

Animal Policy for K-3 Youth

Working with Large Animals and Dogs

Because children in grades K-3 lack the mental and physical skills for controlling and understanding the strength of large animals, they may not have direct contact with 4-H animals such as cattle, goats, horses, llamas, sheep and swine. Additionally, young children may not have responsibility for controlling dogs of any size within 4-H group settings.

Working with Small Animals

Learning about and interacting with small animals on a short-term basis provides a wonderful experiential learning opportunity for young children. These experiences, however, must reflect a child-centered approach and attend not only to the topics taught but also to the environment in which they are taught.

Examples of Appropriate Animal Science Learning Experiences

- Participating in learning activities provided in *Exploring Farm Animals* (K-3 curriculum), *Exploring the World of Small Animals*, *Off to Adventures*, and other K-3 materials.
- Learning about any given animal for 3 months or less. (In other words, the definition of short-term is 3 months.) For example, Adventures members could learn about horses for a period of 3 months, if they do not have direct contact with horses. Then, the club could pursue learning in another area.
- Cooperating with club members to care for a dog that is under the control of an adult leader or a parent.
- Visiting an animal barn.
- Visiting an animal science club for older youth.
- Caring for a family-owned animal in the home environment, using knowledge gained from 4-H.
- Sharing learning experiences in ways that adhere to “Cloverbud” Recognition guidelines (see below)

Examples of Inappropriate Animal Science Learning Experiences

- Raising a 4-H animal with the intent to show in a competitive setting.
- Participating in activities designed for older youth
- Preparing for competitive, show-ring activities
- Participating in competitive state, district, or county fair or fair-like activities

Recognition for K-3 Animal Science Learning

Two of the five types of recognition highlighted in the National 4-H Recognition Model are appropriate for K-3 children. These types are (a) participation and (b) cooperation. Participation and cooperation can take place in club, family, and community settings.

- *Participation* in educational experiences acknowledges involvement as a first step in building a positive self-concept.
- *Cooperation* helps youth learn and work together, preparing them for living in today's interdependent, global society.

Recognition Restrictions

- Young people in grades K-3 or enrolled in the "Cloverbud" Program may not participate in competitive events.
- Young people in grades K-3 may not engage in activities and events that traditionally take place in the "show-ring." This applies to both competitive and noncompetitive activities and events.
- Cloverbud members should not share (meaning a non-competitive presentation) their small animals at the same time and in the same location as competitive exhibits/events for youth in grades 4 and above.

Related Policies of National Dog Organizations

- In order to participate at the novice level of the **American Kennel Club's** Junior Showmanship program, girls and boys must be at least 10 years of age.
- **Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc.** does not allow children under the age of 9 to be Guide Dog raisers