

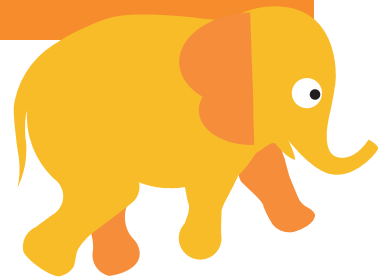
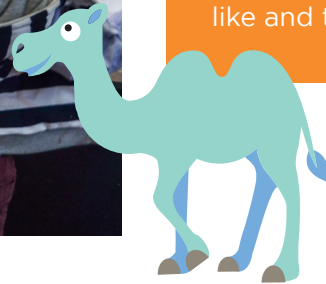
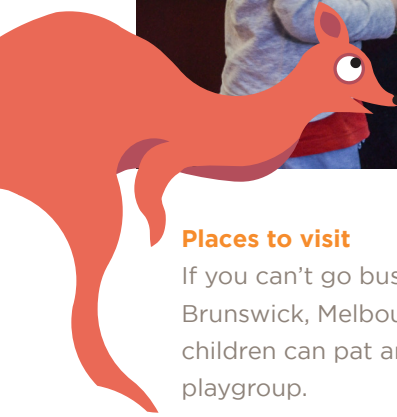
Animals



 Play



Animals are part of nature just waiting for children to explore through real life experiences, books and play. Step outside or go bush to discover insects and animals, look and listen for birds. Talk about what the animals look like and the sounds they make.



Places to visit

If you can't go bush, visit Melbourne Museum's Forest Gallery, Collingwood Children's Farm, CERES in Brunswick, Melbourne Zoo and Werribee Open Range Zoo. Visit a farm where, with close supervision, children can pat and cuddle baby animals. You could even organise a mobile farm to visit your playgroup.

Set up inviting animal play spaces

Put toy animals in a small basket on top of a cardboard box covered with fabric or outside on a tree stump. Stand up an animal picture book and next to it line up toy animals which feature in the book. Place a rug, cushions and choice of animal books in a quiet corner of the room or outside in a pop up tent or under a shady tree. Join your child and look at the books they have selected. Put large plastic toy animals on the floor with blocks and toy people to open play possibilities. Put animal puppets in a basket. Slip one on your hand or finger and let children choose one. Sing a song to suit the puppet e.g. Five Green Speckled Frogs, Baa Baa Black Sheep, Five Little Ducks.

Sand

Bury plastic dinosaurs in sand for children to search for them with their hands, toy spades or kitchen spoons. Offer small paint brushes to gently sweep sand off the dinosaurs. Put plastic animals, small tree branches and smooth rocks in the sandpit or in a shallow tray with a little sand so children can create an animal habitat. Make paw prints with toy animals in a little wet sand (or in clay or playdough) and guess which animal they belong to. Add water! Put a little water in a shallow tray or large plastic shell. Add toy frogs, sea creatures, rocks or shells. Safety note: Supervise water play closely.

Pictures

Stick big colour animal pictures from old magazines or calendars in a scrapbook or cut pictures into big pieces and stick them onto thick cardboard to make a simple puzzle. Borrow picture books from the library of butterflies, frogs, farm animals, family pets, dinosaurs and other animals. Borrow wooden animal floor puzzles or animal dominoes from a toy library. Watch your child mix and match the puzzle pieces. Talk about the colour, size, shape and sound the animals pictured make. See an interesting animal in the street or at the park? Take a photo, put your photos in an album to look through and talk about at playgroup. [Share your animal photos with us on Instagram @playgroupvicofficial](#)

