

Licensing Requirements

Child care programs must meet licensing requirements for having animals on the premises.

Family Home Child Care Providers must ensure (WAC 388-296-0770):

- Animals are in good health, have required immunizations, and are non-aggressive;
- Animal waste must be inaccessible to children and removed daily;
- Staff are always present during animal interactions;
- Children and adults wash hands after handling animals;
- Written parent permission is obtained before taking children on field trips (WAC 388-296-0520); inform parents of risks on the permission slip;
- Special safeguards are present to protect against Salmonella from reptiles; and
- A written plan is in place and approved by the licensor to protect children from health hazards from animals.

Child Care Centers must (WAC 388-295-5170):

- Have a detailed written policy if animals are present either as residents or visitors. The policy must identify the animal; describe the care and cleaning of the animal and enclosure; and include child curriculum information. This policy must also explain the health risks and be signed by parents and reviewed by the health specialist.
- Follow strict guidelines as to where in the center animals are allowed;
- Keep proof of required immunizations and licenses for the animals;
- Post handwashing signs where animals are kept and ensure children wash hands after handling animals;
- Obtain written parent permission before taking children on field trips (WAC 388-295-2070); inform parents on risks on the permission slip; and
- Ensure that children under 5 years old do not physically handle reptiles or amphibians.

DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning:
www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/dccel

Partners in Child Care Mission Statement

To promote and maintain healthy, safe, and nurturing child care environments through support, education, and collaboration involving the child care community.

Special thanks to Public Health Seattle-King County and the Washington State Department of Health for reviewing this brochure.

Call the Snohomish Health District Partners in Child Care Program if you have additional questions about animal exhibits or bringing animals into your child care program. We can also help write policies and provide handouts to share with parents.

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HEALTHIER COMMUNITY



**SNOHOMISH
HEALTH
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Petting Zoos Information and Guidelines for Child Care Providers

“Each year many young children across the country come in contact with farm animals at petting zoos, petting farms, and county fairs where they may be putting themselves at risk of getting a life threatening infection like E. coli O157:H7”

- Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, Former Director, CDC



Animals can spread illness

While animal exhibits can provide children with great joy and excellent opportunities for learning, child care providers need to be aware of the risks associated with these types of activities.

Animals can carry various types of infectious germs, often while appearing healthy. Germs can be carried on the animal's hair, mouth, manure, drinking water, or enclosure. Germs can then be spread to visitors through contact with the animal or its surroundings.

Some common illnesses that can be spread by animals include:

- E. coli O157:H7
- Salmonella
- Campylobacter
- Giardia
- Cryptosporidium
- Psittacosis

Children are at a higher risk of serious illness caused by these pathogens than healthy adults. They are also more likely to put their hands in their mouths or not wash hands thoroughly before eating or drinking. ***At petting zoos, children in child care programs under the age of five should not have direct contact with animals.***



Petting Zoos

There are currently no federal, state, or local laws for protecting the health of visitors at petting zoos.



To help protect the children, visit the petting zoo yourself first. It is best if children have one on one supervision during any animal interaction.

Make sure the petting zoo facility has taken the following precautions:

- separation between eating and animal areas;
- handwashing stations are accessible with reminders posted;
- sanitizer gel available at frequent intervals between handwashing stations (this does not replace handwashing); and
- animal areas clean, free of waste, and have fresh bedding.

Animals Visiting the Child Care

Some child care programs choose to bring animals to visit children at the child care. Wild animals, reptiles, hybrid animals, baby chicks and ducklings, and exotic animals are never appropriate. Any animal brought to a child care needs to be in good health and child-friendly. Only bring animals into areas that can be easily cleaned once the animal leaves. Animals must never be allowed into kitchens, food preparation areas, or infant/toddler areas.



Guidelines for minimizing risks:

If you choose to visit a petting zoo or bring animals to your child care, use the following precautions:

- Call before you go to the facility. Ask about the precautions they take to protect the health of visitors.
- Ensure animals are in good health and non-aggressive.
- Make sure there are adequate and properly stocked handwashing facilities.
- Teach children proper handwashing and instruct them not to put their hands in their mouths.
- Increase staff to child ratios to help monitor handwashing and animal-child interactions.
- Obtain written parental permission before going on a field trip or bringing animals into the child care. Inform parents of the risks at this time.
- Interact with animals after eating lunch rather than before. Never allow eating or drinking around animals.
- Prevent children's contact with manure, animal food, or the animal's water.
- Do not allow kissing of animals.
- Do not involve infants and toddlers in animal activities.
- Consider having children look at the animals and learn about their behaviors rather than touch the animals.

