

	<p>POLICIES &amp; PROCEDURES</p> <p>Number: <b>50-50</b></p> <p>Title: <b>Resident Pets, Personal Family/Friend Pets, Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program - LTC</b></p>
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## **Introduction**

Animals have been found to benefit people socially, psychologically, and physiologically. The goal of resident pets, personal family/friend pets, pet visitation and pet therapy programs is to promote and improve wellness and independence by providing opportunities for recreational, motivational, and therapeutic benefits. Long Term Care (LTC) homes are homes where healthcare is provided. As animals can transmit infectious diseases to humans and humans can transmit infectious diseases to animals, it is necessary to minimize these risks. This policy does not relate to service animals except where specifically noted.

## **Policy**

1. The Resident Pets, Personal Family / Friend Pets, Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program Policy will pertain to LTC homes within the Saskatoon Health Region.
2. Only animals that do not exhibit negative, aggressive or fearful behaviour should be a resident pet or visit a LTC home. If the animal bites and/or scratches or has any other inappropriate behavior, visitation rights are to be revoked.
3. Animals should not have any direct contact with resident's invasive devices, wounds or bandages.
4. Pets shall not be allowed in dining rooms when food is being prepared, stored or served, where clean supplies (including linen) or chemicals are being stored, medication rooms, where any procedures are being completed, and in any other area as identified specifically by the LTC facility.
5. Every reasonable and practical effort shall be made to keep animals away from residents with allergies, phobias or dislikes. Residents who do not wish to have contact with animals shall have documentation in their care guides and/or signage on the door to their rooms.

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6. During any infectious disease outbreak, there will be no pet visits until the outbreak is declared to be over by Public Health Services, unless extenuating circumstances exist (e.g. compassionate care).
7. This policy will supersede any existing pet policies. However, specific facility policies may continue to be used to outline specific processes that exist in their facility.

### **Purpose**

1. To provide a safe environment for people and animals.
2. To prevent or minimize the transmission of disease from pets in LTC settings.
3. To ensure meaningful benefit of resident pet, visiting pet and pet visitation programs.

### **Procedures for all pets:**

- Animals should not drink out of toilets.
- Feed only commercially prepared food to the pets. Animals should not be fed raw meat or poultry.
- Where possible and desired, discourage the animals from lying on beds without an impermeable, disposable barrier, where possible and desired.
- All animals shall have current required vaccinations, be clean, groomed regularly and in good health and free of any disease or parasites.

### **Procedures Specific to Resident Pets:**

Resident pets live in a LTC home or visit on a regular (e.g. daily) basis with a staff person.

- If the LTC home allows resident pets, the facility must have a designated person/s responsible for the health and personal needs of the pet including annual veterinarian check-ups, immunizations, and licensing. Designated person(s) are also responsible to completing and maintaining the Care Plan for their designated pet.
- Animals permitted as resident pets include cats, dogs, birds, and fish, etc.
- Nonhuman primates and reptiles should be avoided.
- Animals are to be groomed, nails trimmed, and if applicable, bathed on a regular basis. If an animal becomes visibly soiled, then facility should bath the pet.
- Birds who reside in LTC facilities, are to be kept in a cage at all times or have their wings clipped to limit their movement.
- Staff members designated to clean and disinfect the bird cage or fish tank should wear a gown or apron, gloves and mask (a mask is for cleaning the bird cage only) and ideally be a non-care staff member.
- Clean the fish tank frequently to prevent mold growth or build up on the fish tank filters, lights or lid.
- Do not store the litter box in any rooms where food is being prepared, served or stored, procedures are done or in the furnace room.
- If pet is a cat, the litter box is to be cleaned and disinfected frequently. With gloves on and with the use of a scoop remove feces daily into a plastic bag, tie closed, and put into the regular garbage. Clean and disinfect litter box with boiling water that is allowed to stand for 5 minutes at least weekly or more frequently if it is needed. Hand hygiene is to be performed after glove removal. Staff who clean the litter box should not be pregnant.

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- If a pet is owned by a resident on precautions, the animal can stay in that person's room. However the animal should not have the ability to wander in other resident's rooms or go into common areas.
- If a service animal lives in a facility with a resident, the animal should be required to follow all requirements of the policy. However, the animal would be given more freedom within the facility, based on a discussion with the Infection Control Professional.

### **Procedures for Personal Family / Friend Pets and Pet Visitation or Therapy Programs:**

Personal friends or family may visit their loved one with a pet. Pet Visitation programs are organized programs with volunteers (group or individuals) that encourage mutually beneficial interaction between companion animals and people. Pet Therapy programs (also called Animal Assisted Therapy) exist when a therapist or social worker uses an animal as a therapeutic modality to assist a resident in their therapy goals.

- Permission should be sought prior to an interaction between a resident and animal).
- Residents, families, staff, visitors and volunteers must practice hand hygiene before and after handling the pet.
- Owners or handlers must practice hand hygiene between residents when there is direct contact (e.g. shaking hands) and after direct contact with the pet and their waste.
- Owners or handlers shall be responsible for the needs of the pet (food, water, and outdoor breaks), properly disposing waste and ensuring the area is cleaned with paper towel, soap and water and followed with a facility disinfectant. Let air dry.
- Animals must be under the control of their owners or handlers at all times and if on a leash it should be less than 2 meters.
- Animals should not visit LTC facility if they are experiencing the following symptoms from the onset of and until at least one week beyond the resolution:
  - Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
  - Urinary or fecal incontinence
  - Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown origin
  - Open wounds
  - Ear infections
  - Skin infections
  - Orthopedic conditions
  - Heat stress
  - Enteric parasites.
- The animal handlers or owners should be healthy and free of symptoms that may indicate a communicable disease (cough, diarrhea or fever).
- Where possible, if residents are going to hold small animals they should have a barrier between their clothes and the animal.
- Animals should not visit rooms where residents are on precautions. However, a resident on precautions can visit an animal outside of their room if they are free of a suspected or confirmed communicable disease and can contain secretions (i.e. cough or draining wound) with proper hand hygiene. If a family or friend chooses to visit their loved one in their room with a pet, they should not visit any other residents with their animal.

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### **Procedures Specific to Personal Family / Friend Pets:**

- Where possible, approval should be obtained by the supervisor prior to the first animal visit.

### **Procedures Specific to Pet Visitation or Therapy Program:**

- An animal visitation liaison shall be designated to provide support and facilitation to animal handlers while visiting the home and to provide all of the procedures that should be met by the owner with each visit.
- Pets must be in the owner's home for at least six months to qualify as a visiting animal.
- The animal handler should be provided with a bottle of alcohol hand sanitizer to carry with him/her during the visit to encourage hand hygiene.
- Pets should not visit without their first set of vaccinations.
- Handlers should provide proof of their animal's yearly check-up and documentation from a veterinarian to verify **all** vaccinations are up to date and animal is healthy (unless a vaccine is deemed a contraindication due to the animal's older age).
- Prior to visiting, handlers should provide proof that their animals have passed a temperament evaluation. There may be difficulty in accessing these services for rural facilities. All animals that have not received a temperament assessment should be observed on a continuous basis by the visitation liaison to ensure they are well trained/behaved. If there is any evidence of aggressive behavior immediately remove the animal.
- In the case of accidental scratches, put measures in place to prevent this situation from reoccurring.
- Visiting animals should not be fed food treats by residents.
- Where possible, make every attempt to discourage visiting animals from licking resident's skin. If a pet has licked a resident ensure the skin is washed and hand hygiene occurs.
- Restrict visiting animals to no longer than a one hour visit to reduce animal fatigue.

### **Procedures for non-domesticated animal visitation (e.g. Petting Zoo):**

Non-domesticated animal visitation pertains to activities such as a petting zoo visiting a LTC home or taking residents off-site to a petting zoo.

- Residents, families, staff, visitors and volunteers must practice hand hygiene before and after handling/ petting the animals.
- Communication must occur with animal keeper prior to the visit to make sure that all the show animals are healthy on the day of the visit.
- Animals should not to visit LTC facility if they are experiencing the following symptoms from onset to at least one week beyond the resolution of:
  - Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
  - Urinary or fecal incontinence
  - Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown origin
  - Open wounds
  - Ear infections
  - Skin infections
  - Orthopedic conditions
  - Heat stress
  - Enteric parasites.
- Animal handlers must supervise the handling at all times.

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- Staff assistants should carry a bottle of alcohol hand sanitizer to encourage hand hygiene.
- If residents are going to hold small animals have a barrier between their clothes and the animal.
- Birds should only be observed and not handled without a barrier (e.g. lap cover). Hand hygiene to follow.

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