

Guidelines: Care and Use of Animals in Victorian Schools

Introduction

In accordance with legislative requirements, any Victorian school using animals for scientific teaching and learning must be covered by a Scientific Procedures Premises Licence (SPPL).

All government schools are covered by a single licence held by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Catholic and Independent schools must apply for individual licences obtained through the Department of Primary Industries. For further details visit [DEPI](#).

Codes of practice and legislation

All Victorian government, Catholic and Independent schools using animals in teaching must comply with:

- [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act \(1986\)](#) - known as POCTA, applies to all individuals and organisations in Victoria, including schools, at all times.
- [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition \(2013\)](#) - ensures that whenever animals are used for teaching or research, it is justified, humane and considerate of each animal's needs.
- [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations \(2008\)](#).
- [Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits \(2004\)](#).

Supporting schools

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to helping schools meet legal requirements while promoting best practice in animal use and welfare in schools.

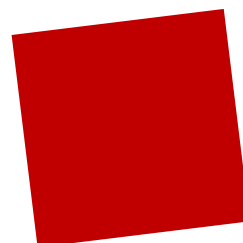
A Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee (VSAEC) exists to provide direction and advice related to legislative requirements and an online *Approval and Reporting System* for all schools using animals. VSAEC has members from all three school sectors and includes veterinarians and teachers as well as community and animal welfare representatives.

VSAEC provide information and guidance about the care and handling of particular species. Information is provided on the assumption that teachers have some familiarity with, or knowledge of, the animals included. Schools are encouraged to seek additional information about the species to be used.

Full details on what schools need to know and do when using animals in teaching are available at: [Care and Use of Animals in Victorian Schools](#).

Planning for teaching and learning with animals

Before using animals for scientific purposes in teaching, all Victorian schools must either **notify** VSAEC if they intend to do a pre-approved activity, or **seek approval** for activities that differ from the pre-approved activities listed.



To notify/apply to VSAEC follow these steps:

- Visit the [Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee Approval and Reporting System](#).
- Enter your Eduweb Account details (or edumail login) to access the *Approval and Reporting System*.
- Check the 'Pre-Approved Activities' page for registering your school's Notice of Intent to use an activity to which VSAEC has already agreed.
- Complete and submit a Notice of Intent Form to undertake a pre-approved activity through the *Approval and Reporting System* if required.
- If the details of the 'Pre-Approved Activities' are different from what you intend to do, go to the 'My School's Activity Request' page to download an Activity Request Form for VSAEC.
- Complete the Activity Request Form and submit the application to VSAEC. This is done through the *Approval and Reporting System*.

To enable consideration at the next meeting, applications must be received by VSAEC a minimum of 2 weeks prior to listed meeting dates, at: [Care and Use of Animals in Victorian Schools](#).

The *Approval and Reporting System* also allows schools to submit completion data to VSAEC after an animal activity is completed. This is important to assist in the compilation of annual data required to be provided to the Bureau of Animal Welfare.

If you require support with your school's Eduweb Account details (or edumail login), call the DEECD Service Desk on 1800 641 943.

For more support, see: [How to Use the Approval and Reporting System](#).

Further support with the [Approval and Reporting System](#) is available by email at: animaethics@edumail.vic.gov.au

Things to consider...

Animals in schools provide a rich learning experience for all students, but when we interact with animals, we have a responsibility to demonstrate appropriate care and respect.

When planning to use animals as part of teaching activities, consider the **3R's** rule.

- **Replacement** of animals with alternatives where possible.
- **Reduction** in the numbers of animals used.
- **Refinement** of techniques to reduce the impact on the animals.

All Victorian schools considering using animals for teaching purposes must:

- consider if they can replace, reduce or refine their use of animals in teaching.
- treat all animals with respect and consideration, ensuring that the level of care for animals is maintained over holidays and weekends.
- avoid using an animal in more than one scientific activity, either in the same or different projects, without approval from VSAEC.
- maintain records of animal care and use for audit inspection by VSAEC.
- take care to prevent the spread of disease with hygiene and minimal handling of animals.
- seek written consent from the parents/carers and students to take animals home beyond completion of a teaching unit.
- not keep animals at school if appropriate level of care and welfare cannot be provided.
- consider the fate of animals after completion of the activity.

See: [School Policy & Advisory Guide - Animals in Schools](#)

Contacts

For any queries related to the care and use of animals in schools, email the Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee Executive Officer on animaethics@edumail.vic.gov.au