

NORTON COUNTY HOSPITAL

IP 1.6	SUBJECT/TITLE: Animals in the Hospital	APPROVED BY: J KEEN, RN, IPO APPROVED BY INFECTION CONTROL DIRECTOR:
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Statement of Purpose: It is the policy and practice of Norton County Hospital to incorporate animals as part of a therapeutic or wellness improvement process for patients. People benefit from human-animal interaction socially, psychologically, and physiologically. A program that allows animal visitation, animal-assisted activities, animal-assisted therapy, and service animals are intended to assist in returning patients to wellness and independence.

Policy Interpretation and Implementation: Pet therapy has the potential to carry risks of infection with it. Individual instances of transmission of illness to humans from animals, or animals to humans, are relatively rare. If this does occur, there is a considerable potential to cause significant morbidity and mortality, particularly with patients who are immunocompromised, allergic or pregnant. Norton County Hospital Infection Prevention department will monitor and follow guidelines that pet therapy must obey to assist in preventing any transmission of illness or injury.

This policy is adapted from APIC text.

1. The animal owner must check in with the infection prevention nurse, or the charge nurse (only in the absence of the infection prevention nurse) prior to the animal visit. At this time, required documents are to be delivered. Upon visiting, the infection prevention nurse, or charge nurse, must inspect the animal for the following:
2. Animal must be a domestic companion animal.
3. The following species may pose a higher risk of causing human injury or infection and must be excluded from visiting:
 - Nonhuman primates
 - Reptiles and amphibians
 - Hamsters, gerbils, mice and rats
 - Prairie dogs, hedgehogs
 - Animals that have not been litter trained or for which measures cannot be taken to prevent exposure of patients to the animal's excrement.
4. Animal must not be a current resident of an animal shelter, pound, or similar facility and must be in a permanent home for at least 6 months.
5. Animal must be at least 1 year old.

6. A record from a veterinarian who has completed health, skills, aptitude, and temperament tests on the animal visiting must be provided to the infection prevention nurse prior to the animal visit.
7. Records of the animal's health must be up-to-date and a copy of the record provided to the infection prevention nurse. This includes current immunizations, including rabies vaccination and other vaccines required by the State of Kansas.
8. An annual physical exam by a licensed veterinarian including, dental and dermatological evaluation must be provided to the infection prevention nurse prior to the animal visiting.
9. Animals must be appropriately restrained or on a short leash.
10. Animals may wear identification badges, bandanas, and vests to help control allergies. Alternatively, a baby or pet wipe will help control dandruff.
11. Animal must never be left alone with a patient.
12. Animals should be restricted from food preparation, service areas, and other high-risk areas identified by the healthcare facility.
13. Animals must not have been fed raw foods of animal origins with the previous 90 days.
14. Animals are required to be bathed within 24 hours before the visit.
15. Animals must have clean ears.
16. Animals must have nails that are short with no rough edges. Animals must be trained not to scratch the patient. Animal may wear protective foot coverings.
17. Animals should be free from communicable diseases and parasites and be on a flea control program.
18. Animals must be free of any skin condition or wounds.
19. Handlers must ensure that animals do not lick or come in contact with a patient's open wound or devices.
20. If the animal is in the patient's bed, a barrier such as a disposable cloth, towel, or sheet is to be placed between the animal's coat and the patient's linens. The barrier is removed and discarded when the animal leaves.
21. The handler must be free from communicable disease and up-to-date on immunizations, including an annual influenza vaccine.
22. When the visit or interaction is finished, the patient and handler must wash his/her hands and use an alcohol hand sanitizer.

Personal Pets

1. The pet must be bathed within 24 hours before the visit.
2. A record of current vaccination is to be provided to the infection prevention nurse prior to approval of the visit.
3. The pet must be on a short leash or in a carrier. Use of a retractable leash is not allowed.
4. The infection prevention nurse or charge nurse must escort the pet, into and out of, the facility.
5. The pet must not be allowed to interact with other patients or visitors.
6. The handler and patient must be informed prior to the visit that they may be asked to remove the animal from the facility at any time.

Service Animals

1. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered unless these devices interfere with the animal's work or the person's disability prevents using these devices.
2. The only documentation required for service animal visits is the certification that the animal is indeed a service animal. A certificate is to be provided to the infection prevention nurse prior to the first visit and as updated.
3. If it is not obvious what service an animal provides, the staff may ask only the following questions:
 - Is a service animal required because of a disability?
 - What work or task is the dog trained to perform?
 1. Staff cannot ask the person with a disability for medical documentation, special identification card for the dog, or documentation of the dog's training, nor can staff require the dog to demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.
 2. Access cannot be denied to a person with a service animal because of allergies or fear of dogs.
 3. A person with disabilities can be asked to remove the service dog only if the dog is out of control and the handler is unable to bring it under control or if the dog is not housebroken.
 4. Service animals are allowed in the public area of a business that sells and prepares food even if state and local health codes prohibit animals on the premises.
 5. Staff is not required to provide care or food for a service animal.

Service Miniature Horses

1. The American with Disabilities Act has added miniature horses as a service. A miniature horse ranges in height from 24 to 34 inches and weighs between 70 and 100 pounds.
2. The following assessment factors are to assist entities in determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in the facility:
 - Is the miniature horse housebroken?
 - Is the miniature horse under the handler's control?
 - Can the facility accommodate the miniature horse's type, size and weight?
 - Does the miniature horse's presence compromise legitimate safety requirements for the safe operation of the facility?

Source: APIC