

## RISK ASSESSMENT

<b>School:</b> Errington Primary School	<b>Classroom:</b> Nursery/Reception Rabbit	<b>Assessment date:</b> 18.09.25
<b>Activity covered by this assessment:</b> Rabbit care and handling		<b>Date reviewed:</b> 18.03.25
<b>Staff involved in the assessment:</b> Jane Jerz, Angela Jennings, Michelle Dardeshi, Charlotte Shepherd		<b>Manager's signature:</b> Sarah Rule

### **Risk Benefit.**

The five freedoms that apply to any living creature in our care.

1: Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition: give ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

2: Freedom from discomfort: provide a suitable environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area. 3:

Freedom from pain, injury and disease: ensure prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

4: Freedom to express normal behaviour: provide sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind. 5:

Freedom from fear and distress: ensure conditions avoid mental suffering.

Having pets encourages children to have shared ownership over the care and attention given to another living creature, which teaches them how to respect and treat animals and in turn this passes over to interactions with humans. It engages them to respond to something other than their own their needs as the creature is dependent upon them for food, warmth, exercise, safety etc. This is often something the children may have not been exposed to thinking about before. Children often talk, with pets, or about the pets promoting communication and language skills, children will also often draw pictures, paintings of the pets in the setting. Children sometime use pets as alter egos who they can play and talk with using their imaginative skills, which can solve problems or issues they may be experiencing.

Staff may take the children to the pet shop to purchase supplies for the animals further enhancing their children's real life experiences and adding to the ownership and responsibility of looking after the animal.

Stroking pets helps to release positive chemicals in the brain which in turn makes the child feel relaxed and happy. However some children are fearful of pets as they might be worried about them biting, scratching or other unpredictable behaviours, observing their peers interacting with pets can help children overcome their anxieties and find strategies to cope with situations they feel less confident about.

Rabbits are sensitive creatures and educators should think carefully about having animals in the nursery as a classroom tool.

<b>HAZARD</b>	<b>PERSONS AT RISK</b> (e.g. staff, visitors, pregnant workers, young persons)	<b>ACTION TO REDUCE THE RISKS</b> (Control measures)	<b>BY WHO AND WHEN</b>	<b>Severity (L, M, H) Likelihood (L, M, H)</b>
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Cage conditions: Escape, sores, insufficient conditions	Rabbit	<p>Minimum recommended cage space provided. Non-wire bottom cage provided. Safe exercise and play area provided. Cage placed away from direct sunlight and any wires. Litter changes daily.</p> <p>Rabbit bedding needs to be checked on a daily basis and removed if soiled.</p> <p>Particular attention needs to be paid to the accommodation during hot weather as flies may quickly lay their eggs on soiled bedding and the resulting maggots may burrow into the rabbit's fur and body cavity.</p> <p>Paper pellets are a safer alternative.</p> <p>Outside ensure this is secure and sheltered from the elements and off the ground. Provide hideaway. Ensure rabbits are not near any area that has been fertilised or pesticide applied.</p> <p>Provide exercise time and space. Ensure cleanliness of cage is maintained and regularly cleaned in the summer months to prevent fly strike. Wear appropriate PPE and practice effective handwashing before and after cleaning.</p>	All and as required	L L
Feeding: Poor diet/illness	Rabbit	<p>Herbivores – provide unlimited access to grass hays – timothy, brome, oat, wheat.</p> <p>Alfalfa hay not to be given to rabbits over 8 months, also provide commercial pellets according to weight as well as green leafy vegetables.</p> <p>Introduce new foods gradually.</p> <p>Limit fruit quantities and avoid bananas and grapes due to high sugar content.</p> <p>Limit quantities of foods to prevent fatal diarrhoea.</p> <p>Provide fresh water in a clean water bottle or heavy porcelain dish.</p> <p>Change water daily and wash/disinfect bowl at least weekly</p>	All staff, as required	L L

Handling/Grooming: Bites or allergies	Handler Rabbit	<p>Brush daily to reduce hair build up and hairballs and check for fleas, parasites.</p> <p>Spot clean rather than bathe which causes stress.</p> <p>If completely soaked dry rabbit as best as possible with a towel.</p> <p>Check with vet regarding flea treatment as some are hazardous to rabbit health.</p> <p>Never pick up rabbit by their ears.</p> <p>Support their limbs at all times, failure to do so may result in spinal injuries.</p> <p>Check ears for wax or mites and clean every two weeks, swab gently never insert cotton bud into ear canal or anywhere not visible.</p> <p>Teeth should be worn slightly at the ends, if sharp or misaligned seek vet assistance.</p> <p>Trim nails when needed, never declaw or cut too short.</p> <p>Some people may suffer sensitivity to rabbit fur or hay.</p> <p>Ensure hay is dust free where possible.</p> <p>Any child bitten, parent must be informed immediately after first aid treatment.</p>	M M	All staff, as required
Health: Illnesses in pet, zoonoses – bacterial, viral, protozoal, fungal, parasitic diseases	Rabbit	<p>Once purchased, to be registered at a vets with treatment for fleas and worms in place and vaccination schedule.</p> <p>Rabbits are susceptible to myxomatosis transmitted by biting insects. Ensure vaccinations are up to date.</p> <p>Seek veterinary assistance should rabbit exhibit signs of illness.</p> <p>Some rabbits may suffer from misaligned teeth as they never stop growing this can be severely problematic – regular veterinary assistance is required once diagnosed</p> <p>Unlikely that zoonoses occur from domestic rabbits, however, basic hygiene should be observed, especially in those with compromised immune systems.</p> <p>Fur mites may cause slight rash – refer to GP.</p> <p>Thoroughly clean any bites or scratches with soap and water as soon as possible. Ensure cuts are covered when handling.</p>	M M	All staff, as required

Holidays/Weekends: Inadequate care	Rabbit	Ensure your rabbits are cared for over the holiday period/weekends by a competent person.	M M	All staff, as required
Illnesses or preexisting Conditions: Worsening of condition or injury	Person with condition	Useful to have a specific first aid kit for animals in the setting that can provide immediate first aid whilst veterinary care is sought. Staff to be aware of staff and children with underlying health conditions that could be exasperated by handling or being in close proximity to the rabbit. Rabbit cage to be kept in alternative room. Staff on site with PFA training if condition needs medical aid.	H L	All staff, as required
Passing on information to new parents/families as they come to the setting.	Children/families	When new children attend the setting parents are informed of pets and asked about fur allergies. This will be added to the admission form.	H L	All staff, families as required.

Sarah Rule 19.09.25