

At The Ranch Weymouth and The Ranch on The Wild Side we believe that children and young people can learn a lot from having contact with animals, however the guidelines below will be followed to ensure that children interact with all animals safely.

Children will also learn what animals eat, about animal habitats and how to keep living things safe and healthy.

**How will children be kept safe around pets in the setting?**

Children will be encouraged to treat animals with respect, learn how to behave around them and how to handle them carefully, with respect their boundary space

* Our staff are trained to a high skill set with dedicated experts for each of our species, handling will always be closely supervised and guidelines set in place with an aim to help minimise and avoid any biting/ scratching. Please be aware that risk cannot be completely removed.
* Children will wash their hands after any contact with animals and learn about the reasoning behind this.
* Animal medication will be stored out of reach of children.
* Hygiene will be a priority. Any animal husbandry equipment that could cause a risk of injury or hygiene risk will either be out of reach of children or children will be taught not to touch this equipment unless closely supervised
* All areas of The Ranch and The Ranch on The Wild Side setting, including outdoor areas, will be risk assessed both before opening hours and continually during sessions to ensure high levels of risk awareness and safety.
* If your child has a known allergy to any animals, please notify The Ranch Weymouth via the Medical Information & Emergency Contact form, or by speaking to key staff straight away, as it may not be possible for them to attend the setting without coming into contact with the animal and/or its hair/fur, etc.

**How will children be kept safe if they encounter an animal that they may not have experienced before at the setting?**

* Children will be taught to respect all living creatures, no matter how big or small.
* We will observe and care for nature in outdoor spaces, being careful not to hurt any creatures or disturb their habitats.
* We will always wash our hands after handling or having contact with any animal.
* Children will be taught not to feed any animals without first checking with an adult if it is allowed/safe. Hand Feeding of the horses will not be permitted unless under adult supervision.

**How will children be kept safe around dogs/assistance/therapy dogs that they may meet at the setting?**

Children will be taught that not all animals are able to interact when we may want to interact with them. They will learn to always check with an assistance animal’s handler before attempting to stroke or handle them**.**

**‘It is important to remember that a happy dog does not necessarily mean a safe dog.’ PDSA website**

If an unfamiliar animal approaches, the children will be taught to:

* stay calm and quiet;
* stand still - not to run away or turn their backs;
* make a loose fist, kept close to their bodies;

If a child is nervous around dogs and a dog were to approach the children, staff would ask another team member to recall it. We would then follow the steps above and avoid making eye contact with the dog.

If your child has a fear of any animal or has had a traumatic experience in the past, please let us know in advance, so we can support them.

The Ranch Weymouth believes in positive confidence building and helping young people to dispel myths and fear around animals.