

CANINE COMPANIONS

LESSON 2: Grades 4-6

YOUR DOG'S HEALTH

Show-Me Standards:

Academic Goals: 1.2, 1.3, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2, 4.7

Knowledge Goals: Communication Arts: 1, 6; Mathematics: 1; Science: 3; Health/Physical Education: 3, 5

Objective: To introduce students to proper health care for dogs.

Materials:

- “Caring for Your Pet” handout
- Optional: Scrubs or white jacket, children’s play medical kit, stuffed animals

Method: Whether you have had a dog for many years or are considering getting a new dog or puppy, it’s important to know how to care for your friend’s health. Remember, dogs are domesticated creatures that rely on us to take care of them. They can’t take care of themselves. They need preventive health care and special care when they are sick.

There are some basic things any dog owner should know about preventive health care. What should you do each year to be sure your dog stays healthy? Dogs need to go to the veterinarian each year for a check-up (just like humans need to go to the doctor once a year). The veterinarian should be one of your dog’s best friends, even if your dog doesn’t think a trip to the vet is fun!

What will the veterinarian do for your canine friend during a yearly examination?

- 1) Give shots (DHLPP and rabies vaccinations):
Vaccinations are an inexpensive and painless way to protect your pet against disease. Dogs need a yearly DHLPP shot. This protects him against the following diseases: **D**istemper, **H**epatitis, **L**etospirosis, **P**arainfluenza, and **P**arvovirus. A yearly rabies vaccination protects your dog against the rabies disease. If you have a puppy, check with your vet for an individual shot schedule.
- 2) Look at:
 - *teeth for tartar/gum swelling
 - *ears for ear mites and other fungus problems
 - *body for ringworm/fleas
 - *fecal exam for worms
 - *eyes for normal pupil response and normal retinal appearance
 - *weight, heart rate, temperature

Distribute the “Caring for Your Pet” handout. This will help students visualize what a pet examination will look like when they go to the vet with their own pet. You may also wish to give them a chance to practice being veterinarians. Bring in scrubs or a white jacket, a child’s play medical kit, and stuffed animals. Allow students the opportunity to experience giving a pet a medical exam.

What else do you need to do for your dog to keep him healthy and safe?

- 1) Spay/neuter – a simple operation that will prevent your pet from making unwanted babies. Spaying is for girls/females and neutering is for boys/males. There are many other benefits to spaying and neutering. It protects your pet against certain types of cancer and infections. The spayed or neutered pet makes a much better companion. They are less aggressive and more affectionate than unaltered pets. They are less likely to roam and fight. Their attention is focused on you.
These simple surgeries can also significantly help impact the pet overpopulation problem. Millions of dogs and cats are euthanized (humanely put to death) in this country each year because people ignore the fact that their pet is contributing to the problem. There are not enough homes for all the puppies and kittens born each year. You can be part of the solution by making sure your own pet is spayed or neutered!
Some shelters practice “early spay/neuter”; this means pets are fixed as early as eight weeks of age. They must also weigh at least two pounds. This ensures that all pets are altered before going home. Too many animals are euthanized to ignore the importance of spay/neuter.
- 2) Microchip – A microchip is a tiny computer part the size of a grain of rice. It is inserted under your pet’s skin between his shoulder blades with a special needle. It hurts a little at first, just like a shot, but will stay there for the rest of your pet’s life as permanent identification. After that, your pet won’t even know it’s there. If your pet gets lost and someone brings him to a shelter, they will use a special scanner that can see if a microchip is present. Each microchip has a special one-of-a-kind I.D. number; that special number will be detected by the scanner. Shelters match that number to the owner and help the pet get home.
- 3) Flea & heartworm prevention – Dogs (and cats) can get heartworm disease. Mosquitoes transmit the disease by biting an infected animal, then your dog. The sad truth is that just one worm can cause coughing, breathing difficulties, vomiting, weight loss and in some cases sudden death. Your vet can determine if your dog has heartworm through a simple blood test.
Flea control is very important to the health of your dog/puppy. Flea bites cause discomfort, irritation, and often carry tapeworms, an intestinal worm. Fleas can quickly infect your home and can bite humans. Control heartworm, fleas and other parasites through medications available from your veterinarian. She will help you select the appropriate product for your pet. Look for non-toxic, highly effective topical products. Apply these monthly. They are easy to use.

Find out the date of your pet’s last check-up. If she hasn’t been within the last year, she is due for a visit to the vet. With proper care, you and your dog will enjoy many happy, healthy years together!

Call to Action: Investigate the cost of veterinary care. Talk to vets in your area to determine prices of the above-mentioned care. Is there a low-cost clinic in your area at a shelter? Assign each student a different vet, then create a chart comparing costs.

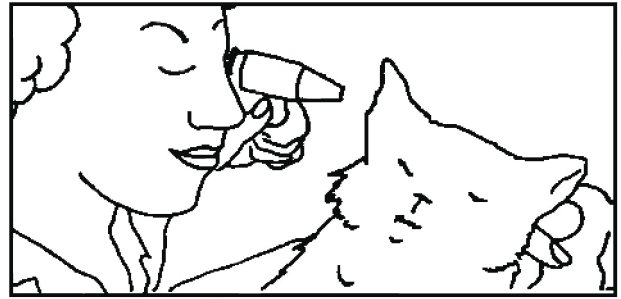
Ask a veterinarian to visit your classroom and speak to the students.

Web sites: For recommended animal-related web sites visit www.apamo.org and choose “Animal Issues” from the left-side menu, then choose “Links” from the top of the page. Or [click here](#) to launch your browser and link directly to the list.

15

Caring for your pet

DR. VETERINARIAN



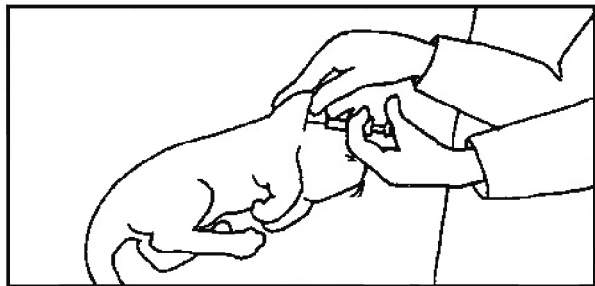
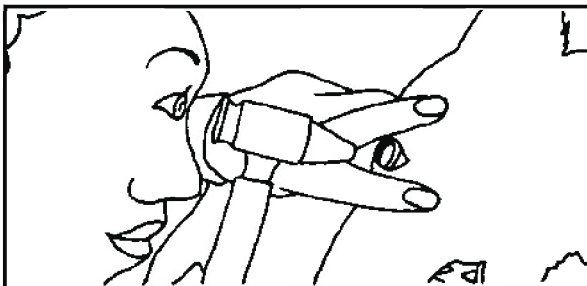
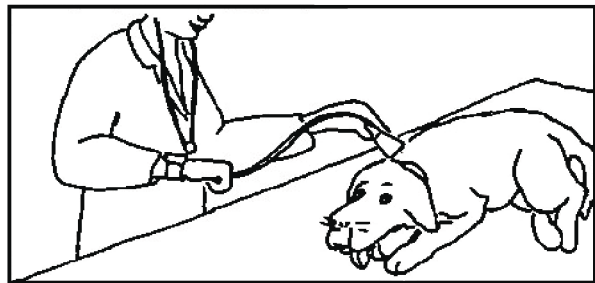
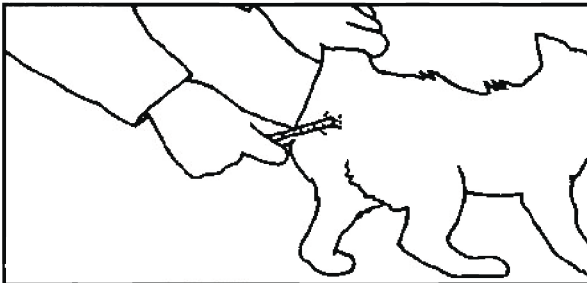
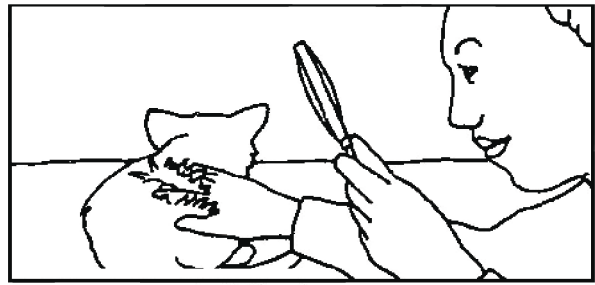
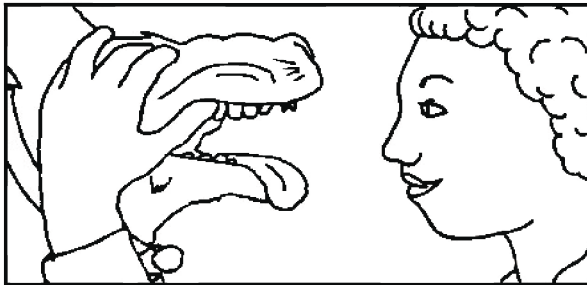
looking for mites

Activity: Pets have to have regular health checkups, just like us. When you visit the animal clinic, the veterinarian gives your pet a thorough examination. Look carefully at what the veterinarian is doing in each of these illustrations. Then fill in the right caption from the list below.

taking the temperature
listening to the heart beat

examining eyes
checking for fleas

checking teeth for tartar
vaccinating against disease



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