



## **Bale's Farm Therapy Dog Policy**

### **Introduction**

Young people can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a dog. In addition to these benefits, young people take great enjoyment from interaction with a dog.

### **Risk?**

There are a variety of accidents which can happen within a school setting which far exceed the number of injuries or incidents caused by a dog. Therefore, it is just another risk that needs to be managed.

### **Bale's Farm Policy**

# Bale's Farm

- Bale's Farm has 6 Therapy Dogs (3 of which are in training) to attend sessions and work with the young people, enhancing their experience by promoting both wellbeing and learning.
- Staff have had training around handling the therapy dogs to ensure they know how to properly utilise them in the best way possible.
- A risk assessment has been produced and will be reviewed annually.

- Only registered therapy dogs are permitted on Bale's Farm premises. This may include a support therapy dog belonging to an attendee of Bale's Farm, in which case the owner will be fully responsible for the dog.
- Staff, visitors and young people known to have allergic reactions to dogs must not go near the dog. Bale's Farm has access to hypoallergenic dogs which can be used when necessary.
- If the dog is ill, they will not be allowed on site.
- The dogs will be kept on a lead when moving around the farm and will always be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Young people will never be left alone with the dog and there will always be appropriate adult supervision when the dog is present with a young person.
- Everyone handling the dog should always wash their hands after touching the dogs.
- The young people will be reminded of what is appropriate behavior around dogs, this will be regulated through dog training with dog trainers if necessary. Young people should remain calm around dogs.
- Young people should never go near or disturb the dogs that are sleeping.
- The young people will not be allowed to play too roughly with the dog.
- If the dog is surrounded by many young people and staff, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that s/he monitors the situation.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs they will be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- The young people should not feed or eat close to the dogs.
- Any dog poo will be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately.

# Bale's Farm

## **Relevant Legislation**

- The primary applicable legislation is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Animal Welfare Act 2006

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Directors have a responsibility to ensure that Bale's Farm has a written policy for dogs on site.

- The directors are responsible for implementing this policy.
- Staff are required to abide by this policy.
- The directors are responsible for providing information, advice and guidance as and when required.

### **Reasons to have Therapy dogs at Bale's Farm**

**Understanding feelings and emotions** can be a problem in all school settings with young people anxious about school. Research shows that dogs are making a difference in helping children make sense of their feelings. Researchers report that young people can identify with animals, and with empathy for the dog, can better understand how peers may feel. It has also been proven that violent behavior declines as does general aggression when a dog is present.

**Anxiety of attending school** is great within some young people. Having a loyal dog waiting for the young people when they arrive and allowing them some time to walk, groom or cuddle the dogs helps the young people to share their anxieties and improve their attendance.

**Reading programmes** with dogs do wonders for young people in school settings. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. Dogs are used to encourage struggling readers to practice reading aloud. With the presence of a "calm and well-trained dog," children find social support and peer interaction. Dogs also provide confidence in children as they do not make fun of them when they read, but above all they make amazing listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love.

**Social Development:** Dogs offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching young people social skills and responsibility. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help learners to build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Young people use dogs to help communicate and teach kindness. With therapy dogs at Bale's Farm, young people have the opportunity to learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving young people in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The young people also learn about responsibility, caring, and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.

**As a reward:** Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for young people. Walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities the young people will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem. Therapy Dogs can work with young people

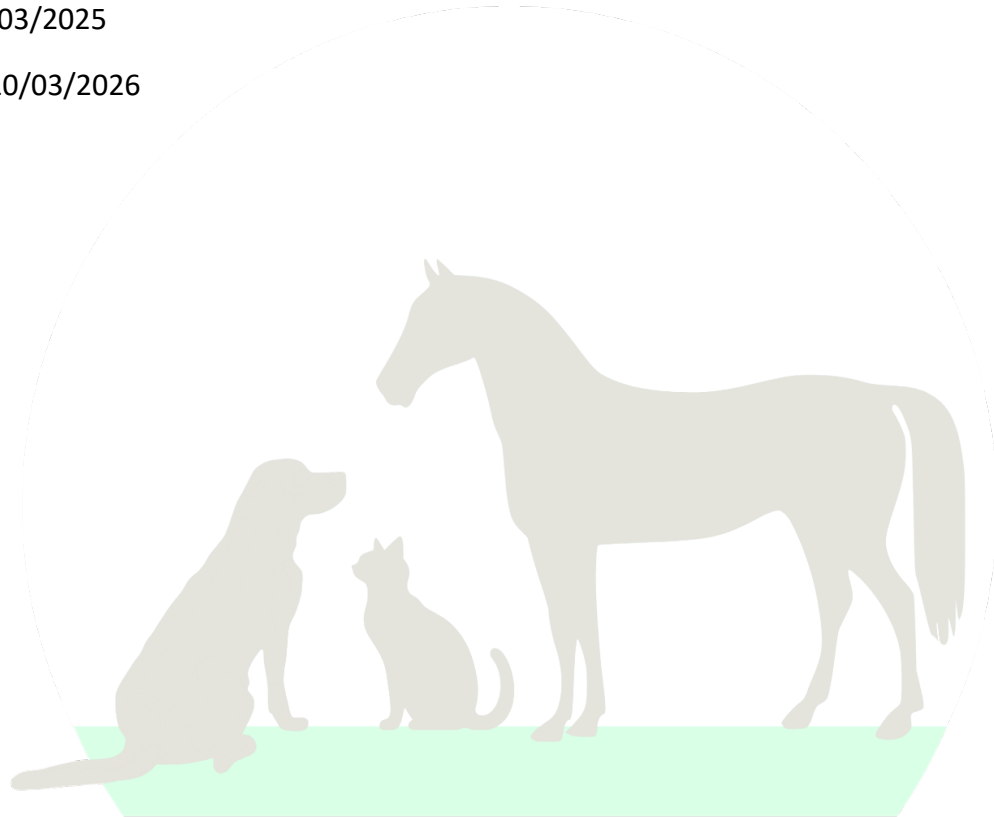
on a one-one basis and will especially help those going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dogs will bring much joy and help to all the young people they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs for the people they are spending time with.

**Signed:** JB

James Bosworth

**Date:** 10/03/2025

**Review:** 10/03/2026



**Bale's Farm**