

Larmenier Catholic Primary School  
St Leonards, Tasmania

## *Farm, Animal and Gardening policy*

### Purpose

The purpose of this *Policy* is to establish a framework for the school, its employees, students and volunteers for the ethical and safe handling and keeping of animals and for the safe working of gardening implements and activities.

### Policy Framework

Larmenier Catholic Primary School, acknowledges that the safety and well being of animals at our school are central to the values of the school. The school also recognises that it is responsible and accountable for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of students and other persons who either enjoy or use the services and facilities of the school.

Central to the schools ethical stance on animals is that if animals are to be used for food and/or human pleasure, then they must be kept and handled with the highest degree of respect and care, in an environment as close to nature as resources permit.

### Definitions

**'Larmenier Catholic Primary School'** – The School.

**'Farm'** – for the purpose of this policy the word 'Farm' refers to pets, farm animals and gardens.

**'Gardens'** – includes vegetable gardens, orchards, plants and trees planted and/or propagated by students.

**'Land'** – refers to those lands, blocks, parcels of land used for the purposes of the school farm and includes property not owned by the school but used for the school farm.

**'Supervision'** – General supervision refers to the supervision by a responsible adult but may include a group of children during activities in a particular area. An example of

'general supervision' is playground duty.

Direct supervision, refers to the immediate supervision of a responsible adult who is supervising the child during the activity.

## Policy Supports

The school is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all workers, students, and other persons who are authorised to be present on school premises.

The school is committed to ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable and financially responsible, the health and well being of our school animals and the management of farm assets.

To support this *Policy*, the school will implement and maintain the following.

- Develop appropriate planning strategies to ensure that the design and function of facilities at our school meets or exceeds the best work health and safety standards.
- Develop a Farm Committee to meet and discuss, share ideas and concerns affecting the overall farm and garden projects.
- Provide teaching staff with resources and ideas for the implementation of the Farm in the schools curriculum.
- Future awareness: An annual automated email prompts us to consider conducting (or not) the following tasks:
  - Refresh participating people (students, staff, etc) on policy and procedures; and
  - Survey our active responsible adults, to check if any joined our program without undertaking our induction.

## Policy Content

1. Animal considerations
2. Animal care and keeping
3. Child safety considerations with animals
4. Animal Ethics and Controversy/conservation
5. Gardens
6. Tool Usage and Potentially Hazardous Substances
7. Produce and Income

## **1. Animal Considerations**

The School is to adopt a 'child friendly' stance in relation to all animals kept or housed at the school. In choosing types and breeds of animals, the highest priority shall be given to the safety of students. Non-aggressive breeds of animals shall only be considered for permanent inclusion.

EXPLANATION: Whilst it is natural for animals to defend themselves, and to 'voice' their pain by appearing or being aggressive, this response shall not be such a nature that the aggression would cause serious harm to children.

For example, a number of breeds of pig can be kept as docile animals, but a number of breeds of sow (female pig) become dangerously aggressive when with a litter (piglets). Likewise, a number of breeds of boar (male pig) can be dangerously aggressive and possessive around sows. Breeds that do not portray these dangerous characteristics should be researched and considered before inclusion. Another example is in the keeping of roosters. Non-aggressive roosters are only to be kept.

Other animals, such as pets shall be domesticated and trained to be handled away from the school property prior to inclusion in the school program and accessibility by students. Volunteers from the school parent community could be enlisted for this purpose, with volunteers to receive instruction from the school on issues such as 'animal care'; 'child safety' (monitor animal potential positive/negative behavior); etc. Only after the animal is deemed to be 'child friendly' should it be included in the schools inventory of animals.

Legal and industry standards shall also be considered prior to selecting animals. Some animals, such as goats and sheep require by law, permits, land permits and other considerations before the transfer of such animals occur. Where such animals are included, such laws shall be complied with completely.

This determination should be adopted for all animals.

## **2. Animal Care & Keeping**

The School shall adopt an animal ethos consistent with a Christian perspective of environmental pastoral care. Psalm 24:1, *the earth is the Lord's and everything in it;*

Every effort shall be made to keep all animals at the School as close to their natural state as possible, given due regard to domestication, practical and financial considerations. In practice, this means that pigs are free to dig, chickens to forage. Where the term 'free range' where relevant shall be central to the keeping of farm animals and this ethos taught to children enrolled at the School, every effort shall be made not to alienate the farming community in Tasmania by confrontation over the ethics of keeping animals.

RSPCA: In all cases, the keeping/housing of animals shall meet and where possible exceed the requirements of the RSPCA in Tasmania. Visitation and inspection by RSPCA officials shall be encouraged and accepted without the necessity of 'notice given'.

NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (NGO): In the case of other (NGO) animal groups seeking to view the keeping of animals at the school, shall be permitted on request

to the Principal or Schools Property Officer, at a time convenient to staff given due consideration to normal and expected 'visitors' on grounds policy. Such NGO's should be expected to give an undertaking not to act in a confrontational/argumentative manner in front of school children. Any concerns should be welcomed and requested to put in writing for consideration of the Farm Committee.

**LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS:** The School shall abide in respect to the keeping of animals and the registering of the schools property when required by relevant legislation. As a registered property the inspection of Department of Primary Industries Inspectors shall not be obstructed and given all requested assistance.

All animals shall have access to plentiful accessible clean water and suitable food at all times, with arrangements facilitated by the school during non-school periods.

All animals shall have any veterinary care when needed. The withholding of veterinary care shall not occur due to financial considerations, with the exception of guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens and ducks, given the necessary consideration to euthanasia being an alternative. The euthanasia of farm animals, ferrets and parrots shall not occur without the advice and recommendation of a qualified vet.

All instances of animal cruelty shall be treated as a serious matter, which reflects the school's ethos on the keeping of animals but also reflects animal welfare legislation. Children are to be encouraged to report instances of animal cruelty to their class teachers.

**INCIDENT REPORTING:** Our incident form is to be completed and provided to the school Principal, by the responsible adult first aware of either:

- Any animal mis-care that requires a veterinarian visit; or
- Any human misconduct to an animal deemed serious enough to result in school behavior reprimand.

### **3. Child Safety considerations with animals**

All children attending the School will be recommended to have a tetanus vaccination as part of their enrolment.

Children are to be encouraged to be active with pet animals. Children shall be taught how to handle and appropriately interact with the animals. Only general supervision is necessary for pet animals along with supervision of other school activities that only require general supervision.

The interaction of farm animals shall be directly supervised by staff or parent volunteers. Supervision is necessary to ensure the appropriate care of animals by students and to ensure the safety of children.

**HYGIENE:** There shall be adequate sanitisers available in all locations in which children have to access or handle school animals, in conjunction with guidance by our responsible adults on normal hygiene standards, and cleaning regimes the school has in place for animal housing and paddocks.

The school is mindful of potentially related infections that can be passed from animals to humans, and are committed to provide safe environments for both animals and humans.

We acknowledge humans at increased infection risk include:

- Pregnant woman, / the elderly / people with compromised immune systems; and
- Children under the age of five.

The school has existing procedures to collect, and distribute information from our members relating to medical concerns, and provides information on request by staff, for the people in their care.

#### **4. Animal Ethics and Controversies**

**BIRTH OF ANIMALS:** The birthing of animals and including copulation between animals shall be treated as a natural occurrence. Answers to children's questions should be addressed at an age appropriateness without embellishing, avoidance or misguidance.

The birthing of animals is an occurrence considered appropriate for all student grades at the School. Consideration in observance and even participation during the birth of an animal shall be directly supervised and the welfare and comfort of the animal taken into consideration.

**DEATH OF ANIMALS:** The death of animals at any farm will occur from time to time. Death is a natural occurrence which should not be hidden from the students but dealt with by age appropriateness. Consideration should be given in the case of an unexpected death of a farm animal to ensuring the animal is covered from view from both students and the public until it can be appropriately disposed of.

Euthanasia of animals is at times a necessary part of animal husbandry. The presence of children during the euthanasia of an animal should be discussed with the principal so that all the circumstances can be considered. Parental consent may be necessary.

**ANIMAL CONSUMPTION:** The killing of chickens and ducks for the purposes of food may be an activity suitable for some grades to participate in. Such activity should be planned ahead of time, a request submitted to the principal in writing seeking consent for the activity, the teaching perspective, parental approval, potential safety issues and location of the activity indicated.

Child handling of farm produce (meat) is to be encouraged as a necessary aspect of using animals as human food. A request for 'cooking' should be made to the principal which covers the necessary hygiene matters. Children should be discouraged from mocking, or making fun of the slaughtered animal in order to emphasise respect for the animal that is being used for food.

Issues of veganism, live animal exports etc. the School accepts the variety of opinions that people share within our community. However, the School adopts the view that the use of animals for food is not immoral or unethical. Members of the school community having alternative views shall be requested to avoid propagating those views actively

amongst the students. Other matters such as issues of 'live animal exports' the School shall not hold a view. Nothing within this policy shall be viewed as restricting classes from participating in 'classroom' discussion as part of their learning.

Free rang / battery – the School adopts the ethos that is the foundation of this policy, *'the keeping of animals for food is both ethical and moral and thus such animals shall be treated with the highest standard of care and respect and shall be kept in as natural state as possible'*. The keeping of animals therefore in 'battery' conditions is recognised as inconsistent with the ethos of the school. However, the School shall not get involved in propagating this ethos in confrontation with the farming community.

## 5. Gardens

The extent of this policy in relation to 'gardens' is intended for use in 'classroom and student activity' and is not aimed at a policy around flower gardens or general landscaping of the school.

TRADITIONAL LAND OWNERS: The School is an indigenous conscious school and as such, students should be reminded of the land being worked and the relationship the Tasmanian Aboriginal community has as the original and continuing custodians of the land that our school is situated on. Staff are encouraged to familiarize themselves with 'native Tasmanian plants' that were a stable source of food to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community (stinging nettles, pig face etc).

Plants considered 'invasive species' by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, and are recommended not to be planted in Tasmania, shall not be kept at the School.

Some plants are considered 'invasive' but their planting are only recommended against in certain conditions. When considering an 'invasive' plant, recommendations by the DPIPW and the Tasmania Conservation Trust shall be followed. No plant on the 'declared list' shall be planted on Larmerier Catholic School Property.

## 6. Tool Usage and Potentially Hazardous Substances

The use of tools by the School students shall be given 'age appropriate' consideration. **Students safety remains the highest priority**, while we are aware of potential learning experience children derive from 'hands on' experiences. Therefore 'Risk versus Benefit' is an ongoing consideration. For example what item children can use, at all times specific instructions shall guide us such as:

- Our Activity Risk Assessment;
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP),
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and
- Information on substance packaging.

In considering the 'age appropriateness' of implements, some items will only require 'general supervision' by staff or parent help, such as a shovel, broom, rake, however, other items will require 'direct supervision' such as forks, picks, powered tools where a child if left even a short period of time may, harm themselves or others if the item is not being used correctly.

## **7. Produce and Income**

Farm and Garden produce originating from School student activities may be sold from time to time as long as such produce meets all local and state government regulations.

The selling of farm produce, such as pork, beef, chicken, chevon and sheep, shall only be prepared by a licensed abattoir and butcher. All children of all grades should be informed of the identity of the animal coming from the school. The extent of this information should be considered on both an 'age appropriateness' and need for the information. Purposely misleading or falsifying information should not occur.

Income from produce sold shall be entered into the School general accounts and banked appropriately as per the schools normal procedures.

### Support Resources

- CSOHS Broken Bay Online subscription:  
Safety mini checklist titled 'Animal Welfare'
- Queensland Health:  
Advice to minimise infection risk from animals to humans.  
[http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/zoo\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/zoo_guidelines.pdf)

### Policy Responsibility

The person responsible for the implementation of this *Policy* is the School Principal.

### Policy Review

The *Policy* shall be reviewed every three years, or in the event of any information, incident, injury, or illness that would demonstrate the need for a review, or resulting from any legislative or organisational change that would warrant a review.

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