



Procedure

Animals in Queensland state schools procedure

Version: 6.0 | Version effective: 23/01/2023

Audience

All state schools

Purpose

This procedure outlines legal obligations, responsibilities and processes for the responsible care, use and protection of animals in state schools.

Overview

Principals, staff and any other person in charge of an animal are obligated under the [Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#) (the Act) and the [Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012 \(Qld\)](#) to promote the responsible care and/or use of animals, and have a duty of care for those animals.

Under the [Biosecurity Act 2014 \(Qld\)](#), all reasonable and practical measures must be taken to prevent or minimise [biosecurity risks](#), including those associated with animals. Schools that own or keep the threshold number of designated animals outlined in Chapter 7 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Qld) must register as a [biosecurity entity](#) with Biosecurity Queensland.

Schools must also uphold the management principles of the [Nature Conservation Act 1992 \(Qld\)](#) regarding the protection of native wildlife and habitats.

The use of animals for scientific (or educational) purposes is governed by the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#) (the Code). The use must be essential to achieve stated learning outcomes and the [3Rs](#) (replacement, reduction and refinement) must be applied at all stages of the animal use and care. The [Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee](#) (QSAEC) oversees the use of animals for scientific purposes in all Queensland schools and has established [categories of animal use activities](#) that align with the Code. Schools proposing the scientific use of animals under Category 2 or 3 must gain prior approval from QSAEC before conducting these activities and must report on their use.

There are also potential disease hazards and other occupational health and safety issues associated with the presence, care and use of animals. Risk management of animal-use activities ensures the health, safety and wellbeing of students, staff and others involved.

Where there are privately-owned livestock agisted on school property or school livestock agisted on non-school property, agreements must be developed in accordance with the [Agistment of livestock procedure](#).

Responsibilities and processes associated with the presence of assistance and support animals on school grounds are detailed in the [Assistance animals and support animals at school procedure](#).

Responsibilities

Principals

- Ensure appropriate resources (human, facilities, financial, training) are available to meet animal welfare and wellbeing needs.
- Ensure that ethical behaviour and respect for animals and their wellbeing underpins all decisions and actions associated with animal-use activities.
- Ensure there is pedagogical justification for the use of animals.
- Establish school animal-management processes that align with the requirements of this procedure to safeguard and monitor animal welfare and wellbeing of animals on school grounds or animals used by the school on private property.
- Ensure all relevant persons are aware of, and meet, their obligations under legislation (animal care and protection, biosecurity, management of wildlife, native animal permits and licences, use of animals for scientific purposes).
- Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of their obligations under the [Student protection procedure](#) and meet the requirements of the [Working with children \(blue card\) procedure](#).
- Ensure that staff using animals have relevant knowledge, skills and/or experience and/or are supervised by suitably qualified mentors.
- Manage [health, safety and wellbeing](#) (DoE employees only) and [curriculum activity risks](#) associated with animal use.
- Ensure that a [school-based animal activity register](#) is maintained for audit purposes.
- Ensure the purchase of animals complies with relevant departmental finance and asset management policies and procedures.
- Ensure staff who may obtain any direct or indirect benefit (financial or otherwise) from the supply, use or disposal of animals adhere to the Conflict of interest [policy](#) and [procedure](#) and seek prior approval from the Assistant Director-General, Human Resources (ADG HR) regarding any interests or arrangements involving [contracting back to the department](#) (DoE employees only).
- Cooperate fully with audits of compliance with this procedure, the Act and the Code which may be undertaken by QSAEC members, the Department of Education (the department), external reviewers contracted by the department, or the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

Staff

- Ensure that ethical behaviour and respect for animals and their wellbeing underpin all decisions and actions associated with animal-use activities.

- Comply with relevant [legislation](#), departmental procedures and school processes relating to an animal-use activity, including those for finance and asset management.
- Adhere to the Conflict of interest [policy](#) and [procedure](#) and seek prior approval from the ADG HR regarding any interests or arrangements involving [contracting back to the department](#) (DoE employees only) if they are likely to obtain any direct or indirect benefit (financial or otherwise) from the supply, use or disposal of animals.
- Apply the [3Rs](#) (replacement, reduction and refinement) when proposing the use of animals and animal parts.
- Provide pedagogical justification for the use of animals.
- Ensure that the use of animals (living or dead) and animal parts is open, responsible, respectful and accountable.
- Ensure [health, safety and wellbeing](#) (DoE employees only) and [curriculum activity risks](#) associated with animal-use activities are identified and appropriate controls implemented.
- Ensure that students and others involved in animal use have relevant knowledge, skills and/or experience and/or are supervised by suitably qualified mentors.
- Ensure that all students can access and fully participate in the animal-use activities alongside their peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Ensure that practices and procedures involving animals are based on current best practice, and adhere to the relevant [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\)](#) if applicable.
- Cooperate fully with audits of compliance with this procedure, the Act and the Code which may be undertaken by a QSAEC member(s), the department, external reviewers contracted by the department, or DAF.

Activity leaders (staff nominated as responsible for QSAEC-approved animal-use activities)

- Follow all responsibilities as listed above for staff and:
 - Lead decision-making processes for QSAEC approval.
 - Ensure all [QSAEC reporting and recordkeeping requirements](#) are met.

Queensland Schools Animals Ethics Committee (QSAEC)

- Oversee activities where animals are used for scientific purposes in Queensland schools to assist schools to meet their legal obligations under the Act and the Code.
- Approve guidelines, including [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\)](#), for the care and scientific use of animals in schools.
- Monitor QSAEC-approved animal-use activities to ensure compliance with QSAEC approval.
- Take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events, complaints and non-compliance.

Process

For all animals

Use the [Categories of animal use activities](#) to determine whether approval is required from QSAEC for the proposed animal use. The process for Categories 1, 2 and 3 activities are outlined below and in the flowchart [Process for animal-use activities in schools](#), noting QSAEC will not provide approval for Category 4 activities.

When QSAEC approval is NOT required (i.e. Category 1 activities)

- Principals ensure appropriate resources (human, facilities, financial, training) are available to meet animal welfare and wellbeing needs.
- Principals ensure all aspects of animal-use activities are justified, ethical and respectful of animals.
- Staff ensure relevant permits and licences are current.
- Staff implement controls to address [workplace health and safety](#) (DoE employees only) and [curriculum activity risks](#) associated with animal-use activities, taking into account:
 - [zoonoses](#) associated with the specific animal species
 - [infection controls](#) and [animal contact guidelines to reduce risks to human health](#)
 - facility and equipment checks
 - storage of medicines and chemicals
 - supervision and monitoring (both in and out of school hours)
 - emergency planning to address staff/student/animal illness, injury or distress
 - disposal of animal waste
 - disposal of carcasses in accordance with local council regulations.
- Staff allocate appropriate resources to ensure animal welfare needs – appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances – can be met. Refer to [Animal information](#) for a range of animal husbandry and care topics.
- Staff ensure animals have:
 - ready access to fresh water and an appropriate diet
 - a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area, whether outdoors or indoors, and security from predators
 - sufficient space, proper facilities and the company of the animal's own kind (as appropriate) that support the animal to display normal patterns of behaviour
 - ongoing supervision and monitoring to provide rapid diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury
 - appropriate handling and conditions that minimise harm, including pain and distress (e.g. anxiety, boredom).
- Staff monitor ongoing compliance with relevant departmental policies and procedures, including financial processes, [asset](#) management, [procurement](#), [revenue](#), [gifts and benefits](#), [donations](#), [advertising](#), [sponsorship](#) and [appropriate and ethical use of public resources](#).

- Staff declare and manage any conflicts of interest in accordance with the Conflict of interest [policy](#) and [procedure](#) and seek prior approval from the ADG HR regarding any interests or arrangements involving [contracting back to the department](#) (DoE employees only), if the staff member is likely to obtain any direct or indirect benefit (financial or otherwise) from the supply, use or disposal of an animal.
- Staff provide students who raise genuine ethical, religious or cultural concerns and objections to an animal-use activity with an alternate activity that is to a comparable standard as the animal-use activity.

When QSAEC approval is required before the activity can occur (i.e. Category 2 and 3 activities)

Application process

- Principals determine who will be the activity leader for a proposed animal-use activity.
- Activity leaders follow steps 1-5 of the [Animal ethics approval process](#) to:
 - determine whether the proposed curriculum outcomes can be achieved without animal use
 - minimise the number of animals required to achieve the curriculum outcomes
 - refine techniques in the proposed activity to reduce the impact on animals
 - provide, in curriculum planning, pedagogical justification for the animal use
 - complete a QSAEC application for approval to conduct the activity.
- In consultation with the activity leader, principals approve submission of the QSAEC application provided that:
 - all aspects of the proposed animal-use activity are pedagogically justified, ethical and demonstrate the governing principles of the Code
 - staff have relevant knowledge, skills and/or experience to deliver the activity, meeting duty of care obligations
 - if privately-owned animals are to be used, ensure written consent is obtained from the owner for the use of their privately-owned animals including details and duration of the owner's responsibility
 - ADG HR approval regarding any interests or arrangements involving [contracting back to the department](#) (DoE employees only) has been received where staff are likely to obtain any direct or indirect benefit (financial or otherwise) from the supply, use or disposal of animals
 - appropriate resources (human, facilities, financial, training) are available to meet animal welfare and wellbeing needs.
- Activity leaders submit application to QSAEC and file application in the [school-based animal activity register](#).
- Activity leaders file the QSAEC decision, once received, in the school-based animal activity register.

Conducting a QSAEC-approved animal-use activity

- Activity leaders inform relevant staff of the conditions of the approval (e.g. husbandry requirements, activities permitted as per application, reporting requirements), adherence to any relevant [SOP](#) if applicable and of staff responsibilities under the [Responsibilities of school personnel under the Code](#).
- Activity leaders ensure staff are suitably qualified and relevant permits and licences are current.

- Activity leaders seek approval from QSAEC for all [modifications](#) to the conditions of an approved activity, before implementing those modifications.
- Staff implement controls to address [workplace health and safety](#) (DoE employees only) and [curriculum activity risks](#) associated with animal-use activities, taking into account:
 - [zoonoses](#) associated with the specific animal species
 - [infection controls](#) and [animal contact guidelines to reduce risks to human health](#)
 - facility and equipment checks
 - storage of medicines and chemicals
 - supervision and monitoring (both in and out of school hours)
 - emergency planning to address staff/student/animal illness, injury or distress
 - disposal of animal waste
 - disposal of carcasses in accordance with local council regulations.
- Staff allocate appropriate resources to ensure animal welfare needs – appropriate to the species, environment and circumstances – can be met. Refer to [Animal information](#) for a range of animal husbandry and care topics.
- Staff ensure animals have:
 - ready access to fresh water and an appropriate diet
 - a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area, whether outdoors or indoors, and security from predators
 - sufficient space, proper facilities and the company of the animal's own kind (as appropriate) that support the animal to display normal patterns of behaviour
 - ongoing supervision and monitoring to provide rapid diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury
 - appropriate handling and conditions that minimise harm, including pain and distress (e.g. anxiety, boredom).
- Staff ensure that [general biosecurity obligations](#), [registrable biosecurity entity](#) and [livestock identification](#) requirements are satisfied as relevant.
- Principals ensure that agreements in accordance with the [Agistment of livestock procedure](#) are in place, if relevant.
- Staff monitor ongoing compliance with relevant departmental policies and procedures, including financial processes, [asset](#) management, [procurement](#), [revenue](#), [gifts and benefits](#), [donations](#), [conflict of interest](#), [advertising](#), [sponsorship](#) and [appropriate and ethical use of public resources](#).
- Staff ensure that, at all times during animal-use activities, students are supervised by a person competent in the activity and who takes into account the competencies and responsibilities of each student, ensuring all students can access and fully participate in animal-use activities alongside their peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Should an event occur that has, or has the potential for, a negative impact on animal welfare, activity leaders:

- take prompt action to alleviate animal pain and distress and to prevent a recurrence of the adverse event
- submit an [Unexpected adverse event report](#) to QSAEC (via the principal) within 7 days of the event.
- Should a complaint relating to an animal-use activity be received, activity leaders:
 - investigate and take prompt corrective action as necessary
 - submit an [Animal use complaint report](#) to QSAEC (via the principal) within 7 days of receipt of the complaint.
- Activity leaders submit annual [Activity completion reports](#) for all approved activities in Term 4 each year and/or at the termination of an approved application.
- Activity leaders maintain the [school-based animal activity register](#) retaining all records for a minimum of 7 years after all related use of animals is complete and as set out in the [Information asset and recordkeeping procedure](#).
- Staff provide students who raise genuine ethical, religious or cultural concerns and objections to an animal-use activity with an alternate activity that is to a comparable standard as the animal-use activity.

Review of QSAEC-approved animal-use activity

- QSAEC member(s), the department, external reviewers contracted by the department, or DAF can conduct audits of compliance with this procedure, the Act and the Code including:
 - [site inspections](#) of schools conducting QSAEC-approved animal-use activities to ensure the general welfare of the animal(s) is considered and that the animal-use activities are being conducted in accordance with QSAEC approval
 - independent external review of compliance with the Code as required by DAF for the department's continued registration as a scientific user.
- If non-compliance is identified, QSAEC will recommend remedial action/s to the principal.

For wildlife

- Staff contact the Infrastructure Advisor in the department's [regional office](#) if advice is required on any wildlife issues affecting school operations.
- Staff develop processes to respond appropriately to any wildlife incident, seeking guidance as deemed necessary from the local council, RSPCA Queensland or the Department of Environment and Science (DES).
- Staff report:
 - wildlife emergencies relating to cassowaries and crocodiles, and incidents where a person has come into contact with bats to [DES](#)
 - all other wildlife emergencies (e.g. sick, injured or orphaned animals) to [RSPCA Queensland](#).
- Staff ensure that relevant permits or licences are current before taking, keeping, using or moving wildlife as required by Queensland's native wildlife [licensing system](#). Note: An [Educational Purposes Permit](#) is also required for keeping native wildlife in a classroom for educational purposes.
- If wildlife are being used in the classroom, refer to information under the "For all animals" section to determine if QSAEC approval is required.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Activities	Any action or group of actions undertaken that involves the care and use of animals, including acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry of those animals. An activity may involve one or more procedures.
Activity leader	The appointed teacher or authorised teacher representative who is conducting the animal use activity and is responsible for the wellbeing of an animal throughout the period of use of the animal in an approved activity, until provisions are made for the animal at the conclusion of the use. Responsibilities of this role are outlined in Responsibilities of school personnel under the Code .
Animals	<p>For the purpose of this procedure, animals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any live non-human vertebrates including live pre-natal or pre-hatched vertebrates in the last half of gestation or development • cephalopods e.g. octopi and squid (at any stage of the life cycle) • malacostraca e.g. crabs, crayfish, lobsters, prawns (at any stage of the life cycle). <p>Please note that malacostracans do not require approval for scientific use under the Code.</p>
Animal welfare	An animal's quality of life, which encompasses the diverse ways an animal may perceive and respond to their circumstances, ranging from a positive state of wellbeing to a negative state of distress.
Assistance animal	<p>An assistance animal is a dog or other animal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accredited under a Queensland law that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or • accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or • trained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and ○ to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place. • Assistance animals will include guide dogs, hearing dogs and assistance dogs for the purposes of the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 (Qld).

Term	Definition
Current best practice	<p>A practice, procedure, method or process that has proven to be most effective in supporting and safeguarding animal wellbeing, and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes into consideration the relevant aspects of species-specific biology, physiology and behaviour • is based on the best available scientific evidence (or, in the absence of scientific evidence, accepted practice) • includes strategies to minimise adverse impacts.
Facility	<p>Any place where animals are kept, held or housed, including yards, paddocks, tanks, ponds, buildings, cages, pens and containers.</p>
Governing principles	<p>Respect for animals must underpin all decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. This respect is demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using animals only when it is justified • supporting the wellbeing of the animals involved • avoiding or minimising harm, including pain and distress, to those animals • applying high standards of scientific integrity • applying Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care and use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the Replacement of animals with other methods ○ the Reduction in the number of animals used ○ the Refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals • knowing and accepting one's responsibilities.
Legal obligation	<p>Responsibilities held under relevant law (e.g. <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> (Qld), <i>Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012</i> (Qld), <i>Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 (updated 2021)</i> (Cwlth).</p>
Livestock	<p>For the purposes of this procedure, livestock refers to animals that are commonly used in agriculture and aquaculture activities.</p>
Others	<p>Volunteers, parents, visiting activity leaders and any school staff involved in planning, delivering or supervising any animal use in schools.</p>
Person in charge of an animal	<p>A person is a person in charge of an animal if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • own or have a lease, licence or other proprietary interest in the animal; or • have the custody of the animal; or

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employ or have engaged someone else who has the custody of the animal and the custody is within the scope of the employment or engagement.
Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee (QSAEC)	The QSAEC oversees the use of animals for scientific purposes in all Queensland schools to assist them to meet their legal obligations under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (Qld) and the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (the Code).
Scientific purposes	For the purposes of this procedure, scientific purposes include all activities conducted with the aim of acquiring, developing or demonstrating knowledge or techniques in all areas of science including teaching, field trials, environmental or agricultural studies, research, diagnosis, product testing and the production of biological products.
School-based animal activity register	<p>For audit purposes, this register retains all records for a minimum of 7 years after all related use of animals is complete as set out in the Information asset and recordkeeping procedure including, as relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> QSAEC applications, approvals, modifications to approval, unexpected adverse event reports, complaints, annual completion reporting qualifications of staff involved in animal-use activities licences and permits acquisition and animal identification records activities conducted feeding logs (times/amount) health treatments and records supervision and monitoring processes and schedules emergency management processes disposal details and dates.
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)	For the purposes of this procedure, a SOP contains activities and environmental conditions that have already been considered and accepted by the Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee as being ethically sound. It details best practice methods for the care and use of the relevant animals for scientific purposes.
The 3Rs (Reduction, Refinement, Replacement)	<p>The 3Rs refer to the principles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> replacement of animals with other methods reduction in the number of animals used refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals.
Wellbeing	An animal is in a positive mental state and is able to achieve successful biological function, to have positive experiences, to express innate behaviours, and to

Term	Definition
	respond to and cope with potentially adverse conditions. Animal wellbeing may be assessed by physiological and behavioural measures of an animal's physical and psychological health and by the animal's capacity to cope with stressors.
Wildlife	Free-living animals of native or introduced species, including those that are captive bred and those captured from free-living populations.

Legislation

- [Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Biosecurity Act 2014 \(Qld\)](#) Chapters 2 and 7
- [Biosecurity Regulation 2016 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Criminal Code Act 1899 \(Qld\)](#) Section 89
- [Nature Conservation Act 1992 \(Qld\)](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- [Flowchart: Process for animal-use activities in schools](#)

Other resources

- [Animal contact guidelines – reducing the risk to human health 2014](#) (Department of Health)
- [Activity completion report](#) (QSAEC)
- [Animal ethics approval process](#) (QSAEC)
- [Animal welfare and ethics](#) (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)
- [Animal use complaint report](#) (QSAEC)
- [Animals in education](#)
- [Australian & New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching](#)
- [Categories of animal use](#) (QSAEC)
- [Contracting back to the department](#) (DoE employees only)

- [Health, safety and wellbeing](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Modification, SOP variation or amendment form](#) (QSAEC)
- [National Livestock Identification System](#)
- [Permits, licences and authorities](#)
- [Preventing zoonoses](#)
- [Registerable Biosecurity Entity](#)
- [Responsibilities of School Personnel under the Code](#) (QSAEC)
- [RSPCA Queensland](#)
- [School-based animal activity register](#) (QSAEC)
- [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\)](#) (QSAEC)
- [Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee](#) (QSAEC)
- [Unexpected adverse event report](#) (QSAEC)
- [Using animals in science](#)

Related policies

- [Assets policy](#)
- [Animal welfare codes of practice](#)
- [Appropriate and ethical use of public resources policy](#)
- [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#)
- [Conflict of interest policy](#)
- [Inclusive education policy](#)
- [Revenue policy](#)

Related procedures

- [Advertising procedure](#)
- [Assistance animals and support animals at school procedure](#)
- [Agistment of livestock procedure](#)
- [Conflict of interest procedure](#)
- [Donations and bequests procedure](#)
- [Gifts and benefits procedure](#)
- [Infection control procedure](#)
- [Information asset and recordkeeping procedure](#)
- [Managing risks in school curriculum activities procedure](#)
- [Purchasing and procurement procedure](#)
- [Sponsorship procedure](#)

- [Student protection](#)
- [Working with children \(blue card\) procedure](#)

Contact

For general information on animals in schools, please contact your [closest regional office](#).

For specific information about the Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee and scientific animal use, please email animal.ethics@qed.qld.gov.au.

Review date

23/01/2026

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

5.0 Animals in Queensland state schools

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