

## **Educational Statement – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Youth with Small Animals**

After looking at the research base, receiving feedback and guidance from a representative committee, and getting counsel from AEED's we are able to expand the program offerings in our K-3 Programs to include safe and educationally sound small animal activities for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. ISUE may sponsor planned educational programs with appropriate enrollment, providing the criteria on the attached Clover Kids Activity Checklist are followed.

Appropriate animals are pets and bucket bottle projects. Animals excluded are swine, horses, beef other than bucket bottle, and dairy other than bucket bottle. All animal exhibiting opportunities with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade youth must be non-competitive.

Physical and emotional safety of youth is the prime consideration. Special procedures, such as joint leading and/or close proximity of adults need to be employed to safeguard youths' safety. Younger youth can benefit most when they experience success in win-win situations instead of risking their positive self worth in being "judged" in competitive situations such as county fairs.

This program expansion does NOT open the door for younger than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade youth. The research base and safety considerations clearly do not support the involvement of K-2 youth in animal activities.

### **Liability Coverage**

Because of increased program efforts with K-3 graders, the cost of the group liability policy for counties (currently through Gaarde Insurance) will increase. The premium is based on the number of youth participating in the Iowa Youth and 4-H program.

The liability coverage for counties provided by the group liability policy will be consistent with the policy statement of the Iowa Youth and 4-H program regarding involvement of youth with animals. Staff and counties which carry out activities with large animals that are not in accordance with the policy statement do so at their own risk and must secure their own liability insurance with some other company.

If there is a county that feels they have a unique situation for the summer of 1997, which necessitates special consideration on liability coverage, a letter outlining the situation and the proposed way to resolve it needs to be sent to Joe Kurth. The situation will be judged in a context of being fair and equitable to all partners in the system.

## Rationale for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Youth and Small Animals

We make generalizations about children's development and learning over time. In actuality, children as individuals grow and mature at different rates and their development is usually not consistent across all skill areas. Knowing that some youth are more able than others at any one task, we must establish guidelines that take into consideration averages where the majority of youth lie. One advantage of basing 4-H work on grades instead of age is that youth are usually placed in school at their level of ability.

In most ages and stages literature youth ages 5 to 8 in grades K to 3 are described as middle childhood. Since physical and mental growth is sequential and on a continuum, it stands to reason that most 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are capable of learning at a higher task level than are kindergartners. For example, while most young people entering kindergarten are developing the ability to hold and use large size writing and drawing tools, by third grade they are refining their writing as coordination improves, and are expanding their ability to use a variety of writing tools. In kindergarten early social development such as cooperation and friendships are beginning while children may continue to express intense emotions. By third grade outbursts of emotion and impatience are less frequent and usually short-lived while closer friendships and cooperative play is common.<sup>1</sup>

Between the ages 8 and 9, usually in grades 3 and 4, mental and physical maturity is such that additional challenges are appropriate. A change takes place as children learn that the "how to" has "why" and as children are more ready for decision-making and personal responsibility. They are gaining understanding of cause and effect, taking increased ownership in decision-making and are increasingly able to organize information in order to remember and apply information.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, to recognize the advanced abilities of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade youth, the Iowa Clover Kids program guidelines are designed to widen the range of experience possible for those 4-Hers in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade only.

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<sup>1</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (1993). *The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland..* A joint project of the Nebraska Department of Education, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Area Education Agencies, Head Start-State Collaboration Project. Available from Office of Child Development, Nebraska Department of Education, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509-4987, p.9

<sup>2</sup> Ditto, P. 11 "continue to deepen understanding of cause and effect..."