



Caring for Animals Policy

Reviewed: 12 June 2025

Next Review: June 2026

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Our Values

At Young Friends, animals are part of our community — not for performance, not for display, but for care and connection. Our approach reflects:

- **Sustainability** – Deep respect for the interconnection of living systems
- **Respect** – Animals are companions, not resources
- **Authenticity** – Children engage in real, meaningful care — not staged or tokenistic acts
- **Supportive Leadership** – Staff advocate for animal welfare with as much dedication as child wellbeing
- **Community** – Children learn through living alongside others — human and non-human alike

Policy Statement

This policy outlines how we care for the animals who live alongside us at Young Friends — including our resident **giant rabbits** and **Labradors**. It reflects our belief that animals deserve calm, consistent care, personal space, and gentle companionship — not novelty or overhandling.

Purpose

- To protect the welfare and dignity of the animals in our care
- To guide how children respectfully and safely live alongside animals
- To ensure all decisions involving animals reflect compassion, regulation, and sustainability
- To teach children empathy, responsibility and respect for life

Animals in Our Setting

We do **not** invite external animals into the setting for entertainment or handling. We believe animals are not teaching tools or spectacles. Instead, we:

- Build ongoing relationships with the animals we live alongside
- Include animal care in daily routines, led by the needs of the animals — not adult-imposed learning
- Protect animals from overstimulation or unnecessary contact
- Respect their routines, rest times and need for space

Our animals include:

- Two giant rabbits
- Two Labradors

Daily Care and Respectful Involvement

Children may help staff with care tasks when appropriate, including:

- **Feeding and refilling water • Tidying enclosures and ensuring comfort • Observing and gently talking to the animals from a calm, respectful distance**

We teach:

- That **washing and brushing** is only done **when needed**, never for fun
- That animals show us when they want company — and when they don't
- That we monitor their **wellbeing as we do children's** — checking for signs of stress, illness or withdrawal

Hygiene and Risk Management

- Hands are washed after any interaction or care task
- Hands are washed thoroughly/gloves worn for cleaning enclosures or picking up waste
- Environments are cleaned regularly and assessed for hygiene risks
- Risk assessments are updated annually and following any changes
- Enclosures provide shade, warmth, shelter and space

Ethical Practice

We are guided by **animal-centred practice** — we do not engage in:

- Petting zoos or animal visits for novelty
- Unnecessary/unwelcome physical interaction
- Displaying animals for 'topics'
- Overhandling by large groups of children

We instead foster:

- Quiet observation
- Careful listening and looking
- Emotional attunement

Animals are not used to teach — they are honoured in their own right.

SEND and Emotional Support

Children with high sensitivity or regulation needs often benefit from calm connection with animals. These interactions are:

- Optional and never forced
- Supported by adults attuned to both the child and the animal's state
- Risk-assessed for sensory sensitivities and allergies

When Animals Are Unwell or Die

- Staff monitor animals daily for health and mood
- Veterinary care is accessed promptly when needed
- Children are supported through any illness or death with honesty and compassion
- Rituals and conversations are guided by the child's age and needs
- Animal rights and feelings are respected at all times

Linked Policies

- Health and Safety
- Risk Assessment and Positive Risk Taking
- Wellbeing and Regulation

- Curriculum and Flow-Based Learning
 - Safeguarding
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Authorisation Signed:

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