

# ANIMAL HANDLING POLICY

Company Operations

ADO Services CIC

Incorporating ADO River Valley

Version 3.3 ©2025

Next Review September 2026

2025-2026

Last Ratification By Management Committee	September 2024
Next Review By Management Committee	December 2025

## 1 Animal Handling Policy Overview

It is the policy of ADO River Valley School (ADO RV School) to promote and ensure that we provide a safe environment, socialised animals and equines and the correct advice and guidance to students and staff when handling, working or touching our collection of invertebrates, reptiles, mammals, horses and ponies.

All of the core staff team are required to attend our own in-house animal or equine handling training within the first 3 months of them being in post with us. Further training on the larger mammals, horses and ponies is also provided to those staff who will be involved in delivering these sessions or events, using our outsourced service providers. Many of the staff team have obtained further animal qualifications including Diplomas in Animal Care and Management, Animal Behaviour, and Animal Assisted Therapy and Equine certifications.

This policy is important as we provide unique educational and therapeutic holistic programmes and this is covered extensively in our main **General Terms and Conditions**.

## 2. Interaction

Students will have the opportunity to observe, care for and handle specific animals and equines which belong to our managed service partners during their education that we may provide. There are over twenty various species of animals, including reptiles, invertebrates, amphibians, small common mammals, farm animals, horses and ponies.

Within each animal science where there is likely to be interaction with our animals, the staff member leading will ensure that the correct advice and guidance is given throughout, supporting and communicating to them constantly.

Only animals suitable will be worked for each age group, accordingly. Similarly the students' confidence of being in the company of animals and equines will be closely monitored and they will be fully supported at all times.

Animals utilised for handling are well socialised with groups of students to ensure that the animals are used to handling and are not under undue stress, as this may cause harm to themselves or the holder.

Some of our species are 'Look No Touch' animals, which means that students can help to care for them with support, however they are not able to handle them. This is due to the vulnerability of certain species and those not suited to handling.

It is the responsibility of staff to always ensure the correct handling, as they have trained for, are provided for of all ages and abilities.

### 3. Incidents and Escalations

We are fully insured for animal handling with some restrictions in place for certain animals and certain age groups. Any incidents or accidents that are involving an animal would be recorded on our **Incident Form** in our main single central record software. All incidents are accurately notified to the parent-carer as soon as possible and a call may be made to the parent-carer following any incident dependent on the level of seriousness of that incident. If the incident was minor and the student is well, the parent-carer will be advised at pickup time or advised by our senior staff via email or phone call accordingly.

We are committed to ensuring the Health, Safety and Welfare of our employees, students, animals and parents-carers-visitors to their sites and will continually work to ensure public health regulations are met across the board including animal handling activities. By the nature of working with some animals incidents and accidents will happen from time to time, but if sound advice and guidance is followed the risk is minimal.

In the case of a student displaying a failure to consistently comply with handling instructions, inappropriate behaviour to the animal or general bad behaviour, after two verbal warnings with the choice to change their approach to the handling, the situation will be escalated to an incident. The incident will be fully recorded for the parent-carer. The animal will be removed for its own safety and that of the holder. The incident will be automatically escalated to the Head or Deputy-Head for them to decide whether handling can then continue or is suitable in future.

In the event of the animal reacting or biting as a result of inappropriate handling, the animal will be immediately removed and the incident will be recorded and escalated. If the animal has been provoked, despite the standard warning sequence and the holder has an injury as a result, the incident will be fully recorded, with evidential images if necessary. In this case, ADO RV School will not be liable for the injury and will consider the future of further sessions based upon the recorded data. We reserve the right to not continue sessions if incidents are deemed a risk to either staff, students or the animals themselves.

The number of incidents and escalation will follow the **Behaviour Learning Policy** guidelines including the levels of consequence.

### 4. Public Health

All animals can carry zoonotic diseases.

In line with Public Health regulations, animal waste is treated by staff wearing disposable gloves. Most herbivore waste is put into a specific composting bin at Poets Corner. Carnivore or omnivore waste is immediately tied up and moved into the relevant waste bin. If an animal defecates whilst handling, students are advised to not approach or touch that specific area until that zone has been cleaned with an acceptable product.

Our anti-bacterial gel and wipes conform to EN1276, prEN120254 and EN1500 standards and reduce any risk of zoonotic diseases and infections. Our animals and equines are up to date on all recommended treatments and immunisations. They are regularly groomed (including claws trimmed) and checked for signs of infection.

Animal bedding is to be laundered or replaced regularly. Animals are not placed near food preparation, storage or eating areas.

Students are also taught not to share food with any animal, and are educated on interaction, how to feed an animal with that animal's specific food where relevant.

Students are advised by staff to wash their hands at pertinent points during their sessions and we offer both hot and cold water hand washing stations and EN1500 gels or wipes.

It is the duty of each staff team member to take reasonable care of their own and other people's health, safety and welfare and to report any situation to their Line Manager which may pose a serious or imminent threat to the well-being of themselves or of any other person or animal.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to ensure that ADO RV Health and Safety Regulations are adhered to and that the health and safety of the students and other members of staff or animal are not compromised in any way.

## 5. Cross Contamination

On occasions students and staff may have symptoms of illness that may cross contaminate the animals or equine. Similarly, they may have recently been in contact with other animals or equines in different locations where there has been an outbreak of zoonotic diseases.

Cross contamination can have very serious consequences for the animals and will often result in veterinary care or a course of medication.

Staff must risk assess any occurrences where either themselves or students have symptoms or signs of an illness that may cause reverse zoonoses, including but not limited to:

- Influenza, COVID-19 or heavy colds (Norovirus).
- Ringworm
- Swine Flu
- Tuberculosis
- Fungal, viral or parasitic infections.

Any of these illnesses should be reported by the parent-carer or student immediately.

There are also a number of animal and equine diseases that can be spread by touch if staff or students have visited a stables, farm or animal petting farm for example.

These include, but are not limited to;

- Strangles (Equines)
- Swine or bird flu
- Parasitic infections
- Conjunctivitis (Equines)

In any of these cases knowing that illness or disease is a risk, it must always reported for the appropriate health and safety action.

## 6. Review

All ADO RV policies and procedures follow ITIL guidelines to ensure version control, change control and release management of any documents. As a matter of policy, documents can be updated at any time to reflect changes to ADO RV procedures, legal changes, OFSTED directives or any other reason to ensure the policies and procedures are accurate and correct. This involves consultation with stakeholders, our management committee and approval from the directors. All policies and procedures are reviewed at the very least on an annual basis. Regular communication through newsletters, social media, text systems and through our website within the ADO RV Library is part of our Release Management.

## 7. Contact

This document was produced by the ADO RV Operations Consultancy Team (Kylanja Ltd). This version supersedes any previous versions and will be reviewed annually.

All correspondence with regard to this policy, or any other operational policy and procedure should be directed to the ADO RV Business Manager by e-mailing [education@adorivervalley.co.uk](mailto:education@adorivervalley.co.uk) or calling 0208 855 6778, requesting to speak to the Business Manager or in writing to ADO River Valley School, Main Office, 126 Upper Wickham Lane, Welling, Kent, DA16 3DP.