

Play is the key way children learn about themselves, others and the world they live in. It is essential to their learning, development, health, and physical, mental and social well-being – and it's FUN! Play provides the building blocks to be ready for school.



Fun with animals

Having animals at playgroup can be a special occasion! Licensed animal handlers such as baby animal farms, reptile or bird handlers are great to invite to a playgroup event.

Did you know?

Animals are regarded differently in different cultures. It can be fun to explore the way animal noises are said in different languages e.g. in English a rooster says “cock-a-doodle-doo”, in several European languages a rooster says “kee-ker-ree-kee”.

Add language

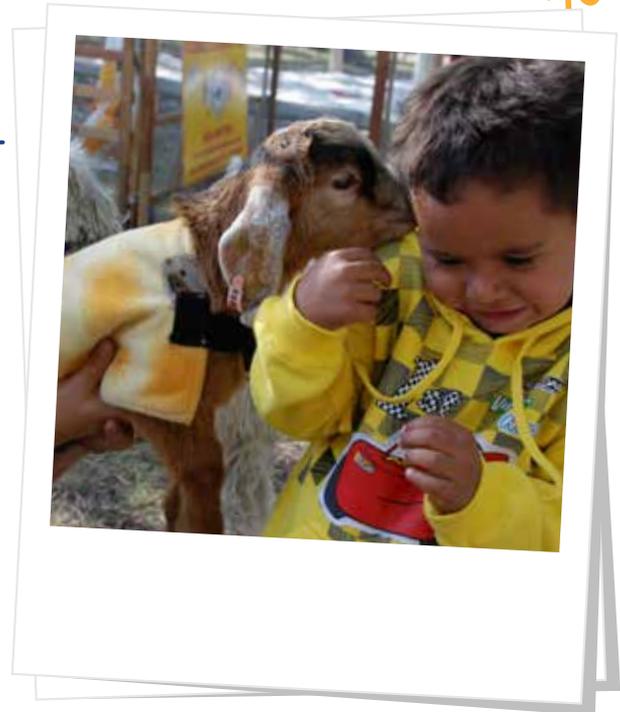
Animals at playgroup stimulate discussion. You could draw children's attention to how animals are the same and different – size, colour, skin coverings, where they live etc. Other ideas include how they move, what noises they make and what animals need i.e. food, water, shelter.

Other development

Animals are great for helping less outgoing children to become involved at playgroup. The presence of animals is a great motivator for social connection and physical activity.

Variations

Why not meet at the zoo or a farm; or invite a reptile or bird handler to playgroup?



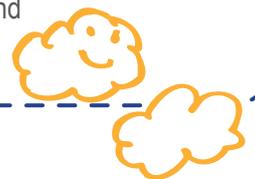
Photos of the day can be made into a book to share. Play props like puppets, toy animals, farm sets etc., can be introduced over several weeks so children can act out their experiences.

Safety and health

It is best to have licensed businesses such as baby animal farms to bring animals to playgroup. This is important from a risk management and insurance issue.

Even well-known animals and young children can be unpredictable. Close adult supervision reduces health and safety risks to both the children and the animals.

After playing with animals is a good opportunity for children to learn about hand washing and why it is important.



- Playgroup WA has a treasure trove of play activities for babies, toddlers and 3-5 year olds, for home and playgroup. These play activities cover a balanced diet of play across sensory, movement, language and thinking skill areas.

You can find them at www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas or visit www.facebook.com/playgroupwa