

FABULOUS FELINES
LESSON 5: Grades 4-6
SOLVING PET PROBLEMS

Show-Me Standards: Academic Goals: 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6
Knowledge Goals: Communication Arts – 1, 6; Science - 3

Objective: To teach students to solve animal-related problems.

Materials:

- When You Get a Pet...” handout
- “Cat Problems Question & Answer Cards”
- “Are You a Cat’s Best Friend?” handout

Method: Today is our last lesson about cats. We began our first lesson by talking about how to choose the perfect pet for your family. As we discussed, getting a pet is a huge responsibility and not something to enter into lightly. Most of the time owning a pet is a wonderful experience. But, occasionally it is challenging. You should be committed enough to your pet to work through any problems that arise over the course of your life together. After all, life will always have its ups and downs.

There are some things you should remember as a pet owner. Distribute the “When You Get a Pet...” handout.

Remember to expect some problems.

If you are adopting a new cat or already have a favorite feline friend, you are bound to encounter some problems. Most pet problems have fairly easy solutions. Some problems require patience and understanding to solve. Owning a pet is a learning experience that can help teach you how to become a good problem solver.

Remember to seek advice.

Part of learning to solve problems requires knowing who to ask for help. If you have a problem with a pet, who can help? A veterinarian, an animal shelter, a friend or relative who is an experienced pet owner, a trusted pet store employee, a trainer, or a pet behaviorist. Don’t forget about other important sources of information like books, the Internet, and pet magazines. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Remember to help take care of him.

Having a pet is a family affair! It can be fun to help care for your pet. What can you do to help care for your cat? Clean the litter box, give your cat food and water, play with your cat, give your cat love and attention, comfort him on the way to the vet, and be aware of any signs of illness.

Remember to train him kindly.

Don’t ever hit your pet. This will only make her afraid of you. It will not reinforce learning. Pets respond best to gentle training. They need time and patience to learn what is expected of them. Put yourself in their “paws” and imagine how it would feel to be hit every time you did something “wrong.” Teach them kindly and soon they will be irreplaceable members of the family that know the rules of the house.

Now let’s practice being responsible pet owners who can solve problems. To prepare for this next section, copy the “Cat Problems Question & Answer Cards” so the answer is on the back of the correct question. Cut apart each question/answer card. Place students into groups. Give each group one question/answer card. Have students choose a spokesperson. The spokesperson will read the question to the group. Allow five minutes of discussion time. When five minutes is up, bring the class back together. Ask each spokesperson to talk about their problem and how their group solved it. Then have the spokesperson read the correct answer to the class.

To reinforce this lesson plan, take “Are You a Cat’s Best Friend?” quiz. Do you deserve a medal for being a responsible pet owner? Find out!

Call to Action:

There is a community problem that needs to be solved: the plight of homeless and abandoned animals. Brainstorm as a group to come up with solutions to this overwhelming problem. How can students help animals right now? Choose one solution that everyone agrees upon and act on it. Create a problem-solving plan that accomplishes your group’s goal of helping animals.

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.

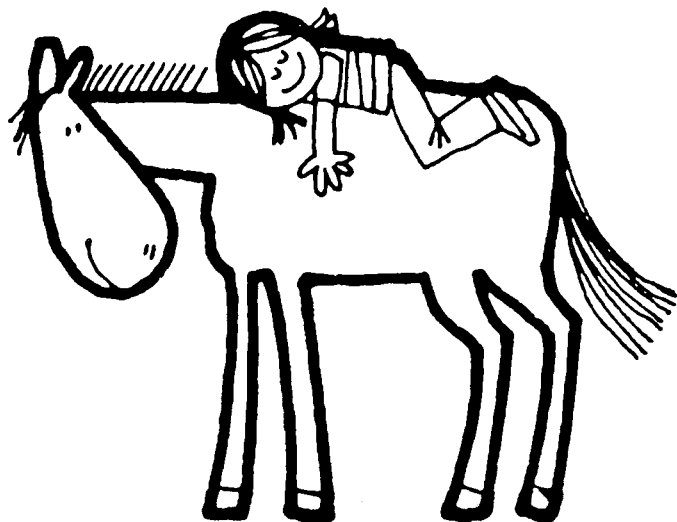
WHEN YOU GET A PET...

Expect
Some Problems



Seek Advice

Help Take Care
Of Him



Train Him Kindly

Question #1

**You find fleas
on your cat.
What should you do?**

Question #2

**Your cat has been
throwing up hairballs.
What should you do?**

Question #3

**Your cat escapes
from the house.
You can't find her.
What should you do?**

Question #4

**Your cat is scratching
up all the furniture
with his claws.
What should you do?**



Question #5

**Your cat suddenly quits
using the litterbox.
What should you do?**

Question #6

**Your cat likes to
attack your hand
and bite it hard.
What should you do?**



Answer-Question #2

Cats are very clean animals. You'll notice that they bathe themselves often. They are animals that naturally shed hair. You can help get rid of hair your cat has shed by brushing her on a regular basis. Then provide her with a hairball remedy. Hairball remedies come in several forms now: a toothpaste-like tube of gel they eat, treats, and dry food. If your cat doesn't like one form, try another.

Answer-Question #1

You need to treat the pet for fleas as soon as possible. Not only will they make your pet itchy and uncomfortable, but fleas can carry tapeworm that make your pet sick. Take your pet to the veterinarian where you can buy a monthly flea preventative. Prescription spot-on treatments like Frontline or Advantage are very effective at killing fleas within 24 hours. Have your vet examine your pet for signs of tapeworm. You may also need to comb your pet with a special flea comb to get rid of flea "dirt" and dead fleas. The best way to prevent fleas is to keep your cat inside!

Answer-Question #4

Cats need to scratch in order to remove the dead nail sheaths from around their claws. They also claw to stretch and mark their scent on objects. First, trim the cat's nails every two weeks to keep them blunt and minimize any damage done by scratching. Distract the cat from furniture by providing a scratching post. You can buy these in a pet store. Sprinkle catnip on the post to make it more likeable to your cat. If your cat uses the post, praise her. Make furniture undesirable to scratch by covering it with foil, double-stick tape, or balloons. Be patient!

Answer-Question #3

Start looking for him as soon as you discover he is missing. Search the neighborhood and ask people if they've seen him. If you don't find him, post signs around your neighborhood and offer a reward for his return. Visit the local animal shelters to file a "lost" report and to see if someone has taken him there. Continue to check back with the shelters if you don't find him on your first visit. Don't give up. When he's safely back home, learn to be in control when the door opens. If he's unsuccessful, he'll stop trying to escape. Be sure your cat wears a collar and ID tag at all times. He can't talk to tell anyone where he lives. Back that up with a microchip.



Answer-Question #6

House soiling, or going outside the litter box, is a common feline problem. NEVER yell at your cat or rub her nose in it. This will make the problem worse. Your very first step should be to take your cat to the vet. Infections and other diseases can cause cats to quit using their boxes.

Your cat may need immediate medical attention.

If your cat is healthy, start looking at how and where she is choosing to go. Clean those areas with an enzymatic pet deodorizer. More than likely the problem is with the box

or its surroundings. She may no longer like where it is located, how it feels, or she may have been scared while using it. Is it clean enough?

Also ask yourself if there has been a change in the home that she could be upset about.

Cats can become stressed, too. Be patient.

Answer-Question #5

Biting may be “cute” when your cat is still a kitten, but it can be painful when he’s full grown. Discourage it from the beginning. When your cat bites, let out a sharp yowl that imitates the sound of a hurt cat. Pull your hand back, turn your back on your cat, and ignore him for a few minutes. Offer a toy to play with instead.

You may also try hissing at a cat that is persistent about attacking you.

NEVER hit your cat!

Even if your cat’s attacks are all in good fun, he needs to learn that is not acceptable behavior.



Are You a Cat's Best Friend?

There is nothing better than owning a pet. The benefits of pet ownership are extraordinary. Do you do as much for your furry friend as he does for you?



Activity: To find out if you are a responsible pet owner, check off your answer to each statement below. Be honest. Then check your score below.

1. I have socialized my cat by helping her get used to people, noises, the veterinarian, and as many situations as possible. _____ yes _____ no
2. My cat lives indoors. _____ yes _____ no
3. My cat has a safety collar and I.D. tag with my name, address, and phone #. _____ yes _____ no
4. I keep all poisonous plants out of my cat's reach. _____ yes _____ no
5. My cat goes to the veterinarian for a yearly check-up and vaccinations. _____ yes _____ no
6. My cat is groomed regularly. _____ yes _____ no
7. My cat's litterbox is cleaned every day. _____ yes _____ no
8. I've trained my cat to travel in a pet taxi in the car. _____ yes _____ no
9. I provide a scratching post for my cat. _____ yes _____ no
10. My cat is fed a nutritionally complete name-brand cat food, and fresh water is always available. _____ yes _____ no
11. My cat is neutered if it's a male or spayed if it's a female to prevent unwanted kittens. _____ yes _____ no
12. I make sure my cat has a warm, quiet place to sleep. _____ yes _____ no
13. I don't allow my friends to tease or be unkind to my pet. _____ yes _____ no

Score:
11-13 "yes" answers - You deserve a responsible pet ownership medal!
8-10 "yes" answers - Keep trying to improve as a pet owner.
Less than 8 - You need to learn more about your pet.