

Safety advice

Year F, unit 1: Needs of living things

Using live animals with students

Each Australian state and territory has its own requirements for risk management and approval to use live animals in classrooms. The following links to government and independent education websites may be useful.

ACT http://www.det.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/191815/DET_Care_Use_Of_Animals_2010.pdf

NSW <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/animalsinschools/>

NT <http://www.det.nt.gov.au/about-us/policies/documents/schools/animals-in-schools>

Qld. <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/eppr/health/hlspr012/resources/liveanimals.pdf>

SA <http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/animalethics/pages/cg0001037/16295/?reFlag=1>

Tas. <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/legislation/risk>

Vic. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/animalcare/animals.htm#H2N10134>

WA <http://www.ais.wa.edu.au/images/member/animal-ethics-guidelines.pdf>

Visitors who bring their animal/s onto school grounds need to be informed (before they come) of their responsibilities for keeping both the students and their animal/s safe.

Handling potting mix in gardening activities

The main concern in handling potting mix is the risk of inhaling bacteria that have built up in the mix. This can occasionally lead to Legionnaire's disease if the bacteria are present and inhaled.

On the day before the potting mix is required for the lesson, carefully open the bag in a well-ventilated area outside (without students present). Allow the mix to ventilate by pouring it into a wheelbarrow and then wetting slightly. This procedure will keep any risk at a very low level. Gloves are recommended and ensure students wash their hands at the conclusion of the activity.

The following downloadable PDFs provide useful background information for risk management:

'Curriculum activity risk assessment: biological activities', Qld. Department of Education and Training website,

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/eppr/health/hlspr012/resources/biolactivities.pdf>

(2012) (PDF, 386 KB)

'Environmental health guide: safe handling of potting mixes, garden soils and composts (preventing legionella infection)', Town of East Fremantle website,

<http://www.eastfremantle.wa.gov.au/uploaded/pdf/potting.pdf> (2012) (PDF, 92.8 KB)

Choosing seeds for activities in lesson 3 – exploring the needs of plants

Seed play: Rice is the safest seed choice if any students have wheat allergies.

Cheap birdseed can also be used. A clean, dry water trough standing on a tarp

makes for easy cleaning up and minimum seed loss. A wide variety of containers and pouring devices maximises the learning.

Seed sorting using native seeds: Some Australian plants have seeds that are poisonous if accidentally eaten. Avoid, for example, Black Bean pods and seeds. If such seeds are taken from within the school campus, the groundkeeper should be informed. The following information can help you check on certain plants:

'Primefacts: garden plants poisonous to people', NSW DPI website,
http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/112796/garden-plants-poisonous-to-people.pdf (2012) (PDF, 870)

'Fact sheet: poisonous plants', Gardening Australia website,
<http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s2300146.htm> (2012)

'Plants', Qld Poisons Information Centre website,
http://www.health.qld.gov.au/poisonsinformationcentre/plants_fungi/pf_common.asp
(2012)