

GEORGIA TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Georgia Elementary Middle School

PROCEDURE: **Animals in School**

The District will take reasonable steps to provide a healthy environment for all students, faculty, and staff to participate in school programs and activities. The school recognizes that animals have been part of the learning experience for many years. However, for students, faculty and staff with asthma, animals can trigger a respiratory reaction that in some case can be severe. Other potential consequences include scratches and bites, infections and infestations and mild to life-threatening allergic reactions.

The District recognizes the need for every school-sponsored activity to be accessible to all students and staff. To ensure this, GEMS does not permit animals, furred or feathered on school property. (This does not apply to service animals.)

Guide, hearing, and other service animals or law enforcement dogs may be allowed in school or on school ground (proof of current rabies vaccination is requested). For educational purposes, animals (mammals, birds, reptiles, fish or insects) may be allowed at school with permission of the principal. Students will not be permitted to handle wild animals. All animals must be restrained and preferably caged. Prior to any animal's involvement in the school, consultation with the school nurse and parents of any child with the specific allergy is strongly advised.

Reptiles, (iguanas, snakes, lizards and turtles) and amphibians (frogs, salamanders and toads) are a source of salmonella which can be life-threatening in very young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. Fish (tanks) pose a very limited health risk. These may be allowed in the classroom. Tank water should not be disposed of in sinks that are used for food preparation or for obtaining drinking water. Hand-washing after exposure or tank cleaning is stressed.

If a stray or wild animal appears on school grounds, students should be kept away from the area until the animal leaves the area or is removed by a local animal control officer, or appropriate official.

If a student is bitten or injured by an animal during a school-sponsored activity the principal, school nurse and parent/guardian must be notified as soon as possible. If a visitor or staff is bitten, the principal must be notified. A report must be made as applicable to the Vermont Department of Health.

The principal may allow egg-hatching and dissection of dead animals in the classroom as part of approved science programs. Animals used for dissection must be obtained through appropriate sources.

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