Using animals in Stage 4 and 5

Science

### Can I use animals in my teaching?

There is NSW and Commonwealth legislation that governs the use of **vertebrate** animals for teaching and research purposes. The legislation states that animals must only be used when the use is justified.

This justification considers:

* NESA syllabus requirements
* School sector priorities
* Community needs
* Student learning needs.

In this context, the use of animals in schools must assist the following:

* Developing students’ skills in relation to responsible animal care and management.
* Developing students’ skills in observing animals to enhance their understanding of the behavioural characteristics of species.
* Developing students’ skills in investigation where the purpose is to improve methods of animal management or to improve production.
* Assisting students to develop empathy with, and respect for, animals.

More information is available at [Animals in schools>Educational justification](http://nswschoolanimals.com/compliance/educational-justification/).

**Note**: This advice only applies to vertebrate animals. There is currently no legislation governing the use of invertebrates for educational purposes.

### What responsibilities do I have if I decide to use animals in my teaching?

The legislation prescribes particular roles and responsibilities of school staff whenever animals are used. This advice is available at [Animals in schools>Responsibilities](http://nswschoolanimals.com/compliance/responsibilities/).

School staff who use animals for educational purposes are required to annually sign the Animal Research Authority issued at the beginning of term 2 each year. Details about this authorisation can be found at [Animals in schools>Animal Research Authority](http://nswschoolanimals.com/compliance/animal-research-authority/). School staff who sign this blanket Authority are authorised to use animals for the purposes of teaching and research, provided that the activities are in accordance with the advice on the [Animals in schools](http://nswschoolanimals.com/) website.

Activities that have the potential to cause greater stress and/or pain for the animal, and hence require specialised skills and experience, are not covered by this blanket Animal Research Authority and additional approval must be sought. For example if a teacher wishes to allow students to carry out castration and tail docking of lambs, a category 4 activity, they must seek approval from the Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee (SACEC). Similarly if a teacher wishes to demonstrate nose ringing of cattle, a category 5 activity, they must also seek approval from the SACEC.

[Animals in schools>Approved activities](http://nswschoolanimals.com/compliance/approved-activities/) provides a list of the activities and their categorisation as well as the list of prohibited activities. If approval is required to carry out an activity, application forms can be found at [Animals in schools>Application forms.](http://nswschoolanimals.com/application-forms/)

### Can I carry out a dissection with my students?

Dissections may be carried out as a teaching activity in any one of the following ways:

* Using whole dead animals or animal parts that have been purchased from a butcher, supermarket, fish market or abattoir.
* An opportunistic dissection, where an animal kept on the school site dies due to age, illness or injury or is humanely euthanased.
* Using prepared specimens that have been purchased from biological suppliers.

**Note**: No live animals can be acquired or bred for the sole purpose of dissection.

### Can I keep a native animal in my classroom?

Schools are permitted to keep native animals if the following conditions are met.

A teacher is responsible for the animals and this teacher:

* holds a scientific licence and
* has or gains an appropriate depth of understanding of the physical and behavioural needs of the species kept and
* obtains the animals from licensed breeders or keepers.

The species of native animals considered to be most suited to keeping in schools are:

* Inland bearded dragons
* Eastern snaked necked turtles
* Blue tongued lizards
* Children’s pythons
* Green tree frogs.

Details about how to obtain a scientific licence can be found at [Animals in schools>Australian native animals>Licensing](http://nswschoolanimals.com/australian-native-animals/natives-licensing/)

For further information, contact Sally Bannerman, Animal Welfare Coordinator

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