

# **Animals in Care Settings: Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines**

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## 1 Introduction

The use of animals in care settings is widely accepted as a useful way to assist those receiving care with communication, relaxation and improvement in overall wellbeing.

The guidance set out within this document, provides actions required for any health or social care settings when considering bringing animals into the care setting.

Local infection prevention and control (IPCT)/health protection team (HPT) must be contacted to discuss responsibilities and measures prior to an animal attending premises and prior to keeping any pet in a care setting.

## 2 Definitions

Animals that are associated with care settings may be defined under the following categories:

- An assistance dog; trained for the benefit of the handler (this is not always the person receiving healthcare) e.g. guide, hearing, signal or seizure dog. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or owner.
- A therapy animal; visits care settings for identified therapeutic purposes. These animals are the responsibility of the handler or affiliated organisation e.g. Canine Concern Scotland Trust Inc.
- A pet; an animal kept on care premises for social and motivational reasons. The animal (pet) is the sole responsibility of the organisations employee(s).
- A patients own pet; an animal owned by the person receiving care.

## 3 Procedures for animals within care settings

### 3.1 Animal selection

3.1.1 Animals **not suitable** for care settings include:

- exotic animals e.g. reptiles, snakes or fish that require specialist facilities or foods which could introduce infections;
- caged birds and rodents;
- ruminant animals such as ponies, reindeer, llamas etc. in acute healthcare; and
- feral animals (nor should they be actively fed on healthcare premises).

3.1.2 Pet animals must:

- be registered with a licensed veterinarian;
- have a record of up-to-date immunisations and comprehensive parasite prevention e.g. de-worming, flea prevention;
- be healthy, clean and of suitable temperament; and
- be toilet trained and unlikely to foul in the premises.

**3.2 General infection prevention and control - prior to the animal arriving**

The following actions must be undertaken prior to the animal arriving:

3.2.1 Permission to bring a pet animal into healthcare premises must be sought from the appropriate person in charge, animal exclusions apply (see section 3.1.1).

3.2.2 Allocation of a named employee/person to oversee the care/management of the pet/animal during any visit or residential stay and ensuring all persons receiving care are aware of the pending visit.

3.2.3 Completion of a risk assessment **prior** to arrival on the premises including the following and must be a process subject to ongoing review:

- Suitability of animal as a pet (refer to section 3.1).
- Suitability of area to determine pet visitation or stay; whether staff/persons receiving care have any suspected or known allergy to the animal.
- Assessment of those receiving healthcare that may pose a risk to the animal with actions in place to mitigate risk and ensure safety of both e.g. mental health status.
- Suitable area identified for pets to excrete e.g. cat litter.

3.2.4 The IPCT/HPT must be informed of any animal that being considered for access to healthcare premises.

### **3.3 Infection prevention and control – during animal visits**

The following actions must be followed when the animal arrives:

- 3.3.1 Contact between the person receiving care and the animal must not be allowed if either is displaying symptoms of sickness and/or diarrhoea.
- 3.3.2 Keep pet animal away from any person receiving care who has wound sites and/or invasive lines.
- 3.3.3 Hand hygiene must be carried out using liquid soap and running water following contact with the animal, its housing, bedding and/or any other equipment or when cleaning, feeding or handling any pet excreta.
- 3.3.4 If bites or scratches occur staff must carry out a first aid procedure ensuring the wound is cleaned, dressed, medical advice should be sought where necessary and incident reported.
- 3.3.5 Discourage the animal from licking staff, and persons receiving care; If this occurs the area should be washed with liquid soap and water as soon as possible.
- 3.3.6 A pet animal must not be allowed to visit any other persons receiving care.
- 3.3.7 Animals must not be permitted access to any clinical areas, kitchens, dining areas or staff area.
- 3.3.8 Animals must be kept under control at all times within healthcare premises e.g. dogs must be kept on a leash.

## **4 Social Care Settings Guidance**

The following procedures apply in social care settings in addition to the procedures for animals within the care environment outlined in section 3.

### **General Pet Management**

#### **4.1 Cleanliness**

- 4.1.1 For resident (pet) animals, staff must ensure a cleaning schedule is in place for areas where the animal resides, this may include a process of shampooing and steam cleaning of all soft furnishings.

## 4.2 Pet excreta

- 4.2.1 Dogs should be encouraged to eliminate away from the healthcare premises; consider suitable area prior to pet arrival.
- 4.2.2 Persons receiving care must be assessed to determine the ability for management and disposal of animal waste; staff oversight may be required; personal protective equipment (disposable gloves and disposable apron) must be worn.
- 4.2.3 Pregnant woman should not handle cat excreta due to the risk of toxoplasmosis.
- 4.2.4 Litter trays should be fitted with a disposable plastic liner for waste disposal.

## 4.3 Feeding

- 4.3.1 For resident (pet) animals; food must be stored in a lidded, seal proof container in a secure area that is only accessible to staff.
- 4.3.2 Animals must not be fed/watered in kitchens or food preparation areas and have their own designated feeding bowls.
- 4.3.3 Staff and persons receiving care must not eat in front of or share food with the animal.

## 5 References

Legislation.gov.uk.(2010). *Equality Act 2010*. [online] Available at:

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