LIVING CREATURES AND PETS

QUALITY AREA 2 – CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance for Sparkways services for the incorporation of living creatures and pets into the service and educational program, including:

- animals that exist within the natural environment of the service
- animals housed on the service premises
- animal brought into the service

POLICY STATEMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Sparkways recognises that living creatures and pets provide children with valuable learning experiences, including:

- How animals, insects, birds and fish form part of the ecosystem and the link to environmental sustainability
- Opportunities to share their own knowledge and theories about animals, insects, birds, fish and nature
- The opportunity to observe and learn about animals and their behaviour
- Some understanding of what it means to care for animals, always providing water, food and a clean cage
- Aesthetic and physical pleasure and amusement
- The opportunity to work through emotional and spiritual feelings when a creature is born, thrives, is sick or dies.

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, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Sparkways, including during offsite excursions and activities.

RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

The following potential risks and associated management processes have been identified in relation to living creatures and pets:

Potential Risks

- Children bitten
- Child knocked over
- Child scared/frightened
- Animal disease/hygiene
- Allergies to animals

Note:

Possible outside animals include: rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, cats, dogs, birds, ducks, reptiles.
Possible inside animals include: rabbits, guinea pigs, small chickens, kittens, puppies, birds, small ducks, reptiles.

Risk Evaluation

Likely frequency/severity of incident:

- Child bitten – unlikely with fish, possible with other animals and therefore risk treatment procedures need to be specified for each animal group. This has potentially the highest severity should it occur.
- Child knocked over – unlikely with small rabbits, fish, guinea pigs, small birds, small ducks and reptiles, possible with cats and dogs depending on the size and freedom of movement of theanimal
- Child scared/frightened – with a carefully supervised and monitored introduction of the child to the pet program fears should be significantly reduced. Furthermore, control of the animal will ensure that the child will not be put into a situation where they feelthreatened.
- Animal disease/hygiene – provided procedures are followed minimal risk as a result of:
    - All animals, birds or livestock kept on or about the premises are maintained in a clean and healthy condition
    - All housing used to keep the animals is maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition and in good repair at all times
    - All animals, birds or livestock present at the service are in good state of health and have had required vaccinations and health checks ifappropriate
    - Children are encouraged to wash hands after handling
- Allergies to animals- allergies to animals or specific animals will be identified on enrolment and selection/retainment of the animal will be determined taking into account this information. The safety and well-being of the child will always be the first priority.

Procedures to Address Risks

- Parents/Guardians to be advised about the use of living creatures and pets in the educational program prior to enrolment
- The Educational Program to be available at the centre, including where living creatures and pets are incorporated
- Should a child enrol with an allergy to or fear of an existing living creature or pet within the service, the nominated supervisor will work with the parent/s to evaluate the specific risks and, if considered necessary, consult with their Area Manager to address any concerns prior to the commencement of the child. Should the living creature or pet present a significant risk to the child, re-housing may be required.
- New living creatures and pets will require Area Manager approval before being introduced – consideration of costs, including for housing, food and potential veterinary bills must be factored into the approval process and available within the service budget. Veterinary visits and procedures will need to be approved by the Area Manager.

- Prior to the introduction of the new living creatures and pets (to be housed at the service) the nominated supervisor will evaluate any specific risks and, if considered necessary, consult with their Area Manager to address any concerns. If considered appropriate, expert advice can be obtained. Signed parental permission may also be considered. The new animal will not be introduced until a 'person with primary responsibility' has been arranged.
- Each creature or pet will have an assigned 'person with primary responsibility' – this person will be responsible for any licensing requirements, and care and maintenance, including organising care during periods of leave. If the person with primary responsibility leaves the service and no alternative person with primary responsibility can be arranged, they will take the creature or pet with them.
- Persons with primary responsibility for the living creature or pet, will complete and sign the associated form to confirm their agreement.
- The organisation will maintain a central register of Living Creatures and Pets – this will include the name of the person with primary responsibility, any licensing requirements and specific care needs. Services will submit the Person with Primary Responsibility Form to the Compliance Desk, who will then add the creature or pet to the central register.
- The organisation will conduct periodic reviews to ensure all living creatures and pets have an assigned person with primary responsibility and are captured on the central register.
- A formal complaint management process is available to respond to any issues or concerns with the pet program.
- All animals, birds or livestock kept on or about the premises are maintained in a clean and healthy condition
- All housing used to keep the animals will be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic manner and in good repair at all times
- All animals, birds or livestock present in the kindergarten are in good state of health and have had required vaccinations and health checks
- Staff awareness of personal and child hygiene such as hand washing
- Restricted controlled access to animals
- Education of children by staff about pet handling
- Pet handling only occurs under adult supervision
- Regular monitoring program
- Staff clean up after the animal in an appropriate and hygienic manner
- Caging/containment of the animals when not directly supervised

The risk of a child being bitten or knocked over poses the greatest concern to the service therefore the following safeguards will apply:

- All animals handled under the supervision of an adult
- An additional adult on duty at animal incursions
- Only children enrolled at the service are permitted to attend incursions and excursions (see Excursions and Special Event Policy)
- Larger animals are to be restrained at all times either by an adult or lead or the animal confined in a pen/cage
- Children taught basic animal handling skills prior to contact e.g. how to hold, staying calm, not to tease. If necessary, a qualified animal trainer may visit the service.
- Frequency of the animal at the kindergarten is controlled if necessary – if supervision is not available
- If there are any concerns about the temperament suitability of the animal, the animal is removed from the kindergarten until an independent assessment can be made.
- The animal is confined by cage or pen when in the centre and not directly involved in the program.

ATTACHMENTS & LINKS

- Attachment 1: Person with Primary Responsibility Agreement Form

EVALUATION

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

- seek feedback from people affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- 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
- notifying 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 *(Regulation 172 (2)*.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was confirmed by Sparkways on 03/10/2025

REVIEW DUE: October 2026

ATTACHMENT 1

Person with Primary Responsibility Agreement Form

(image only – access form from Staff Hub)

Sparkways

Living Creatures and Pets
Person with Primary Responsibility Agreement

(To ensure that each living creature or pet housed within a service has an assigned person who is responsible for their care and maintenance. Please send completed forms to the Compliance Desk, so the creature/pet can be added to the central register. Area Manager approval must be obtained prior to the introduction of new living creatures or pets – refer to the Living Creatures and Pets policy for more information)

Service:		
Name of Person with Primary Responsibility:		
Role of Person with Primary Responsibility:		
Living Creature or Pet:	Name:	
	Species:	
	Description:	
	Age:	
Housing Requirements: (e.g. cage; tank; pen; coop)	Type:	
	Description:	
	Location:	
	Anticipated Cost:	
	Cleaning Needs:	
Feeding and Grooming Requirements:	Food Type:	
	Supplier:	
	Anticipated Cost:	
	Amount & Schedule:	
	Grooming Needs:	
Vaccination and Veterinary Care: (Note: Area Manger approval required before any treatment)	Annual Requirements:	
	Anticipated Cost:	
Licensing Requirements:	Yes/No:	
	If Yes	
	Details:	
	Cost:	
	Obtained By:	

Staff Member Acknowledgement and Signature

I confirm my agreement to be the Person with Primary Responsibility for the living creature or pet described above. This includes ensuring that their care, maintenance and welfare is maintained at all times. I understand my responsibility to organise alternative care arrangements for the living creature or pet whilst I am on leave, or in the event I leave the service. If no alternative Person with Primary Responsibility can be arranged, I agree to take the living creature or pet with me or locate an alternative housing arrangement.

Staff Member Signature/s:	
Line Manager Name:	
Line Manager Signature:	

Living Creatures and Pets Primary Responsibility Agreement – September 2024