

Operational Directives	WRHA Infection Prevention & Control Program	
	Animals In Acute Care Facilities	Page 1 of 8
	Approval Signature: Original signed by Lori Lamont	Supersedes: Pet Therapy and Pet Visitation In Acute Care Facilities Operational Directives September 12, 2011
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1.0 **PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To provide guidelines for animals in healthcare facilities within Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) acute care facilities.
- 1.2 To prevent transmission of animal-related diseases within WRHA acute care facilities.

2.0 **PREAMBLE:**

- 2.1 The presence of animals in acute care provides an opportunity for zoonotic infection.

3.0 **DEFINITIONS:**

- 3.1 **Animal Assisted Interventions (AAls):** Encompass various procedures that are goal-directed and targets the specific aspects (developmental, therapeutic, emotional, and behavioral) of individuals or groups of people involved in working with trained animals. AAls are conducted by an animal-handler, by meeting the standards of the competent organization. ^[6.2]
- 3.2 **Animal Visit Liaison (AVL):**
A staff member designated to provide support and facilitation to animal handlers visiting the facility. This includes being apprised of all animals entering the facility. ^[6.2]
- 3.3 **Disinfectant:**
 Product used on inanimate objects to reduce the quantity of microorganisms to an acceptable level. Hospital-grade disinfectants require a drug identification number (DIN) for sale in Canada. ^[5.2]
- 3.4 **Hand Hygiene:**
 A comprehensive term that applies to hand washing, hand antisepsis and to actions taken to maintain healthy hands and fingernails. Refer to [Routine Practices Policy # 90.00.060](#).



3.5 Immunocompromised:

Patients with congenital or acquired immunodeficiency or immunodeficiency due to therapeutic agents or hematologic malignancies. ^[5.2]

3.6 AAI Handler:

A person who has been trained to handle dogs that have already been trained for Animal Assisted Activities, Animal Assisted Therapy, or Animal Assisted Education. ^[6.2]

3.7 Pet Escort:

The person, who is responsible for a pet visiting in a health care facility. This person cannot be the patient. ^[6.2]

3.8 Personal Pet:

A family-owned pet. This pet, with prior approval from the Animal Visit Liaison, is brought into the facility for the sole purpose of visiting a specific patient. ^[6.3]

3.9 Service Animal:

An animal trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability. ^[5.1]

3.10 Zoonotic Diseases:

Infectious diseases spread between animals and people that cause illness. ^[6.4]

4.0 OPERATIONAL DIRECTIVES:

4.1 Site Requirements

4.1.1 Only animals used for animal assisted interventions (AAI), service animals and authorized personal pets are permitted in hospitals. All other animals shall be denied entry to acute care facilities

4.1.2 Each site shall designate an Animal Visit Liaison (AVL) to facilitate AAI activities. This person shall ensure:

- Animals meet and adhere to required health screening and the facility standards for patient safety and health
- Pet Escorts receive Appendix A: **Pet Escort Information Sheet for Hospitals**

4.1.3 Animals used for AAI must:

- Be registered or certified for AAA/AAT
- Have appropriate training
- Be oriented to the health care facility
- Wear appropriate identification while in a facility. ^[6.3]

4.1.4 Each site should develop a policy for AAI activities. ^[6.3]

4.1.5 Consult Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) regarding possible AAI program and personal pet visits. ^[5.1]



4.2 Requirements/Restrictions for all Animals

- 4.2.1 All visitations should be restricted to dogs (i.e. exclude cats and other animals).^[6.2]
- 4.2.2 Animals must be a minimum of one year of age.^[6.3]
- 4.2.3 Animals must receive a health evaluation by a licensed veterinarian at least once per year and have current vaccinations.^[6.3]
- 4.2.4 Animals must be appropriately restrained, on a short leash or in an appropriate carrier.^[6.3]
- 4.2.5 The animal must be under the control of a Pet Escort/AAI Handler/Patient (if Service Animal) at all times while in the facility.^[6.3]
- 4.2.6 Animals shall be free of communicable diseases and excluded from visitation if the following is present:
- Vomiting or diarrhea, urinary or fecal incontinence, episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown or suspected infectious origin, animals currently on treatment with non-topical antimicrobials or immunosuppressant medications, infestation by flea, ticks or other parasites, open wounds, ear infections, skin infections, hot spots, or is demonstrating signs of heat (estrus).^[5.1]
- 4.2.7 Animals' should be clean and well-groomed and nails must be short and free of sharp edges.^[5.1]
- 4.2.8 Animals must not be a current resident of an animal shelter or similar facility.^[6.3]
- 4.2.9 Animals must not have been fed raw foods of animal origin in the last 90 days.^[6.3]
- 4.2.10 Personal pets shall not be left alone with a patient.^[6.3]
- 4.2.11 Restrict all visiting animals from entering the following clinical and non-clinical areas:
- Intensive care units, isolation rooms, neonatal and newborn nurseries, areas of patient treatment including OR and Dialysis areas, immunocompromised patient rooms, medication rooms, Medical Device Reprocessing (MDR), Laboratory, Diagnostic Imaging (DI), Cafeteria, dining area and food prep areas.^[5.1]
- Note:** Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis, with discussion and approval from IP&C.
- 4.2.12 All animals should be prevented from coming into contact with invasive sites, wounds, surgical incisions, and other non-intact skin or medical equipment.

4.3 Pet Escort/AAI Handler Responsibilities in Facilities



- 4.3.1 The Pet Escort & AAI Handler shall obtain permission from the site Unit Manager/designate/ or IP&C before visitation.
- 4.3.2 AAI Handlers shall sign in, where designated upon entering the facility.
- 4.3.3 Before entering a room or elevator with an animal, the Pet Escort/ AAI Handler must obtain verbal permission from the occupants.
- 4.3.4 The Pet Escort/ AAI Handler shall dispose of any animal waste immediately in the following manner:
 - Pick up waste with paper towel and place in plastic bag
 - Tie shut and put in soiled room garbage, not in patient garbage
 - Perform hand hygiene and inform staff
 - Staff shall clean and disinfect the area.

4.4 **Personal Pet Visits**

Visitation by a personal pet is different than AAI activities. Risks from visitation by patient pets may be increased as there is no formal training or temperament test. Personal pets also do not undergo the same degree of health assessment as do animal-assisted therapy pets.

The following must be met before permitting a personal pet visit:

- 4.4.1 All requests regarding personal pet visits entering the health care facility shall be discussed with Unit Manager/designate/or IP&C.
- 4.4.2 The patient's physician shall be consulted if necessary for evaluation of the patient's allergy status and immune system competency.
- 4.4.3 Personal pets are not allowed to visit patients, visitors or staff other than the patient they have been approved to visit. [\[6.3\]](#)
- 4.4.4 For specialty care areas such as oncology or critical care, visitation for exceptional circumstances may be done on a case by case basis in discussion with site IP&C.

4.5 **Service Animals**

Service Animals differ in their roles from other animals. A Service Animal is an animal trained for a person with a disability for reasons related to his or her disability. While most Service Animals are dogs, personal pet/comfort animals and therapy animals are not Service Animals.



4.5.1 Staff shall accommodate a Service Animal when the animal is identified through the following:

- Wearing Service Animal harness or jacket
- The Handler indicates the animal is a Service Animal or
- The Handler voluntarily offers certification

A Handler shall not be asked to present identification verifying certification of a Service Animal but may be asked to indicate what work or tasks the Service Animal will perform.

Refer to [Access for Persons with Service Animals. WRHA Policy Number 10.60.010](#) for additional information.^[5.1]

4.6 Hand Hygiene Requirements

4.6.1 All patients, visitors, and health care workers must perform hand hygiene before and after animal contact.

4.6.2 All Handlers should advise anyone who has contact with the animal to perform hand hygiene before and after animal contact.

4.6.3 Provide all AAI Pet Handlers and Pet Escorts with the following hand hygiene resources:

- [Hand Hygiene Resources](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Education for Health Care Staff](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Procedures - Hand Rub](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Procedures - Hand Wash](#)

4.7 Injuries caused by animals

4.7.1 Report all injuries caused by an animal to the unit manager/designate, the animal owner and the AVL.

4.7.2 Individuals injured by an animal shall be evaluated and treated promptly by medical personnel, as appropriate for the type of injury.

4.7.3 Animal bites should be reported immediately to the City of Winnipeg Animal Services Agency by phoning 311 and should be documented in the patient chart if it involves the patient.^[6.1]

4.7.4 Animals having caused intentional or serious injury shall be permanently banned from the facility.

5.0 **RESOURCES:**

- 5.1 [Access for Persons with Service Animals. WRHA Policy Number 10.60.010.](#) (2015, May). Accessed October 24, 2018.
- 5.2 Acute Care IP&C Manual [Definitions.](#) (2017, July). Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Accessed October 24, 2018.

6.0 **REFERENCES:**

- 6.1 [Animal Bites.](#) (2015, December). City of Winnipeg Animal Services Agency. Accessed October 24, 2018.
- 6.2 [Animals in Healthcare Facilities.](#) (2015). The Society of Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA). Accessed October 24, 2018.
- 6.3 Darling, K. Animals Visiting Healthcare Facilities. APIC Text of Infection Control & Epidemiology. Washington, DC: Association for Professional in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. 4th edition 2014 pp 122-1 – 122-8.
- 6.4 [Zoonotic Diseases.](#) (2018, April). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Accessed October 24, 2018.

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APPENDIX A

Pet Escort Information Sheet for Hospitals

This sheet provides information for persons who wish to bring a patient's personal pet to visit in a hospital. This information will help to ensure a safe and positive experience for the patient, the pet and others. Persons who bring a pet into a hospital must know and follow the facility rules and must be responsible for the pet at all times.

Before a pet may be brought into a hospital, permission must be obtained from the person in charge of the unit where the visit will take place.

- Visitation should be restricted to dogs. Not all animals are appropriate to bring into a hospital due unpredictable temperaments and risk to carry a disease.
- Some patients, because of their medical condition or the hospital unit which they are on, should not have a pet visit.

A pet that is allowed to visit must be:

- Clean and well groomed (i.e., trimmed and filed nails, no ticks or fleas, and have no bad odors) and have good oral hygiene
- Healthy when visiting (i.e., no diarrhea, vomiting, respiratory problems, open sores, injured limbs and not in heat)
- Up-to-date with all vaccinations, including rabies
- Well behaved, friendly, obedient, predictable and quiet

Pets are not allowed to enter:

Dining Rooms/Cafeterias/ Food preparation areas	Emergency Departments	Isolation Rooms
Medication preparation areas/ Clean supply rooms	Nurseries, Postpartum and Labor & Delivery areas	Operating Rooms
Specialized patient care units (Burn, Dialysis, Intensive Care, Oncology)	Medical Device Reprocessing (MDR)	Laboratory
Diagnostic Imaging (DI)	Any other spaces designated as off limits by the hospital	

Instructions regarding pets in the hospital:

The Pet Escort:

- Must clean their hands when entering the hospital, patient's room, leaving the patient's room, and when leaving the hospital
- Before entering a room or elevator with an animal, the Pet Escort/ AAI Handler must obtain verbal permission from the occupants
- If anyone is allergic to or afraid of your pet, you must accommodate them by removing the animal from the room. If this is expressed while boarding an elevator you and the pet must exit the elevator and take the next available one

The Pet:

- Must be on a clean leash and under control at all times during the visit, or transported in an appropriate clean carrier
- The pet may only visit the patients(s) that it has been approved to visit and interaction with staff and other patients should be discouraged
- Visiting pets shall be discouraged from licking and/or shaking paws

The Patient visited by the pet:

- Must clean their hands before and after handling the pet
- Don't allow patients/residents to give visiting pets treats so as to minimize the potential for bite injuries

If the pet has an elimination accident:

- Pick up waste with paper towel and place in plastic bag, tie shut and put in the garbage in the soiled supply room (staff can provide location) not in patient garbage
- Clean your hands
- Notify a healthcare worker to disinfect area

If a patient, visitor or staff is bitten or scratched or injured in any other way by the animal:

- It must be reported to the person in charge of the unit where the accident occurred
- The injury should be evaluated and treated promptly

Note: The pet escort must abide by the rules of the facility and can be asked to remove the pet from the facility if the rules are not followed or the pet displays other undesirable behaviors.