

Purpose

Animals can transmit infectious diseases to humans, and likewise, humans can transmit infectious diseases to animals. Animals can become vectors or carriers of potential human pathogens and could be responsible for cross-infection.

The purpose of these guidelines is to reduce the risk of animal-human disease transmission for facility pets, animal therapy programs, pet visits and long-term care pet programs. A combination of clean, healthy, immunized, even-tempered animals and good hygiene practices are recommended to provide a safe environment and animal interactions.

Scope

This document pertains to facility pets, therapy animals, and visitation pets. This document does not apply to assisted living facilities, independent living facilities, mental health and substance use facilities, or shelter settings.

These guidelines do not include service animals.

Definitions

- **Facility pets** are those animals who reside or live in the facility permanently
- **Therapy animals** visit the facility for rehabilitation or therapeutic purposes
- **Visitation pets** are for social visits intended to support the emotional well-being of residents/tenants.

| Requirements | |
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| Restricted Animals | <p>The following animals are excluded from entering the facility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reptiles and amphibians ▪ Rodents (hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats, hedgehogs) ▪ Farm animals, zoo animals and birds ▪ Exotic pets ▪ Animals that appear ill or sick must not visit and be removed from the facility (e.g. skin disorders, vomiting, or diarrhea) <p>For facilities that currently have facility pets that are on the excluded list, these animals should be relocated to alternate homes. Do not replace the restricted animal(s) with another restricted animal once they are deceased or relocated.</p> |

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| Eligibility Requirement | <p>Only domestic companion animals suitable for animal therapy, pet programs or animal visitation that are appropriately screened by the facility should be considered for live-in or visitation. The animal must meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has received all required vaccinations (documentation required) ▪ Receives an annual veterinarian examination (documentation required) ▪ In good health and free of wounds, communicable diseases and parasites (documentation from veterinarian required) ▪ A minimum of one year-old ▪ Neutered or spayed ▪ Litter trained or housebroken ▪ Good tempered ▪ Has not been fed a raw food diet of animal origin within the past 90 days due to risk of salmonella or E.coli transmission <p>Animals that are aggressive or in season (in heat) should not be permitted into the facility.</p> <p>Please see Appendix A: Pet Visitation Checklist</p> |
| Visits | <p>Visit requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The animal must have a collar with a short leash, a harness or be in a pet carrier at all times while on facility premises ▪ The animal must not be allowed to lick others ▪ The animal must not be allowed in food preparation, clean supply and medication preparation areas ▪ Hands must be cleaned immediately after contact with the animal ▪ Only pet owners and/or their animal handler should touch personal pets; Other residents and staff should avoid contact with personal pets <p>Follow these guidelines for facility pets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residents and staff must perform hand hygiene after direct contact with the pet ▪ Facility pet must not be allowed in food preparation area, clean supply room, medication room, and in isolation rooms |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facility pet may be allowed in resident room for visitation. Avoid placing animals on resident’s bed. If the facility allows the pet to be placed on a resident’s bed, ensure there is a barrier between the pet and the resident’s linen. |
| Outbreaks | <p>During outbreaks follow these recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external animal visits are allowed during outbreaks unless deemed essential (i.e end of life). refer to the Visitation Table in the Long-Term Care, Assisted Living COVID-19 Resource Toolkit ▪ Facility pets must be relocated to a temporary location for the duration of the outbreak ▪ Temporary location can include with family friends, boarding or kenneling, or non-care area within the building |
| Contraindications to Animal Visits | <p>Residents/staff who have the following conditions should be discouraged/protected from contact with animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On additional precautions (e.g. Contact or Droplet Precautions) ▪ Open wounds or tracheotomy ▪ Burns ▪ Immunocompromised ▪ Allergies or phobias to animals |
| Animal Handler Responsibility | <p>In preparation for a visit, animal handlers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Obtain approval for animal visitation in advance ▪ Bathe and groom the animal within 24 hours before the visit ▪ Ensure nails are short with no rough edges or wearing protective coverings ▪ Exercise or walk dogs outside the facility before they visit ▪ Brush cats and apply an anti-allergen grooming product ▪ Stop feeding the animal at least two hours before the visit ▪ Ensure neither handler or animal are ill <p>During visit, animal handlers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the animal is restrained appropriately ▪ Restrain the animal from licking other people ▪ Avoid feeding the animal during the visit ▪ Ensure the animal has adequate breaks for water and elimination needs |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean up after the animal and notify a nurse to contact Environmental Services/Housekeeping to sanitize any area that may have inadvertently become soiled ▪ Avoid placing animals on resident's bed. If the facility allows the pet to be placed on a resident's bed, ensure there is a barrier between the animal and the resident's linen. ▪ Ensure personal pets only interact with their owners, handlers, and facility staff assisting with the visit |
| Facility Responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Facility/Unit Manager or delegate must approve the animal's visit in advance before the animal is allowed on the unit ▪ Leaders of particular sites/programs must ensure mechanisms are in place within sites/programs to address concerns and disputes about animal visitation ▪ Facilitate animal visits in designated areas, avoiding resident rooms unless approved and dining areas ▪ Ensure that residents with wounds or devices that are participating in animal visitation have their wounds/devices securely covered prior to any interaction ▪ Provide hand hygiene stations for cleaning hands before and after animal handling ▪ For facility pets, ensure procedure and documentation is established for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There must be a dedicated person(s) responsible for the care of the facility pet ○ Ensure procedure and documentation is established for the following: ○ Ongoing veterinary care arrangements ○ Feeding: food and water bowls must be washed at least daily ○ Cleaning and sanitizing living space, bedding and toys using facility procedures and facility-approved products ○ Birdcages, if used and unavoidable, have a cleanable container under the cage to contain scattered birdseed, feathers, etc. Clean bird cages on a routine basis. ○ Provide a dedicated storage area for pet supplies away from medication rooms, clean supply rooms and kitchens |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aquarium water, if present and unavoidable, must not be disposed of in sinks used for hand hygiene, food preparation or drinking water. Sinks must be cleaned and disinfected after use. |
| Hand Hygiene | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residents must clean their hands before and after all animal contact. ▪ Staff must clean their hands before and after contact with animals, and after cleaning up animal excrement, litter boxes, bird cages or aquariums. |
| References | <p>Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology Text. (2014). Animals Visiting in Healthcare Facilities.</p> <p>Fraser Health. (2018). Corporate Pet Visitation Policy.</p> <p>Fraser Health. (2021). Long-Term Care Coordination Centre Visitation Table. Long-Term Care, Assisted Living COVID-19 Resource Toolkit.</p> |