



ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

The Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control (ACIPC) releases new guidelines for animals in healthcare facilities

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The Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control (ACIPC) has released a new position statement outlining its recommendations for assistance, therapeutic and companion animals visiting or residing at healthcare facilities. The statement, entitled [Animals in Healthcare Facilities](#), also includes recommendations for pets living at or visiting facilities, and any domesticated livestock kept on the grounds of the facility.

ACIPC supports animal-assisted interventions for patients, their families and healthcare workers; facility pets or domesticated livestock; and personal pet visits in healthcare facilities where this is evidence-based and appropriate.

The new position statement provides policy and procedure recommendations for healthcare facilities to mitigate the risk of zoonotic (animal to human) disease transmission while acknowledging the importance of assistance, therapeutic and companion animals to the health and wellbeing of many who live and work at the facility. It recommends best-practice policies for animal, patient and staff health and hygiene, including veterinary health screenings and vaccination mandates, compliance with State and local animal legislation, and restrictions on animals entering areas such as operating theatres, intensive care, and food preparation areas.

ACIPC recommends facilities maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding infection prevention and control issues relating to animals within healthcare settings, and use this knowledge to develop systems for animal handling, animal food and waste disposal, and hygiene practices for staff, patients and trainers following contact with animals.

The facility's infection prevention and control professionals (ICPs) should be notified and keep records of animal activity at the facility. Animal access for isolated and immuno-suppressed patients should be negotiated with the ICPs on an individual patient/client basis, balancing risks and benefits.

The position statement also provides definitions of the types of animals which may live in or have access to healthcare facilities, the training and accreditation needed for assistance and therapy animals, and the standards of animal hygiene and behaviour required. Assistance and therapy animals cannot by law be prohibited from entering healthcare facilities, but can be restricted from entering certain areas to best protect the facility's patient population from infectious disease.

With zoonoses accounting for approximately 60% of all infectious pathogens of human beings and 70% of all infectious diseases, it is vital that healthcare facilities have appropriate infection prevention and control protocols in place for animal residence and visitation.

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