Model Animal Protocols for Long-Term Care Facilities

This protocol is designed to target key topics related to animals in a long-term care facility (LTCF) likely to affect resident and animal health. Using this protocol as a guide, users are encouraged to adapt it to their facility while continuing to meet the requirements enforced by the Ohio Revised Code 3701-17-09. Please refer to the supporting document for an extension of the information and guidelines and state requirements to help inform your decision in developing an animal protocol.

Name of facility: ________________________________
Date last updated: ______________________________

Name of facility proudly supports the utilization of animal-related activities (visiting animals and live-in animals) for the enrichment and entertainment of our residents. There is strong evidence that animals can provide many health benefits and can also create a home-like environment for our residents to enjoy. The following protocols ensure that our residents can benefit from visiting or live-in animals while preventing the risk of injuries and disease to these animals and our residents.

I. Visiting Animals and Their Handlers. Visiting animals are those brought into the facility to participate in an animal-related activity for all residents at the facility. This includes but is not limited to therapy animals, “petting zoos” animals, and animals used in educational programs.

a. The animal must be pre-approved by (staff position and/or internal committee member) before the first visit. Pre-approval includes ensuring the animal meets all requirements of this protocol including but not limited to species, age, health and temperament.
   i. Approved animals will be entered into a log; (staff position and/or internal committee member) is responsible for overseeing and updating this log. This log will be reviewed yearly as annual temperament and health evaluations are completed.

b. The handler is required to provide proof (e.g. health certificate or signed letter from a veterinarian) that within the last year the animal (as indicated for the species):
   i. Has received a physical examination by a veterinarian including screening for internal and external parasites.
   ii. Is up-to-date on vaccinations for common infectious agents including rabies.
   iii. Is on appropriate flea and tick prevention program for the area the animal resides to prevent external parasites.
   iv. Is on an appropriate internal worming prevention program involving: fecal examinations that are negative for internal parasites, prophylactic medications or a combination.
c. As appropriate, the animal must be well groomed, including bathed, brushed and nails trimmed within the last ____ (length of time) _____.

d. The animal must be free of any known or suspected infectious illness, wound or skin infection.

e. While visiting, the animal will remain on a leash (no longer than 6 feet) or inside of a cage.

f. The animal must be fed a fully cooked diet (no raw meats or eggs)

g. The animal must be well trained, calm and obedient
   i. Annual temperament testing is required.
   ii. Certified animals are encouraged.

h. _____ (staff position or person) is/are responsible for cleaning any mess (feces, urine, fur) the animal makes during the visit.

i. Only the following species and/or ages are permitted to visit the facility, other species or ages may be considered but will require prior authorization from _____ (staff position and/or internal committee member).
   i.
   ii.
   iii.
   iv.
   v.
   vi.

j. If the animal has been on antibiotics in the last ____ (length of time) ____ it is not permitted in the facility.

k. If the animal has vomited or had diarrhea in the last ____ (length of time) ____ it is not permitted in the facility.

l. The animal is not permitted in the following restricted areas:
   i.
   ii.
   iii.

m. The handler must clearly state and repeat the rules regarding animal contact to residents during animal interactions.

n. All animal visits will be kept to less than ____ (length of visit) ____ to ensure the animal does not become irritated or fatigued.

o. All or subsets of animal visitation may be suspended from the facility if the residents’ or animal’s health is at risk (e.g. during a disease outbreak)

p. In addition to the log mentioned in section (a), _____ (staff position) will verify that the animal is in good health at the beginning of each visit by doing a brief inspection and asking a few questions related to:
   i. Recent history of antibiotic use in the animal
   ii. Health status (i.e. diarrhea, vomiting)

II. Personal Pets visiting a Resident. These visiting animals are owned by a resident or a family member of the resident. During their visits the animal’s purpose is to visit the designated resident only, this is not a facility planned activity.
a. The animal must be approved by \text{(staff position and/or internal committee member)} before the animal enters the facility, which includes the following:
   i. A certificate must be provided with evidence that the animal is up to date on rabies vaccination (cats, dogs, ferrets).
   ii. The animal must undergo a brief temperament test and inspection by \text{(staff position)} to ensure animal appears healthy.

b. The animal must not interact with anyone in the facility (including staff members) except for the resident it intends to visit.

c. While visiting, the animal will remain on a leash (no longer than 6 feet) or inside of a cage.

d. The resident is encouraged to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after the visit.

e. The \text{(staff position or person)} is responsible for cleaning up after the animal.

f. Only the following species and/or ages are permitted to visit the facility, other species or ages may be considered but will require prior authorization from \text{(staff position and/or internal committee member)}.
   i. 
   ii. 
   iii. 
   iv. 

III. \text{Live-In and Resident Owned Animals.} These animals are owned by a resident or by the long-term care facility; these animals will visit for the entire day or live at the facility fulltime.

a. The animal must be pre-approved by \text{(staff position and/or internal committee member)} before the first visit. Pre-approval includes ensuring the animal meets all requirements of this protocol including but not limited to species, age, health and temperament.

b. The owner is required to provide proof (e.g. health certificate or signed letter from a veterinarian) that the animal (as indicated for the species):
   i. Has received an annual physical examination by a veterinarian including screening for internal and external parasites.
   ii. Is up-to-date on vaccinations for common infectious agents including rabies.
   iii. Is using an appropriate flea and tick prevention program for the area the animal resides to prevent external parasites.
   iv. Is on an appropriate internal worming prevention program involving: fecal examinations that are negative for internal parasites, prophylactic medications or a combination.

c. In the event that the animal does not have a long-term medical history or came from an animal group setting (e.g. animal shelter or pet store) the animal must
go through a quarantine period. The animal must spend at least three weeks in a
designated home away from the facility after which a veterinarian evaluates
them before entering the LTCF.
d. The animal must be routinely groomed, including bathed, brushed and nails
trimmed.
e. The animal must be free of any know or suspected infectious illness, wound or
skin infection.
f. Any illness (including vomiting and diarrhea) or skin infection must be reported
to ______ (staff position) ______ immediately and followed by immediate removal of
the animal from the facility or (isolation to an area where the animal will not
have contact with residents) and treatment or consultation with a veterinarian.
Proof (letter or receipt from the veterinarian) of this veterinary visit must be
presented to ______ (staff position) ______ and kept on file in the log mention in section (1a).
  i. In the event of illness, for every animal in the facility there must be an
identified and approved secondary housing option outside of the facility.
g. Cats and dogs and ferrets must be spayed or neutered.
h. Animals must be at a mature age (e.g. cats must be above the age of six months
and dogs must be above the age of one year).
i. Live in cats and dogs must be under direct supervision of a staff or resident.
j. If the animal shows signs of aggression to residents or other animals in the
facility, or poses a threat to the safety of the residents that animal will be
removed from the facility.
k. It must be fed a fully cooked diet, which includes treats (e.g. no raw meats,
  eggs)
l. Only the following species and/or ages are permitted to visit the facility, other
species or ages may be considered but will require prior authorization from
________ (staff position and/or internal committee member).
  i.
  ii.
  iii.
  iv.
  v.
  vi.
m. The animal is not permitted in restricted areas which includes:
  i.
  ii.
  iii.

n. ______ (staff position) ______ is/ are responsible for overseeing the
resident owned live-in animals to ensure the residents are following the
protocols, which includes:
  i. Visual inspections of live-in animals to ensure they look healthy and are
     behaving appropriately.
  ii. Reviewing health records of the animals (annual physical examinations,
       vaccinations and internal and external parasite screen and prevention),
iii. Ensuring the animal feces is removed immediately (dogs), at least daily (cats) or as indicated for the species and housing.

iv. (List any duties associated with best animal practices for live-in animals)

v. 

vi. 

o. Facility Owned Live-In Animals Only:

i. ______________ (staff position) is/are responsible for the care of the facility-owned live-in animals. This includes (as indicated for the species):
   1. Taking the animal to its annual veterinary examination, which includes vaccinations and the screening of internal and external parasites.
   2. Administering flea and tick prevention.
   4. Feeding commercially prepared diets.
   5. Cleaning up fecal matter and cleaning and disinfecting litter boxes, cages and aquariums as needed.
   6. Controlling where the animal goes throughout the facility, ensuring the animal does not enter areas that are prohibited.
   7. (Include any additional duties related to animal care of facility owned animals)

p. Any concerns about live-in animals should be addressed to _____ (staff position and/or internal committee member).

IV. Residents Participating in Animal Activities: This is to include all residents that participate in the animal-related activities within the facility.

   a. Residents especially individuals with immunocompromising health conditions should be pre-approved to participate in any animal activities from _____ (staff position and/or internal committee member).

   b. Visiting animals are not permitted to visit certain residents, such as those with infectious diseases (e.g. MRSA) or residents with open wounds and sores.

   c. When participating in animal activities residents should respect additional rules the animal handler has provided. These rules could include:
      i. Animal petting/touching
      ii. Animal holding
      iii. Volume of voices

   d. When possible, residents are encouraged to not allow the animals to lick them; likewise, residents will be instructed to refrain from kissing the animals.

   e. Residents are highly encouraged to wash hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after interacting with the animals.

   f. If residents do not follow these protocols consequences could include:
      i. (list consequences associated with not complying with protocols)
V. **Staff and Internal Committee/Facility.** The internal committee is comprised of interdisciplinary professionals, inside and outside of the facility that will oversee the creation revisions and enforcement of the protocols.

a. In the event that a resident or staff is scratched, bitten or becomes ill as a result of an animal then the following protocols should be followed:
   i. *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* will determine what level of treatment is required and if a doctor needs to be contacted for additional medical assistance.
   ii. *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* is/are responsible for reporting the event to the institution's reporting system in accordance to the facility's policy.
   iii. *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* is/ are responsible for reporting a bite to the local health department within 24 hours, which is required by law.

b. In the event that an animal becomes ill or injured then *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* is/are responsible for immediately isolating the animal from the residents and other animals and also ensuring the animal is moved to the secondary housing option. This person ensures that the animal receives veterinary care as soon as possible and will adjust the protocols as needed to prevent a repeated incident from occurring.

c. *(staff position)* will discourage resident contact with stray and wild animals around the facility.

d. *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* is/are responsible for reviewing the protocols yearly or more frequently as needed.

e. *(staff position and/or internal committee member)* is/ are responsible for ensuring that all animals' welfare is considered during animal activities or while living within the facility.

VI. **Environmental Infection Control:**
   a. The facility only allows exotic, zoo and “farm” animals to visit outside of the facility.
   b. The animal will not be permitted in the following areas:
      i. *(list areas the animals are not permitted to go)*
      ii.
      iii.
   c. *(staff position)* is/are responsible for ensuring hand sanitizer dispensers are readily available at the site of all animal interactions.
   d. *(staff position)* is/are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting all areas that visiting animals stayed. Clean up will include cleaning of the area to remove all debris followed by the facility-approved disinfectant.
   e. All staff is responsible for practicing proper hand hygiene before, during and after animal contact.
VII. Education Program:
   a. An education program will be developed and maintained by [staff position and/or internal committee member].
   b. All staff must attend an education program to provide necessary knowledge in order to promote a safe animal program within the facility. This program will include educational material about:
      i. Safe animal-human interactions.
      ii. How to properly clean and disinfect an area that an animal had occupied.
      iii. How to recognize an unhealthy animal.
      iv. Basic animal care including:
         1. Reading animal health certificates
         2. Administering flea/tick medicine
         3. (List other animal care lessons that will be provided)
   c. All visitors/animal handlers must attend a brief orientation that will provide information and requirements that must be met to participate in animal interactions, which will include:
      i. Animal contact and interactions to keep the residents safe from injuries and infectious pathogens.
      ii. Health and behavioral requirements the animal needs to meet before it is approved to visit.
         1. Requirements stated in Section I
      iii. Requirements the handler must meet:
         1. Must adhere to the existing volunteer manual
   d. All residents must go through a brief orientation to provide them with skills and knowledge to provide a safe animal experience, this will include:
      i. How to properly interact with visiting animals.
      ii. How to practice proper hand hygiene before and after interacting with the animals
      iii. (List other animal care lessons that will be provided)
Supporting Resources of Animal Protocol Model:

Ohio Revised Code 3701-17-09:
“Each nursing home that allows animals or pets to reside in the nursing home shall establish, in consultation with the medical director and a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine under Chapter 4741 of the Revised Code, and implement a written protocol regarding animals and pets that protects the health and safety and rights of residents. At minimum the written protocol shall include:

1. An annual physical examination, including an examination for internal an external parasites;
2. Vaccination for common infectious agents, including rabies;
3. Any other preventive care necessary to protect the health, safety and rights of residents;
4. Procedure to follow if an animal:
   a. Bites a person; or
   b. Becomes ill or injured
5. The name of the designated member or members of the staff responsible for the care of the animal and for maintaining the protocol, including medical records for the animal; and
6. An evaluation of the medical needs of residents”

Section I:

Subsection B, iii: Bites from fleas and ticks can transmit pathogens to people. For this reason, flea and tick treatment/prevention is strongly encouraged. For example, bartonellosis or “cat scratch disease” results when an infected flea bites a human. It is important to require flea and tick prevention to reduce the potential transmission of diseases like bartonellosis.1,2,3

Subsection C: It is beneficial to bathe animals regularly because this will remove saliva, dander and extra hair from the animal, thus reducing the sources of allergens as well as any infectious agents that have contaminated the hair of the animal. Hair contamination can occur in the home or healthcare environment-animals that frequent multiple facilities can potentially move infectious agents between facilities in this manner.

Subsection F: Raw meat and egg pet diets frequently contain infectious pathogens such as Salmonella. Requiring animals to be fed commercially prepared diets (or those treated by irradiation or high pressure pasteurization) will reduce the chance of the transmission of these pathogens. Diets include treats that the animal is given; raw treats like pig ears and rawhides are also frequently contaminated with pathogens. These bacteria can cause severe illness and possibly death in people, yet animals often
carry these pathogens in the gastrointestinal tract without showing signs of illness. Humans can acquire these diseases through contact with feces from animals that are fed a raw diet. Additionally, the preparation or feeding of raw foods in long-term care facilities can contaminate the feeding area thereby posing a risk for the residents. Restricting animals that are fed a raw egg or raw meat diet is an easy way to reduce the transmission of these pathogens3

**Subsection I:** There are some animal species that are not suitable for at-risk human populations (e.g. elderly or immunocompromised) because they have a natural tendency to carry diseases and some of these can be transmitted to humans. It is important to consider species that are domesticated, have predictable temperaments, animals that are house trained, those that live in households, those that can be temperament tested and those that can undergo a thorough health assessment. It is encouraged to use cats, dogs, rabbits, fish and birds because they meet all or most of these suggestions. Other species like reptiles and amphibians (e.g. turtles and frogs) naturally carry the bacterium *Salmonella*. When choosing animals it is important to consider if the risks outweigh the benefits to the residents. See also section 1; subsection A.4,3

It is encouraged to use adult animals because sexually mature animals are less likely to cause injuries and less likely to carry diseases that can be transmitted to the residents. For example, bartonellosis, is less likely to infect older cats, but many young cats have the disease and can pass along to biting fleas, which can then bite humans and cause an infection. It is recommended to use cats above the age of six months and dogs above the age of one year3

**Subsection J:** Animals currently or recently treated with antibiotics are more likely to carry antibiotic resistant bacteria than are other animals. These antibiotic resistant bacteria can then be shed by the animal and picked up by residents during animal interactions. When a resident harbors resistant bacteria resulting infections can be difficult to manage, which can result in serious health consequences. Also, if an animal was recently on antibiotics it can make the animal more susceptible to picking up bacteria because the antibiotics have temporarily compromised their gastrointestinal bacteria. This can result in the animals picking up bacteria and potentially spreading it to other residents within the facility. Allowing for a period of time to pass (e.g. two to four weeks) after antibiotic use may help to reduce these risks.

**Subsection K:** Following illness, animals often continue to shed infectious pathogens for a period of time after but are no longer showing signs of illness. Allowing animals into a facility immediately after resolution of an illness may increase the risks for residents contracting these infections. Ensuring animals have not had diarrhea or vomiting for at least one week before they are able to interact with the residents is recommended.2
**Subsection L:** There are certain areas of the facility that animals are prohibited from entering. These are areas where food is prepared or residents eat, bathe, wash their hands and brush their teeth and areas where extremely susceptible residents reside (residents that are sick, allergic, have open wounds or are infectious to other people). Other areas that animals are discouraged from entering include: medication and treatment rooms. If animals enter these areas the chances of these residents becoming sick or infecting others can increase. Some of these restricted areas can include dining areas, food preparation areas, bathrooms and rooms of sick patients.³

**Subsection N:** Limited visitation lengths should be considered to keep animals and residents safe. Animals can become fatigued and irritated if they have to work for long periods of time. Fatigue and irritation could possibly result in injuries to the residents (bites and scratches).

**Subsection O:** In the event of a disease outbreak in the LTCF it is important to limit the traffic moving in and out of your facility. Animals and handlers can unintentionally move pathogens from one facility or one room to the next.

**Section II:**

**Subsection A, ii and iii:** This animal should undergo a brief temperament test to ensure that all of the residents and staff in the facility will be safe to move through the facility freely without being injured by the animal. Although the animal will not be directly interacting with the residents the transmission of pathogens can occur indirectly, which is why the animal should undergo a brief inspection to ensure the animal appears healthy.

**Subsection B:** Allowing residents to spend time with their pets can be beneficial to their health. Since this interaction is encouraged between residents and pets it is practical to not put these pets through a strenuous screening process as is done with the visiting animals mentioned in section 1. Since the LTCF is unfamiliar with the health history of these animal they should not interact with any other people in the facility. This allows all residents and staff to remain free from injuries and pathogens, while still allowing the intended resident to benefit from the animal interaction.

**Subsection D:** Washing hands or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers before and after interacting with animals prevents diseases from being transmitted from the animals to the residents. It also prevents residents from transmitting diseases to the animals, which will protect the animal and the residents that will interact with that animal in the future.¹²³
**Subsection F:** See section 1; subsection I. Although the animal will only visit a single resident, other areas in the facility can be inadvertently contaminated. Therefore, higher risk species and ages should be excluded from the personal visits.

**Section III:**

**Subsection B:** See section 1; subsection B

**Subsection C:** A quarantine period is necessary because animals can carry diseases without showing signs of illness. During this period it is possible that animals can transmit these diseases to humans and other animals. Animals that lived in a group setting (e.g. animal shelters and pet stores) have a higher chance of carrying pathogens than animals not in these settings.

**Subsection D:** See section 1; Subsection C

**Subsection F:** When an animal or resident becomes ill or injured the animal should be moved to their secondary housing option. This secondary housing option should be designated before the animal moves into the facility. The owner of the pet is also financially responsible for transporting the animals to the secondary housing option.

**Subsection G:** Spayed and neutered animals are usually more manageable, which can prevent injuries to the residents.

**Subsection H:** See section 1; subsection I

**Subsection K:** See section 1; Subsection F

**Subsection L:** See section 1: subsection I

**Subsection M:** See section 1; subsection L

**Subsection N; iii:** It is important to consider some of the residents are likely to be immunocompromised, which can make them more susceptible to becoming infected with diseases. This is especially true when handling vomit, feces and urine. If residents are responsible for cleaning after the animal it is important that all supplies, including gloves, cleaner and disinfectant is readily available.

**Subsection O; i:** This section is similar to section 1; subsection B, C, F and L. Additionally, It is important to pickup the animal’s feces regularly, whether it is in the yard, litter box, cage or aquarium. Litter boxes should be scooped out once per day. Also, the entire litter box needs to be emptied, cleaned and disinfected with scalding water and bleach (1 part bleach: 32 parts water) at least every several weeks. While
cleaning the litter box the disinfectant needs to be left on the box for at least 10 minutes, or as indicated by the manufacturer, rinsed and left to dry. NEVER clean a litter box in a kitchen or bathroom sink. Like cats, birds need their cages cleaned regularly because bird droppings can cause breathing issues in immunocompromised individuals. Dog’s feces need to be removed from the yard immediately because some pathogens that are present in dog stool can live in the environment for a long time and can infect humans and other animals. The stool should be picked up with a bag or scooper and disposed of in a trashcan. Remember to clean your hands thoroughly after handling animal feces and urine.4

Section IV:

Subsection A and B: Pre-approval can ensure the resident is healthy enough to participate in the animal activities without putting the resident at risk for contracting a disease. It will also ensure that only residents that are capable of interacting properly with the animal can participate. For instance, individuals who are highly immunocompromised will be at a higher risk of becoming infected with pathogens. Such interactions may need to be altered or eliminated completely to ensure the risks are reduced. Individuals with mental disabilities may not be reliable to safely handle some animal species and thus interactions should be carefully considered and approved ahead of time. This will make the animal more comfortable, reducing the chances of injuries.

Subsection D: There are many pathogens that are frequently present in an animal's mouth. When an animal licks a human's face it puts the resident at risk of becoming infected with these pathogens, especially since they are being licked on or close to their mouth. Prohibiting "kisses" will prevent this oral transmission of pathogens than can cause diseases in the resident.3

Subsection E: See section II; subsection D

Section V:

It is beneficial to create an internal committee because it will allow unbiased decisions to be made about the animal protocols and animal activities within the facility. It is advantageous to create a committee that is interdisciplinary which will contribute to informed and well-rounded decisions about animal activities within the LTCF.

Subsection A: If any resident is bitten or scratched the wound should be cleaned and disinfected immediately. If necessary an evaluation by a medical professional should occur promptly thereafter (within a few hours) to determine any additional needs (such
as antimicrobials). The health records of the animal should be reviewed to ensure the animal is up to date on a rabies vaccination. All animal bites must be reported to the local health department where the bite occurred within 24 hours as required by law-Ohio Administrative Code 3701-3-28. After reporting the bite the local health department may require further action to be taken.

Subsection B: Isolating the animal as soon as possible will prevent any further spread of the disease to other animals and people. Isolation will also prevent environmental contamination that could cause indirect transmission of the disease. It is safest to treat a sick animal as if it is infectious until proven otherwise.

Subsection C: Wildlife and stray animals have a higher chance of carrying diseases and causing injury to residents than domestic animals. Residents should be encouraged to avoid contact with these animals. In fact, wild animals should be excluded from the property entirely, as able. This will keep residents and their pets safe from diseases associated with wild and stray animals. You can discourage these populations on the property by securing waste containers and restricting residents and staff from feeding these animals.

Subsection D: The protocol should be updated yearly to coincide with the changing needs of the facility.

Subsection E: Animal welfare is protected by Ohio law- ORC 959.131. It is important to ensure that animals are free from injury, pain or discomfort (e.g. thirst and hunger). This includes animals visiting or living within the facility.

Section VI:

Subsection B: See Section 1; Subsection L

Subsection D: It is important to disinfect areas believed to be highly contaminated and areas that have been contaminated with animal feces, urine and other bodily fluids. This can prevent further contamination of the environment and will reduce the chances of the residents coming into contact with these pathogens.

Section VII:

Subsection A & B: Creating an educational program will provide the staff with a source of information that is consistent with the animal protocols. Having this source of information will create an environment that has well-informed staff. This will ensure the residents are at a reduced risk for injuries and diseases that could be acquired from animals.
Subsection C: Although most of the protocols focus on animal associated risks, the handlers that bring the animals into the facility can be just as hazardous. Handlers could also be a potential source of disease transmission so it is important that they have received all necessary vaccinations, are not sick, and are not currently or have not recently been on antibiotics (similar to section1; subsection j). All volunteer requirements can be found within the facility’s existing volunteer manual. Handlers must be well informed of these protocols, the facility’s animal program and the volunteer manual to ensure the residents’ safety is not at risk.

Subsection D: Although the staff and handlers will oversee the interactions between animals and residents, the residents are also responsible for their own safety and should be required to attend a brief orientation.
Visit the following resources to obtain more supporting information about the following protocols.


