



Classroom Pets

Position:

Calgary Humane Society supports classrooms caring for a resident pet only if that pet is owned by a responsible adult and is taken home when school is not in session.

The students must also be taught how to care for, respect and handle the animal visiting or living in the classroom. Further, animals chosen to live as a classroom pets must be able to thrive in that environment and live a full and active life.

Rationale:

- Students who assist in caring for pets learn about the animal's needs and behaviours. They also learn about the responsibilities of care for and ownership of animals and empathy.
- Since students see teachers as role models, teachers must ultimately be responsible for the care of classroom pets. The best way to assume this responsibility is to have the teacher adopt the pet, thus showing the teacher's willingness to assume full responsibility for the classroom pet and that caring for a pet is an important commitment for the lifetime of the pet.
- The responsibilities and requirements for owning a pet should be thoroughly researched, including:
 - Determining the appropriate type of pet and the care and socialization needs of specific species and breeds.
 - The cost of feeding, housing and veterinary care.
 - Liability.
 - Proper handling and socialization of the animal.
 - Health concerns for students including allergies.
 - Understanding for and reduction of stress that the animal may experience in the classroom setting.

References:

1. National Association for Humane and Environmental Ethics (1998). "Is a classroom pet for you? Problems and promises of pets in the K-6 classroom" [Brochure].
2. BC SPCA - <http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/Educators/clsrmanimals.asp>.

Note: The parents, the school's principal and custodial staff should be informed of the arrival of a classroom pet before it enters the classroom.