. At no time will animals considered dangerous be brought into the classrooms.

When an animal is to be brought into a classroom a note will be sent home with the students of that class notifying the parents that an animal will be present. If known in advance this will be done at the beginning of the school year. It is up to the parents to notify the teacher or principal if their student is allergic to the animal. Upon such notice, the Principal will confer with the Teacher and determine what options are available including having the student transferred to a different classroom without animals or changing to a different species with no allergy problems, or not having an animal in the classroom. The school will not reveal the name of the student with allergy issues to students or parents. If after an animal is brought into the classroom, the parent finds their student is allergic to the animal, the school will work with the parent and teacher to resolve the issue. If necessary, housekeeping will clean all surfaces in the classroom to remove any animal dander that may still cause an allergic reaction by the student. Food and animal bedding shall be stored in appropriate sealable containers to avoid attracting pests.

Examples of educational purposes where animals would be in the classroom for an extended period are:

- 1) Animals used in health class to demonstrate affects of different diets.
- 2) Animals used in biology to show developmental changes or diversity.
- 3) Eggs incubated to show development.

Examples of educational purposes where animals are in the classroom for one day or less:

- 1) Pets/animals brought into the classroom to allow students exposure to a variety of species.
- 2) Pets/animals used to demonstrate obedience training.

This is not a comprehensive list of appropriate uses. The principal, when requested by a teacher, has the authority to determine if it is appropriate to bring an animal into the classroom.

Cleaning: Cages shall be cleaned by the teacher in charge of the animal (not students) on a routine basis as to avoid offensive odors or pest issues. Aquariums with fish are to be maintained by the teacher in charge of the aquarium including cleaning as needed.

When appropriate, teachers may allow students to handle and/or feed the animals.