

Animal Therapy at Mansfield Autism

Introduction

Animal-assisted therapy involves interactions with animals as the primary means for supporting skill development. Human-animal interactions are often motivating for autistic children, and provide a calming and non-judgemental space to help develop social skills and general wellbeing.

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services' new 100 acre property aims to be home to a range of animals to help deliver animal-assisted therapy, including miniature Galloways, donkeys and goats. We also plan to finish building our undercover arena to offer equine-assisted learning.

Miniature Galloways

We are in discussion with Gold Creek Galloways about purchasing some animal assistance therapy-trained miniature Galloways. These are beautiful, gentle, small cows that have been trained to be great with children. Each cow costs \$7,500.

- Introducing animals to the farm will give students meaningful opportunities to develop responsibility and empathy.
- The students will have daily interaction with the cows: brushing, talking to and bonding with them.
- The students will learn about animal husbandry, emotional regulation, recognising and responding to animals needs.
- Opportunity for local community members to 'adopt' a cow and come visit it. The students will develop the program, take pictures of the animals and organise for the community to visit 'their' cow, providing valuable learning opportunities.



Regular interaction with animals can boost motivation and support emotional regulation.

Cost: \$37,000 for five cows (four of which are pregnant) and a bull.

Miniature goats and donkeys

Our ideal animal program will involve gentle cows, some miniature donkeys and miniature goats. They will live full-time in safe paddocks but come into the open barn for scheduled time during the day so that the children, young adult and families who attend any of our program can interact with them. We might also run [mini goat yoga](#)!

The miniature goats are \$950 each and we would like to buy five. The miniature donkeys are \$5,000 and we would like to buy three. Total cost: \$19,750.



Fencing, troughs, walkways

Our farm currently has a perimeter fence but no internal fencing. To make a safe home for the animals we want to build 2,000m of fences to create one large, two medium and a couple of smaller paddocks. We also need to install water troughs in each paddock and finish the walkway from the paddocks to the open barn and the activity area where some of the interaction will happen.

Ballpark cost for fencing and troughs \$45,000.