

**RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SCHOOL AND GROUP EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS AT COLCHESTER ZOO**

This risk assessment is a guidance sheet providing a general outline of potential risks and controls identified for educational sessions at Colchester Zoo. It is strongly recommended that if there are any concerns or specific needs within their group of children, **organisers should contact Colchester Zoo staff for a detailed breakdown of their session. Organisers can then create their own risk assessment and advise zoo staff of any additional specific modifications or controls required.**

**1. INTRODUCTION****Teacher Responsibilities:**

Teachers and any supporting adults are responsible for the behaviour of the students towards the animals, staff, and other visitors. All pupils attending sessions at Colchester Zoo must be supervised at all times. Colchester Zoo staff will be on hand to provide education, it is the responsibility of the teacher and other supporting adults to ensure the students are behaving appropriately.

When in close contact with biological artefacts (furs, skulls, etc.), or live animals, teachers must **ensure appropriate hygiene** afterwards. Teachers are also responsible to ensure all groups **follow instructions as explained by the education staff** before entering a situation with biological artefacts and/or live animals.

During the session, pupils are expected to:

- Behave sensibly (no standing on chairs, no running up and down stairs, etc.)
- Act appropriately towards each other (not hitting each other, not throwing things at each other, etc.)
- Respect zoo equipment and supplies (no unplugging computer cables, no shoving laptops off table on purpose, etc.)
- Listen to and follow all specific rules in regards to handling biological artefacts and/or live animals

In the event of any emergency, follow zoo staff instruction and ensure all students and adults with your group also follow said instructions.

**Zoo Responsibilities:**

Colchester Zoo strives to provide a safe and enjoyable day out for schools including during pre-booked educational sessions. To ensure these groups' health and safety Colchester Zoo follows a variety of procedures, and has many existing control measures in place. Stated below is a general risk assessment identifying potential risks associated with the pre-booked educational sessions as well as the controls Colchester Zoo has in place to mitigate these potential risks. Please note that these are guidelines only and teachers with any specific needs or further concerns based on their specific group of children are advised to contact Colchester Zoo staff for a more detailed breakdown of their session, and to complete their own risk assessment prior to a school visit.

## 2. RISK ASSESSMENT

### Educational Sessions with Biological Artefacts

Many sessions utilise a variety of biological artefacts (bones, furs, feathers, skins, etc.). Most of these are customs seizures from animals hunted in the wild. Customs have donated the artefacts to the zoo for use in education. These objects have all been cleaned prior to use, but still present some specific risks:

| Risk Identification   | Risk Level | Existing Controls   |
|---|------------|---|
| Biological Artefact Handling - Disease                              | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All biological artefacts have been properly cleaned and sanitised prior to use in sessions</li> <li>• Objects are routinely cleaned</li> <li>• Hand-wash areas and/or hand-gel are located near all teaching spaces</li> <li>• At the end of each session, teachers are advised to ensure all pupils wash their hands</li> </ul>   |
| Biological Artefact Handling – scratches, cuts, manual injury, etc. | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All biological artefacts have been properly prepared prior to use in sessions; where possible and appropriate sharp corners/claws/etc. have been removed</li> <li>• Pupils are advised on how to handle objects by education staff</li> <li>• Pupils are advised to use ‘sensible behaviour’ during all handling (e.g. not turning around quickly while holding sharp horns)</li> <li>• Teachers, other supervisory adults, and education staff supervise all handling and ensure pupils are behaving appropriately</li> <li>• Trained first aiders are on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park.</li> <li>• Majority of staff in radio contact in case of emergencies</li> </ul> |
| Biological Artefact Handling - allergies                            | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All biological artefacts have been properly cleaned and sanitised prior to use in sessions (relevant as the majority of ‘fur’ allergies are actually related to animal saliva and skin cells; after the fur has been processed into rugs, etc. many people find they are not allergic to the ‘finished’ product)</li> <li>• Objects are routinely cleaned (prevents build-up of dust, etc.)</li> <li>• If any pupils have allergies to specific biological artefacts (fur, feathers, etc.); teachers are advised to prevent these students from contacting the potentially hazardous objects</li> </ul>  |

## Educational Sessions with Live Animals

Unless specifically stated in a session description, live animals are not used during educational sessions. Groups who just want to handle and hold minibeasts and other similar animals can drop-in at Sensation Station (see signage at location for times), but these are not available as a pre-booked educational session. However, there are a few specific sessions where live animals are brought out to illustrate specific points the students have learned about. Before any live animal is brought out, the education staff will discuss behaviour, rules, and any other safety concerns; however, there are still some specific identified risks associated with these live animals:

| Risk Identification              | Risk Level | Existing Controls   |
|----------------------------------|------------|---|
| Animals – Bites, scratches, etc. | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visitor contact with species that are likely to cause harm.</li> <li>• Trained first aiders on site and first aid equipment stored at various areas in the park.</li> <li>• Majority of staff in radio contact in case of emergencies.</li> <li>• Staff will handle animals in such a way as to limit contact with visitors and prevent risk as scratches, etc. (e.g. children can stroke the animal on its back but not hold it, thus avoiding the claws)</li> <li>• Only students who are willing will be allowed to handle animals</li> <li>• Education staff will remove animals if they show signs of agitation or stress</li> </ul> |
| Animals - Disease                | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No contact with animals likely to transmit disease.</li> <li>• Where animals are used for handling sessions hand washing facilities are available.</li> <li>• All animals used for handling are regularly health screened.</li> </ul>  |
| Animals – Knocked over by goats  | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students advised on appropriate behaviour prior to starting activities involving goats</li> <li>• Staff member with group at all times at goat enclosure to oversee activity</li> <li>• Students are not required to participate if they are concerned or feel incapable of following the instructions</li> </ul>  |

## Educational Sessions with Active Games

Some sessions involve the students being up and active playing games or other activities to reinforce or introduce specific learning concepts. Prior to commencing any active game/activity, staff will ensure all pupils are familiar with any rules or restrictions for the activity. Despite this introduction, due to the nature of running around there is a chance for some further specific risks:

| Risk Identification   | Risk Level | Existing Controls  |
|---|------------|--|
| Activity items (e.g. ropes, balls, blindfolds, etc.) – trip hazards, impact, etc. | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education staff instruct all participants in the appropriate use of any item</li> <li>● Teachers, and other adults ensure all items are used only for their intended purpose</li> <li>● After activity is finished, all items are cleared away to prevent trips, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| Children playing roughly – cuts/abrasions or other physical injury                | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education staff instruct all participants on how to complete each activity/game</li> <li>● Most games/activities are non-contact</li> <li>● Minimal contact activities (e.g. variations of ‘tag’) are fully explained and played in a way so as to limit any potential rough play</li> <li>● Teachers and other adults ensure pupils are playing appropriately</li> </ul> |
| Trips/Falls   | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children must wear appropriate footwear when playing games</li> <li>● Boundaries for each activity/game set to avoid potential hazards (e.g. stairs, etc.)</li> <li>● Large groups divided into multiple areas to play to limit the number of children attempting to run in one area</li> </ul>   |

### Educational Sessions – Miscellaneous Other Risks

Due to the variety of sessions available, there are a number of other risks specific to certain sessions which do not fit into any of the other categories:

| Risk Identification  | Risk Level | Existing Controls  |
|--|------------|--|
| Animal Food - allergies  | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When preparing food/enrichment for animals, food which is not a common allergen is used (e.g. sunflower seeds, rice, etc.)</li> <li>Prior to handing out food, education staff will check with the teacher and the group if there are any allergies/suspected allergies</li> <li>Pupils are advised not to eat any of the food items (they are just for the animals) and to wash hands thoroughly after the activity is finished</li> <li>Participants with suspected/known allergies can take part without using any food</li> </ul>   |
| Panic attack/phobia to specific animals and/or photos of animals             | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher must inform education staff with advanced notice of any severe phobias</li> <li>If informed with enough notice education staff can modify some sessions where applicable to avoid photos/etc. of specific animals</li> <li>If the phobia is not severe pupils can close their eyes during certain segments – education staff can verbally warn them when the photos are about to appear</li> <li>If the phobia is more severe, pupils can leave the room during certain segments</li> <li>In the event of extreme phobias, it may not be possible to modify some specific sessions (e.g. Animal Behaviour takes place near snakes; even if the snakes are not used, they will still be in the room) – the teacher and education staff can discuss possible solutions or modifications before hand – but it may not be feasible for the pupil to attend</li> </ul> |
| Injury through movement while seated (e.g. stretch arms to measure reach)    | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are instructed in how to carefully perform any action prior to trying; including specific instructions to watch out for people sitting next to them, etc.</li> </ul>   |
| Holding breath (e.g. hold your breath as long as a penguin) activities       | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The longest holding breath activity only lasts for 20 seconds</li> <li>Prior to starting the activity pupils are informed to start breathing if they are finding it difficult</li> <li>After the full 20 seconds (or shorter) pupils are all instructed to start breathing again</li> <li>Teachers and other adults supervise during activity to ensure no pupils are distressed</li> </ul>   |
| Burns from portable space heater in the tent (one of the teaching locations) | Low        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portable heater in use only gets warm to the touch and not enough to cause burns</li> <li>When possible (weather dependant) the space is heated prior to sessions and the heater will then be turned off before any pupils enter the space</li> <li>Equipment and plug sockets regularly inspected by electricians to ensure it is safe</li> </ul>  |