**Pet/Animal Policy (EYFS September 2025)**

**Policy Statement:** At Little Acorns preschool, we recognise the valuable role pets and animals can play in children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. Interactions with animals can enhance empathy, responsibility, and curiosity, as well as provide opportunities for learning about nature and care routines. This policy outlines our approach to ensuring safe, clean, and respectful interactions between children and pets in our setting, in alignment with EYFS 2025 guidelines.

**Types of Pets Allowed:**

* We may introduce children to **age-appropriate pets**, such as:
  + Small mammals (e.g., guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters)
  + Birds
  + Fish/Reptiles (where appropriate)
* **Larger or high-maintenance pets** will not be introduced unless thorough risk assessments confirm they are **safe for children**.

**Health and Vaccinations:**

* All pets/animals will be **in good health**, and their **vaccinations and regular health checks** will be up to date.

**Child-Friendly Pets:**

* We will only introduce pets that:
  + Are **calm, well-socialised, and accustomed** to children
  + Have a **non-aggressive temperament**
  + Do not pose a **significant allergy risk** to children

**Hygiene and Cleanliness:**

* **Proper handwashing routines** will be followed after handling pets or touching pet enclosures. Children will be taught about **safe and hygienic interactions with animals**.

**Allergies and Sensitivities:**

* Parents will be informed **in advance** about the presence of any pets or animals in the setting.
* Parents will be asked to **disclose any known allergies or sensitivities** before their child interacts with animals.

**Supervised Interactions:**

* Children will only interact with pets **under direct supervision** to ensure the **safety of both the child and the animal**.
* Staff will teach children **gentle and respectful handling techniques**.
* Pets will not be handled when they show **signs of stress or distress**.

**Health and Safety measures:**

* Any pet that **exhibits aggressive or unpredictable behaviour** will be removed from the preschool environment.
* First-aid procedures will be in place in case of **accidental scratches, bites, or allergic reactions**.

**Reporting and Communication with Parents:**

* Any **incidents or concerns** will be promptly reported to parents.
* Parents will be **informed about their child’s interactions with pets**, including any **questions or observations from the child** about animals.

**Alignment with EYFS 2025 Changes:**

* **EYFS 2025 places greater emphasis on outdoor learning and hands-on experiences**, including **interactions with animals** as part of **Understanding the World**.
* This policy aligns with **EYFS 2025** by:
  + Encouraging **responsibility, curiosity, and respect for animals**.
  + Providing **safe, supervised pet interactions** that support **social and emotional development**.
  + Teaching children about **hygiene, safety, and kindness toward living creatures**.
* The **EYFS 2025 framework recognises the benefits of real-world learning experiences**, including **caring for animals, learning about nature, and fostering empathy**.

**Signed:** Chairperson  
**Date:** September 2025