

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

The Canton School District is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building Principal.

School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building and/or classroom. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

Educational Program

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the building Principal provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the Principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

Student Health

The health and well-being of students is the District's highest priority. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have his/her health impaired and each student shall have full access to available educational opportunities.

Animals Prohibited from School

Families whose children will be affected by the presence of an animal must be notified by the building principal or designee if an animal or service animal will be included in a classroom or visiting a school building.

Rabies* is a growing problem and any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based on the Massachusetts Departments of Health and Education recommendations the following animals are prohibited from schools within the Canton School District.

Animals Prohibited

Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals

Wild mammals pose a risk for transmitting rabies and should never be brought into schools or handled by children. Wild animals' behavior tends to be unpredictable. A wild mammal that has been raised in captivity is still a wild animal. Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, skunks, raccoons, groundhogs (woodchucks), and wild carnivores (e.g. coyotes and

foxes), these animals (including recently dead animals) should not be permitted on school grounds unless they are under the control of a licensed professional responsible for preventing exposures to students and staff. It is against the law to keep or transport wild animals without authorization from the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Stray domestic animals also pose a risk for transmitting rabies because the health and vaccination status of these animals is unknown. Therefore, stray animals should never be brought into classrooms or onto school grounds.

Fur-Bearing Animals (Unvaccinated pet dogs,** cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.)

These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and injuries. All fur-bearing animals under three months of age (too young to be vaccinated for rabies) or not vaccinated against rabies should not be brought into classrooms or onto school grounds without taking precautions to prevent exposures.

Bats

Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

Poisonous Animals

Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, poisonous reptiles and poisonous lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

Animals Not Prohibited

As a general rule, only domesticated mammals with current rabies vaccinations and for which USDA-approved vaccines exist should be permitted to have contact with students

Exceptions may be made with the prior approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Animals)

Service animal is an animal trained to perform a specific function.

The Canton School Committee does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. The District will comply with Massachusetts law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance dogs and with federal law and will permit such animals on school premises and on school transportation.

For purposes of this policy, a “service animal includes any dog that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.” The regulations further state that “a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability.”

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as “seeing eye dogs” or “guide dogs;”
- alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments; and
- assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance.

The District shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner or person having custody and control of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc.

If, in the opinion of the School Principal or authorized designee, any service animal is not in the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school. The parent or guardian of the student having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from District premises immediately.

If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by the Building Principal or designee and an alternative plan will be developed with appropriate District staff. Such plan could include the reassignment of the person having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This

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will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, District, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student. When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other District facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent or guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of an assistance animal in District facilities and on school transportation vehicles

***DESCRIPTION OF ZOO NOTICE DISEASES AND GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Enteric diseases (diseases predominately of the digestive system) include illnesses caused by organisms such as Salmonella, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, E. coli O157:H7 and Giardia. Enteric disease organisms primarily cause diarrhea in people, but in some cases, can infect the blood and cause life-threatening illness. People can be exposed to these enteric organisms by eating food contaminated with feces, or by touching a contaminated object and then touching one's mouth. Animals can carry these organisms without being ill.

Because of the risk of contracting salmonellosis from reptiles (including non-poisonous snakes, lizards, and iguanas) and amphibians, even when reared in captivity, special precautions are necessary when handling them. These animals may intermittently shed salmonella, and negative cultures will not guarantee that the animals are not infected. Treatment of infected animals with antibiotics has not proven useful and may promote the development and spread of resistant bacteria. Because salmonellosis can be more severe young children and because their hygiene practices are less thorough, handling of reptiles and amphibians by young children is not recommended.

Psittacosis is a bacterial disease that can cause fever, chills, rash, and pneumonia. This disease is primarily transmitted through inhaling dust from the contaminated droppings of infected birds. The elderly and those with a weakened immune system may develop more serious forms of this illness. Because psittacine birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels) can carry psittacosis, these birds should not be handled by children. Birds showing any signs of illness should not be brought into school. Psittacine birds may be

brought to school as long as they are kept caged, their cages are clean and the bird's wastes are frequently and safely removed and discarded.

Rabies is a fatal, viral infection of certain wild and domestic animals. Rabies can infect any mammal, but it is more common among certain mammals like raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. Rabies can be spread to domestic animals and to humans through contact with an infected animal's saliva, usually through a bite or scratch, or through contact with nervous tissues (brain and spinal cord) of infected animals. In people, rabies virus causes an infection of the brain, which is always fatal in those who are infected and do not receive protective treatment after an exposure. Rabies is rare among small rodents like squirrels, rats, hamsters and mice. Fish, reptiles (such as snakes, turtles and lizards), amphibians (such as frogs and salamanders) and insects cannot get or spread rabies.

Currently, USDA-approved vaccines exist for the following domesticated animals only: dogs, cats, ferrets, cattle, horses, and sheep. Students should be educated on safe and proper handling procedures before handling or touching these animals. Current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian should be documented for all dogs, cats, and ferrets brought onto the school campus for instructional purposes.

****Exception: Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs or Law Enforcement Dogs** - These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

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