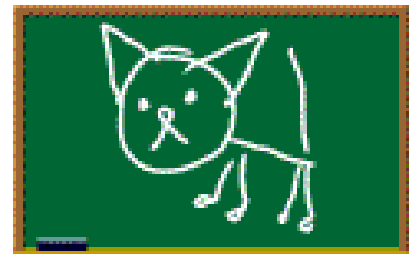


INVITING ANIMALS ON CAMPUS



Feral cats have called some school campuses “home” for several reasons:

- In the recent past, some school staff have taken it upon themselves to feed stray cats on campus.
- People know that there are kind-hearted souls on campus and have “dumped” cats on or near campuses.
- Schools have activities that invite cats, rats, raccoons, skunks and foxes to campus by not securing their food waste.
- Schools have had a pet cat to keep vermin numbers down. The cats have been spayed or neutered, fed, kept current on their shots and taken to the vet when needed.



Times have changed:

Cats cannot be fed on campus anymore because:

- Feces on campus is a health hazard.
- Cats attract larger predators, in one case mountain lions (happy, screaming kindergarteners at recess and mountain lions do not make a good combination).
- Their food also attracts foxes, raccoons and skunks, all species are known to have carried rabies in this county.

One district cared for a cat, and in turn, the cat kept the vermin population down. Public Health directed the district to find another home for the cat, due to a rabid fox on campus, a student and staff member had to receive the subsequent vaccination series. Public Health felt that the cat’s food attracted the fox onto the campus.

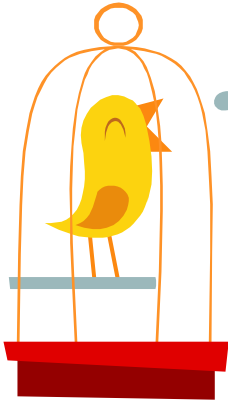
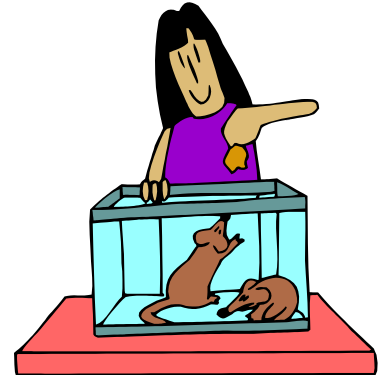
In the spring of 2011, Humboldt County had a first; a human tested positive for rabies.

Even though Public Health does not know how, where or when the exposure occurred, if schools have animals on campus (cats, foxes, skunks and raccoons), they need to change the environment so that those animals no longer feel invited on campus.



HOUSING ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

Classroom pets may be a child's only constant interaction with a domestic pet. Caring for the classroom pet reinforces responsibility and compassion. Science lessons can also be incorporated with the pet.



The following has to be followed with classroom pets:

- Feces have to be contained (How are tiny birds able to flick the contents of the bottom of their cage the length of the classroom?).
- The food must be stored so that it does not attract uninvited classroom “pets” (mice, rats, cockroaches).

Ed. Code 51540 states “ Live animals on the premises of a public elementary or high school shall be housed and cared for in a humane and safe manner.”

When contemplating whether to add a pet to your classroom, ponder how the animal will be cared for over the weekends and during vacation breaks.

Keep in mind

- During the weekends and vacations the heating/cooling units are programmed differently than when the school is occupied
- It is not the responsibility of the custodians and maintenance crew to care for the classroom animals over weekends and vacation breaks.
- All classroom pets are to be removed from campus during summer break.

Other points to consider:

- Newer and modernized schools are energy efficient, that means that they more air-tight. Bringing in an animal also brings in smells that may affect the indoor air quality of the classroom if the cage cleaning is not kept up.
- Some students may be allergic to the classroom pet.



