

PET OVERPOPULATION
LESSON 1: Grades 4-6
HELP! THERE ARE TOO MANY DOGS
AND CATS AND NOT ENOUGH HOMES!

Show Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.6, 1.10, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6 & 4.7; Communication Arts: 1 & 6; Mathematics: 1; Science: 8

Objective: To help students understand that there is a very serious overpopulation problem with dogs and cats.

Materials:

- Crayons
- Scissors
- Paper
- Magazine photos of animals (if desired)

Method: Dogs, cats and rabbits need an operation (spaying for females or neutering for males) to keep them from having litters of puppies, kittens or bunnies. Everyone loves to see baby animals, but the truth is, not all animals that are born are lucky enough to have loving, caring homes.

Spayed or neutered companion animals live longer, healthier lives than those who haven't had this simple operation. They are less likely to roam and fight. They are happier to be a pet. They are prone to less types of cancers and diseases. Neutered males tend to be more affectionate and less aggressive.

Spaying or neutering your pet will also eliminate unwanted animals---remember, there are not enough homes available for all the animals being born. By spaying or neutering your companion animals and encouraging others to do the same, you can help some animals from suffering the tragedy of being born homeless or being euthanized (humanely put to sleep.)

Next, explore these questions with your students:

- How can we be kind to animals?
- If every home had one dog and one cat, would all the cats and dogs being born have a home? Why or why not?
- What responsibilities do we have to domestic animals that we have made pets?
- What do animal shelters do? Why are they necessary?
- What would your community be like if there were no place for homeless, unwanted animal to go?

Create an animal "shelter" in your classroom by having students design the layout. What would they need? How many cages are "enough" for a community of your size. What problems might you encounter with space and size? How will you fund your animal shelter? Where will it be located? Will it be a place that people would like to visit? Who would work at the shelter? How would they be paid? What care do the animals need? Is it open seven days a week? Who will care for the animals during the night, on weekends and holidays? How many animals can your shelter care for? What happens when it is full?

Have each student cut out 20 pictures of dogs, cats or rabbits OR draw and color 20 such animals. These will represent a very small percentage of the actual number of animals in your community. Have the students choose two animals they will keep as pets. The remainder of the homeless animals will be placed in your animal shelter. Discuss with students the obstacles that these animals face. What is the uncertainty of the future

of those that are not “chosen”? What responsibilities do we have to those that are unwanted? Do they deserve a home? Let the children explore options and situations, gently leading them to the realization that there are simply too many wonderful animals being born and not enough responsible homes available. What can be done to help these homeless animals? What options do they have? How can WE make a difference?

Call To Action: The above scenario is true in every community, city, state and country in the world. The reality is that too many animals are being born and not enough homes are available. Create your ANIMAL SHELTER as a model to display in the lobby or hallway of your school. Have students take turns monitoring the display to answer questions that students in other classes might have. Your students can take the model shelter to other classes, repeating the lesson so that all students in your school will be made aware of the pet overpopulation problem in your community.

Attention Teacher: See the following activity sheet “A Shelter Story”.

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.

Teacher's box: This worksheet, which is useful for teaching parts of speech, may be used as a springboard for discussing responsible pet ownership and the role of animal shelters.

Name _____

A Shelter Story

Read the story below. Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the lists at the bottom of the page. (Work in pencil, in case you need to change any of your answers.) You may use each word only once.

When I was a puppy, I was _____ enough to fit in the palm of your _____.
(adjective) (noun)

My owners thought I was cute. But as I _____ bigger, they didn't think I was very
(verb)

cute anymore. That's when they took me to the animal _____. Everyone there
(noun)

was very _____ to me. Still, I wanted a home of my own. One day, a boy named
(adjective)

Eddy and his _____ came to the shelter. They _____ with me and asked
(noun) (verb)

lots of questions. It was _____ at _____ sight! I _____ they would take
(noun) (adjective) (verb)

me home. Sure enough, they _____ me. Now we're a big, _____ family.
(verb) (adjective)

nouns (people, animals, places, things)		
adjectives (words that describe)	love shelter family hand	verbs (action words)
kind happy first small		adopted hoped played grew

On the back, write a shelter success story of your own. Leave out some adjectives, nouns, and verbs. Ask a classmate to fill them in.

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