

Animals in the Education and Care Environment Policy

PURPOSE

To ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all children, educators and visitors when animals (including dogs) are present in a Family Day Care residence operating under Building Futures Care – Family Day Care Scheme.

POLICY STATEMENT

Building Futures Care acknowledges that animals can provide valuable learning experiences for children. However, animals may also pose health and safety risks.

Animals may be present in a Family Day Care residence only where:

- Risks are identified and effectively managed;
- Children are adequately supervised;
- Hygiene standards are strictly maintained;
- Animal faeces should be removed promptly and hygienically, using safe and practical methods appropriate to the environment.
- The animal does not pose a risk of harm.

The service is committed to complying with 2026 updates under the National Quality Framework, including strengthened Child Safe Standards, supervision requirements and infection prevention controls.

Animals must not compromise children's safety, dignity, health or right to a safe environment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Educators must:

1. Conduct and document a written risk assessment before animals are present in areas accessed by children.
2. Consider:
 - Animal temperament and behaviour;
 - Vaccination status (current and documented);
 - Size and breed (particularly for dogs);
 - Child allergies or medical conditions (e.g. asthma, anaphylaxis);
 - Physical environment risks (gates, fencing, escape points);
 - Food safety and contamination risks.
3. Update the risk assessment annually or whenever circumstances change.

Animals deemed aggressive, unpredictable or unsuitable must not have contact with children.

If an animal displays aggressive behaviour, the animal must be immediately removed from children's areas and the Approved Provider notified.

SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

- Children must be actively supervised at all times when interacting with animals.
- No child is to be left alone with a dog or any other animal.
- Dogs must not have access to:
 - Sleep/rest areas;
 - Food preparation areas;
 - Nappy change areas.
 - Interaction must be intentional, calm and guided by the educator.

Animals that have **not** been approved to interact withing the family day care environment must be securely contained when not directly involved in a planned learning experience.

HYGIENE AND INFECTION CONTROL

Educators must ensure:

- Children wash hands with soap and running water after touching animals;
- Animal faeces should be removed promptly and hygienically, using safe and practical methods appropriate to the environment.
- Animals are clean, healthy and free from parasites;
- Food bowls, litter trays and bedding are kept separate from children's areas;
- Toys or equipment contaminated by saliva are cleaned and disinfected before reuse;
- Outdoor play areas are inspected daily for animal waste before children access them.

PARENTAL COMMUNICATION

- Families must be informed in writing if animals are present in the care environment.
- Written acknowledgment must be obtained where regular interaction occurs.
- Parents must notify educators of allergies, phobias or medical conditions.

Parents must be informed immediately if an animal-related incident, injury or bite occurs.

Any serious incident involving an animal must be reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours where required under Regulation 12.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Approved Provider / Scheme

- Ensure educators have appropriate policies in place;
- Monitor compliance during home visits;
- Provide guidance and support on risk management;
- Ensure risk assessments are reviewed as part of coordination visits;

Educators will

- Implement this policy at all times;
- Maintain a safe, hygienic environment;
- Conduct and review risk assessments;

- Supervise all interactions;

Dogs Approved for Interaction in the Family Day Care Environment

Building Futures Care recognises the positive benefits that occur when children have the opportunity to interact with dogs, including social, emotional, and developmental learning experiences. These interactions can support empathy, responsibility, and confidence in children.

To ensure safety and compliance:

- Written permission is to be obtained from guardians on enrolment for any dog present and interacting in the Family Day Care environment.
- Only dogs that have been approved prior by the Building Futures Care scheme may be present within the Family Day Care environment
- Planned and supervised: Interactions between children and approved dogs must be intentional, calm, and guided by the educator. Children must never be left alone with a dog.
- Environmental safety: Dogs must not access sleep/rest areas, food preparation areas, nappy change areas, or any space that may compromise hygiene or safety. Dogs must have access to a designated space where they can move away from the children and the Family Day Care environment if they wish or need to.
- Dog/s Interacting risk assessment: Approved dogs must be included in the Home Risk Assessment. This includes temperament, breed and size,
- Hygiene management: Educators must ensure proper handwashing after handling dogs and that dog bedding, food bowls, and toys are kept separate from children's areas. Outdoor areas must be inspected and cleared of animal waste prior to children accessing them.

Coordination Unit will

- Will discuss and approve dog/s based on their breed, size, temperament and suitability to be interacting with children in consultation with other coordinator team members and the Nominated Supervisor. A written agreement and authorisation will be provided to educators once it is agreed that the dog/s are seen and known to be suitable for interaction with children within the care environment.
- During visits, the Coordination Unit will: monitor the dog's presence and interactions with children, observe the behaviour and wellbeing of both dog and children, ensure health and hygiene standards are maintained, and note any changes or concerns in the dog's behaviour, health, or interaction with children.

By following these requirements, Building Futures Care ensures that all interactions with dogs are safe, positive, and developmentally appropriate, while remaining compliant with Family Day Care legislation and the National Quality Framework.

Relevant Laws, Sources and other Provisions
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Related Policies

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Hygiene Policy • Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy • Supervision Policy • Work Health and Safety Policy • Risk Management Policy • Child Protection Policy |
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Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

• Regulation 103 – Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair

• Regulation 168 – Policies and procedures required

• Regulation 170 – Policies to be followed
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National Quality Standard (NQS)

• Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety

• Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services
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Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Child Safe Standards (as amended 2026)
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Relevant State/Territory Animal Management and Local Council Laws

Document Control

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28/03/2026	Amended – Added Dogs Interacting Section
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