

## Risk Benefit Assessment - Animals

Subject of Risk Assessment:	Animals present during nursery sessions
Description	Animals will be invited to join in some nursery sessions. Initially these sessions will be in the woodlands where a companion dog will be present during the session. The dog will generally also be present in the centre for the part of the session following the woodland visit. Animals may also be invited to a normal nursery session (lamb visit, visit from organisations such as Animal Man, Blair Drummond Safari Park etc)
Benefits	Social relationships are fundamental to child development, this includes relationships with animals. Relationships with animals have emotional health and wellbeing benefits and can reduce anxiety and depression. Relationships with animals can foster cognitive development, facilitate language acquisition and communication. Interaction with animals can provide opportunities for improving executive function (planning, attention, memory, self-control). Being around animals encourages children to develop compassion, respect and understanding of others.
Who is involved	Children Parents Staff
Local factors affecting risks or controls	Many families have pet animals. Children are familiar with pet animals. Children are regularly exposed to pet animals, particularly cats and dogs through their normal daily lives. Children often meet dogs on walks in the woods.
Potential Hazards:	Precautions and Controls used to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or the severity of the risk
*All staff members hold a current first aid qualification, a first aid kit is always available and accident reporting procedures in place	
Bites, scratches Escape of animal Animals fighting Damage to property	Animals formally attending a session will be known to staff and understood to be of good temperament and used to children. Hand washing available Faeces will be removed Any animal showing signs of distress or aggression will be isolated and removed as possible
Animal becomes over excited or distressed when interacting with the children causing children to be knocked over or frightened.	Children will be advised and reminded regularly of appropriate behaviour around animals. Children will be reminded of how their behaviour impacts on the animal's behaviour and how to interact appropriately with it/them. Animal will be in the care of a responsible adult. Children will not be left unsupervised with any animal Animals will be closely supervised and monitored as they undergo conditioning to the children and environment



Biological hazards (faeces/urine)	Animal faeces are regularly found in the woodlands and children are reminded of appropriate behaviour when finding animal faeces (tell an adult who will bag and remove). Urine is not considered to be a concern - often will have been deposited by humans and animals in this woodland area and will be soaked into the ground and watered down with usual rainfall.
Children or staff have allergic reactions	Parents and staff asked to inform setting of any known allergies. Any child with an allergy can choose not to interact directly with the pet animals.
Children get germs/ infection from pet animals	Animals will be in good health. Animal waste will always be cleared away appropriately. Dog will be appropriately health checked and immunised.
Claim is made against the group because of behaviour of pet animals	Nursery insurance is available. Pet animals also appropriately insured.
Bite, sting, direct or indirect contact with animals leading to zoonotic disease such as Toxoplasmosis, E-Coli 157, Lyme Disease, Weil's Disease	All bites or stings recorded in accident book. Staff aware of any known allergies to bites or stings. Good hygiene practices followed post contact with any animal or animal faeces

## Precedents and Comparisons

Many households have companion animals (eg dogs, cats, rabbits, horses) which have a variety of instincts, nature and behaviours. Children often pay visits to animal based centres such as Safari Park, Briarlands Farm or Zoo. Children regularly encounter animals in their daily lives and particularly in the woods which is a popular dog walking area.

We have used information from  
 Grounds for Learning (risk benefit assessments)  
 Play Safety Forum (Managing Risk in Play Provision)  
 Health and Safety Executive (Children's Play and Leisure - Promoting a Balanced Approach)  
 Forestry Commission (Growing Adventure)  
 Care Inspectorate (My World Outdoors)  
 Care Inspectorate (Positive approach to risk in play)  
 Care Inspectorate (Animal Magic)  
 Kindling Playwork Training (Beaufort Scales)  
 to inform our assessment process

## Judgement

These are significant benefits to having animals involved in a children's setting. Being around animals helps children relax, provides companionship, enhances their relationships, gives them a positive focus to their lives, encourages them to be active and makes them feel happier. Having animals around services promotes a culture of kindness and tenderness for people of all ages, including young children.  
 When the safety issues are carefully thought through and planned for they can be managed and the risks associated with contact with animals therefore can be considered to be acceptable