

Outside School Fact sheet Hours Care

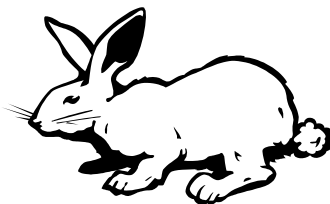
HEALTHY PETS - HEALTHY CHILDREN

Pets provide many hours of joy and companionship and teach children values and social skills. However, some pets can carry diseases or may be dangerous to children. If you choose to have pets in either your school age family day care service or outside school hours care service you will need to take precautions to ensure the children under your care do not become ill or are injured by a pet.

Like people all animals carry germs. Diseases that people can get from animals are referred to as zoonotic diseases or zoonoses. These diseases can be transmitted through everyday contact with the animal or contact with the animal's urine, faeces or saliva. A person can also be infected by entering a contaminated animal enclosure or while cleaning an animal's home.

The best way to avoid catching a disease from a pet is to make sure your pet is healthy. Pets should only be purchased from a reputable source. The RSPCA advises people purchasing a pet to beware of markets or places where large numbers of animals are kept for sale. Always check that the facilities where the animals are kept for sale are in excellent condition. It is not unusual for animals sold from these establishments to have received no suitable examination from a veterinary surgeon and, accordingly they may not be healthy or free from physical defects.

Providing the correct shelter, food, water, exercise and handling can prevent illness. Children should wash their hands after handling an animal. Animal enclosures should be kept clean and animal faeces cleaned up and disposed of correctly.



It is important to ensure your pet receives proper veterinary care. This includes maintaining vaccination programs and seeking veterinary care should it become ill. An ill pet should be kept separate from children and other pets. Never purchase a pet that looks unwell or is for sale with other animals that look unwell.

Children should be taught how to handle an animal correctly. A small animal can be injured or hurt if held without correct support or squeezed too tightly. When an animal is in pain it is likely to scratch or bite to get away. Animals may also become stressed if over handled, tormented, teased or not given adequate rest and peace. Children need to be guided and shown how to read an animal's mood and demeanour.



PET CARE

There are many animals suitable for children's pets. Some such as silkworms can be kept in a cardboard box, others require purpose built shelters such as kennels, hutches, cages or aquarium tanks. The lifespan of an animal may vary from a few months to many years. When selecting an animal, adults must at all times be prepared to supervise the day-to-day care so that the animal is not neglected through ignorance or loss of interest.

The following animals are common pets that may be found in either a home based or centre based outside school hours care service. For further information please refer to your local veterinary surgeon or any animal welfare organisation.

BIRDS	CARE	AILMENTS
Suitable birds for beginners include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • canaries • budgerigars. 	Housing - aviary or cage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum cage size 30cm x 30cm x 38cm height • place cage/aviary in sheltered position • ensure protection from cats, dogs and wild birds • provide bark covered perches (not dowel) • remove excreta daily and thoroughly clean. Feeding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepared seed mixtures • green foods and fruit • cuttlefish bone • fresh water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overgrown beak and claws - provide cuttlefish bone, change perches, seek veterinary assistance. • Feather plucking - can be due to boredom, provide toys, mirrors. • Mites - dust with special insecticide and vigorously clean the cage. • Scalyface (caused by a mite) - highly contagious, treat with special insecticide and pest strip hung outside the cage. Provide water for bathing on hot days.

FISH	CARE	AILMENTS
Suitable fish for beginners include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coldwater fish in freshwater aquariums eg goldfish • tropical freshwater fish eg guppies, millies. 	Housing - fish tank, aquarium, outdoor pond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure fish tank/pond is appropriate size for the number of fish • position aquariums out of direct sunlight • change a quarter of the tank water every week. Feeding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feed daily • do not overfeed - provide enough food for the fish to feed for 5 minutes. 	Main cause of death of fish in an aquarium/pond are overstocking and polluted water. Fish gasping on the surface is a sign of a fouled tank or pond. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White spot, fin rot, fungus - signs include a change of colour, swollen eyes, or skin, white spots, rotting tail - remedies sold in fish shops • Fish can get worms - treat once a year. Household sprays such as insecticide can kill fish.

RABBITS GUINEA PIGS	CARE	AILMENTS
Live for 5-10 years.	<p>Require regular handling to become tame. Smaller breeds of rabbits can be handled by children.</p> <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roomy hutch divided into 2 compartments, day and night areas • cover floor with wood shavings, bedding straw • replace bedding straw daily and thoroughly clean and scrub hutch weekly. <p>Feeding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special pellets • vegetables, apples, pears • fresh water supplied via a drip feed bottle. 	<p>Desexing prevents unwanted litters, controls fighting in males</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myxomatosis - no cure, have rabbit 'put down' as soon as disease is diagnosed. • Calicivirus - rabbits should be vaccinated. • Diarrhoea - withhold greens for 24 hrs, seek assistance if condition persists. • Overgrown teeth - provide gnawing block of bark covered wood. • External parasites (fleas) - consult vet for treatment. • Skin ailments - can be due to unclean hutch, mites, ringworm, fighting - seek veterinary assistance.

MICE / RATS	CARE	AILMENTS
Live up to 2 years. Easily handled by children. Handle daily to keep animal tame.	<p>Housing - cage with nesting box - mice suffer stress if a retreat is not available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide shaving litter on floor 2.5cm deep with ample bedding straw • clean daily and scrub weekly • provide ropes and ladders for exercise. <p>Feeding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food pellets, raw fruit and vegetables, fresh hay • fresh water - drip feed bottle 	<p>Rodents have poor recuperative powers - prevention of illness through high standards of care.</p>

CATS	CARE	AILMENTS
Live for 12 years or more.	<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sleeping area which is sheltered from the elements eg - basket, box • litter trays should be cleaned daily. <p>Tinned and dried cat food provides a balanced diet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worms - worm regularly, worms not infective to humans • Fleas - use powders, collars on cat and clean bedding • Fur balls - groom during moulting, give 1 tspn paraffin oil mixed in food.

DOGS	CARE	AILMENTS
Live for 10 years or more. Large dogs need plenty of space.	Housing - shelter from the elements eg kennel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change bedding regularly. Exercise daily. Groom and bathe regularly. Train your dog - contact your local dog obedience class. A balanced diet of meat, raw, cooked and canned and dry food is required. Fresh water - daily	Dogs should be vaccinated for a range of diseases- consult your veterinary surgeon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worms - some can infect humans, worm regularly • Fleas - use powders, washes and collars.

ANIMAL DISEASES THAT CAN INFECT HUMANS

The following table is a sample of some of the diseases humans can get from animals. For further information contact your local veterinary surgeon or doctor.

DISEASE	HOW THE DISEASE GETS FROM PETS TO PEOPLE	TIPS FOR PREVENTION
Toxoplasmosis	Most pet species can carry this disease, but only cats shed the germs that cause infection. Transmitted through contact with infected cat faeces or contaminated soil.	Wear gloves when cleaning out cat litter trays. If pregnant do not handle cat litter, infection can cause birth defects, miscarriage or death of the baby. Wear gloves when gardening. Keep children's sandboxes covered.
Roundworms	Contact with an infected dog's faeces	Make sure dogs are wormed. Always clean up your dog's stool.
Cat scratch disease	Germs carried under the claws of cats. Cats are likely to get their infection from fleas.	Clean scratched skin thoroughly with soap and water. See your doctor if skin becomes red or inflamed.
Ringworm	Cats are the most common carrier. Transmission is through direct contact with fungal spores.	Avoid contact with infected animals. Seek medical advice if infected.

References:

RSPCA factsheets from internet site www.rspcawa.asn.au

WA Health Department - Communicable Diseases Branch

Paediatrics and Child Health - Journal of the Canadian Paediatric Society