

REQUEST TO INTRODUCE A CLASSROOM PET

1. A full-time classroom-based employee seeking to introduce a classroom pet is required to make a request to the school principal in writing to introduce a classroom pet for curricular purposes. See *Administrative Procedures #xx - Animals in Schools for Curricular Purposes* for more details and complete the associated form (*Appendix A - Request to Introduce a Classroom Pet*).

2. When requesting to introduce a classroom pet, the employee must consider and meet the following requirements:
 - 2.1 Provide of a plan and description of the educational outcomes, student interactions, and duration the animal will be present at the school. This request will only be considered for, and should not exceed, one school year. Permission for classroom pets for longer than one school year must be applied for annually and is at the sole discretion of the Principal.
 - 2.2 Confirm of ownership of the animal(s) by a full-time staff member working in the room where the animal may be housed
 - 2.3 Confirm the animal(s) is not listed on the Prohibited Animals list. (Refer to *Appendix A – Prohibited Animals* for expanded information.)
 - 2.4 Confirm the animal is in good health, free of infection or infestation, and lacks aggression. The Principal may request a current veterinarian’s note confirming the animal’s health at any time if there is cause to question it.
 - 2.5 Submit a detailed description with which Replacement methods were considered prior to the request, as well as which Reduction and Refinement methods will be employed.
 - 2.6 Provide the species, size, and number of animal(s) being proposed for the classroom.
 - 2.7 Submit plans for the animal’s care, veterinary care, and ensure that enclosure size meets the standards for safety, design and location.
 - 2.8 Provide animal care plans to ensure the appropriate care of the animal over school calendar breaks and weekends. Management of care plans is the sole responsibility of the employee owner.
 - 2.9 Affirm that you are responsible for all costs associated with procuring the animal(s), related equipment, and veterinary care. Discuss food and supply costs with the Principal as a principal may accept or decline to pay food and supply costs via school funds, in which case, these are also the sole responsibility of the employee owner.

- 2.10 Confirm the animal will be in an enclosure or otherwise will not be free-roaming in the classroom.
 - 2.11 Confirm the employee will appropriately manage the clean-up and dispose of all waste and may participate in this and similar case tasks.
 - 2.12 Confirm which, if any students, have known allergies to the animal and describe the strategies being proposed to reduce exposure to such students. Note that students with significant health issues will typically cause the request to be denied.
 - 2.13 Seek in writing permission from and notify parents of students within the classroom, classes, or school (as relevant) of the introduction of a classroom pet. (Important: Parent permission or notifications must not be distributed or completed until after the Principal is provided information on the request and conditionally granted approval). The Principal's final approval of the classroom pet will be contingent on the completion of the parent permission/notification process.
3. Notwithstanding the above, the Principal may deny the employee's request based on the presence of concerns over allergies and allergens, fear, health or safety issues, or logistical issues including space, load on school administration, concerns from parents or other staff, or other issues that may be raised by the presence of the pet(s) in the classroom. Similarly, the Principal may revoke their approval should issues arise after the animal(s) is introduced to the classroom.
4. The following guidance is provided to employees considering applying to introduce a classroom pet:
- 4.1 A classroom pet is not a disposable commodity, but a long-term commitment by the employee owner who, with permission, temporarily shares their pet(s) with students in the classroom for curricular purposes.
 - 4.2 A classroom pet must not be included in the *Appendix A – Prohibited Animals*.
 - 4.3 Appropriate species for classroom pets may include the following domestic animals:
 - 4.3.1 Guinea pigs can be well socialized when handled appropriately and regularly; they require room for exercise and ample housing. Average life expectancy is 5 to 7 years.
 - 4.3.2 Gerbils are sociable and curious but may be difficult for children to handle because of their small size. Typical life expectancy is 2 to 4 years.
 - 4.3.3 Domestic Rats are sociable if handled regularly and are very intelligent. Typical life expectancy is 2 to 3 years.
 - 4.3.4 Domestic fish are a good choice if a robust freshwater species but are not generally interactive. Typical life expectancy: 5 to 10 years (goldfish).

- 4.3.5 Domestic ant farm (without a queen) can be educational, however, they are not generally interactive. Typical life expectancy of workers is 1-3 years, but with a queen a colony can live up to 30 years.
- 4.4 In addition to animals listed in this *Administrative Procedure, Appendix A – Prohibited Animals*, animals which are inappropriate, however, are common in classrooms elsewhere may include:
- 4.4.1 Reptiles require very consistent tank heating which cannot be provided in a classroom. Typical lifespan can be over 30 years.
- 4.4.2 Anoles (American chameleons) are amphibians which require consistent tank heating and require very delicate handling.
- 4.4.3 Hamsters are nocturnal and, therefore, naturally sleep through the day and are awake at night. Hamsters are more likely to bite than other small rodents.
- 4.4.4 Rabbits are generally relatively large for classroom pets and need a large amount of space to provide room to exercise. They are naturally skittish and difficult to pick up. Rabbits require a calm, quiet environment.
- 4.4.5 Tarantulas are exotic animals which are venomous, do bite, and throw sharp hairs in defense. These spiders are extremely fragile and often die if accidentally dropped on hard surfaces. Typical lifespan is 30 years.
- 4.4.6 Chinchillas generally need a good amount of cage space to exercise. Contrary to common practices, these animals are naturally very curious and are stressed by being held in a person's grasp/lap. They are also more prone to illness due to fluctuations in temperature and humidity, which can be difficult to control in a classroom.

Reference: *BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act; Administrative Procedure XXX – Assistance Dogs (Under development); Animal Control Bylaw No 9150, City of Vancouver, BC; Youth Science Canada; Canadian Council on Animal Care; Appendix A – Prohibited Animals; Appendix B – Request to Introduce a Classroom Pet*

Adopted: February 5, 2020



Request for a Classroom Pet

Name of employee: _____.

Full-time or Part-time.

Name(s) of animal's legal owner: _____.

Species, size, and number of animal(s):
_____.

Proposed location of pet: In my classroom or Other:
_____.

Is the animal(s) prohibited by the district?: Y N

As the owner I acknowledge that I'm responsible for the animal(s) care:

Agree Disagree Other _____.

Duration/dates in school (max. one school year): _____.

I have read *District Administrative Procedure - Animals in Schools for Curricular Purposes and understand my responsibilities*: Y N

Complete and attach to this form:

- The plan for curriculum connection, educational benefits and outcomes, and extent of student interactions with the animal(s).
- Replace, Reduce, and Refine* strategies considered prior to application and intended to be used.
- The detailed animal care plan, including enclosure size, design and location, daily care plan as well as care plans for over breaks and weekends, and any veterinary care (if needed).
- The animal safe handling instruction you have received and will train the students to practice (where appropriate).

In applying to have the above classroom pet(s) I accept responsibility for 1) humane care and treatment of the animal(s), 2) all costs associated with equipment and veterinary care (Note: food and supplies costs may or may not be provided via school funds and are to be determined by the Principal), 3) keeping the animal in its enclosure or under control at all times (not free-roaming), 4) planning for care over breaks in the school calendar, and 5) ensuring appropriate clean-up and disposal of all waste created by the animal(s).

Staff member and Pet Owner Signature: _____ Date: _____.

School: _____.

Procedures
1. Only classroom-based staff may have classroom pets and complete this form.
2. Review the Administrative Procedure AP 255 and <i>Appendix A - Prohibited Animals</i> in advance.
3. Complete this form and await conditional approval before you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Procure or bring any animal to school; and <input type="checkbox"/> Advise students or parents of any plan to introduce a pet.
4. Provide a completed copy of this form to the school Principal or Vice Principal for approval.
5. Await the decision of the Principal or Vice Principal.

For Administrative Use Only

Approved Conditionally Approved Denied

Principal/Vice Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Approval period (date to date): _____ to _____

If conditionally approved, the Principal/VP will direct the staff member to communicate with relevant parents to:

- Ensure via parents that all students in the classroom, or who will reasonably have contact with the animal(s), have no allergies or health issues related to the animal(s) presence.
- Seek and receive informed consent from all relevant parents regarding the introduction of the animal(s) prior to its introduction to the school. Sample letter on reverse side.

Requesting a Classroom Pet - Instructions

Please gain approval from the Principal or Vice Principal in advance of introducing any animal as a classroom pet. School administrators will use *Administrative Procedure – Animals in Schools for Curricular Purposes* as a guide. To apply:

1. Provide a plan with the curriculum connection, educational outcomes, student interactions, and duration the animal will be present at the school (Not to exceed one school year. Permission for classroom pets for longer than one school year must be applied for annually and extension is at the sole discretion of the Principal.)
2. Confirm you are a full-time employee working in the room where the animal may be housed.
3. Confirm the animal is in good health, free of infection or infestation, lacks aggression, and is not listed on the Prohibited Animals list. *Refer to *Appendix A – Prohibited Animals* for expanded information.
4. Submit detailed description of which Replacement methods were considered prior to the request as well as which Reduction and/or Refinement methods will be employed.
5. Provide the species, estimated adult size, and number of animals being proposed for the classroom.
6. Submit plans for the animal's care, veterinary care, and enclosure size meets standards, design and location.
7. Provide plans for and the care of the animal over breaks and weekends are made by the owner.
8. Affirm that you are responsible for all costs associated with procuring the animal(s), related equipment, and veterinary care. Discuss food and supply costs with the Principal as a principal may accept or decline to pay food and supply costs via school funds.
9. Confirm which, if any students are known to have allergies to the animal and the strategies being proposed to reduce exposure to such students.
10. Confirm the animal will be in an enclosure or otherwise will not be free roaming in the classroom.
11. Confirm the employee will appropriately clean-up and dispose of all waste.
12. Confirm the employee is skilled in the safe handling of the proposed animal(s) and, when capable of instructing students in the safe handling of the animal(s).
13. Provide notification to the parents of all students in the classroom or who will reasonably have contact with the animal(s). (Important: Parent notifications and permissions must not be distributed or sought verbally prior to the Principal's conditional approval of the animal(s)).

