

PET OVERPOPULATION

LESSON 2: Grades 4-6

FACT OR FICTION?

Show Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7 & 4.1;
Communication Arts: 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6; Science: 3

Objective: To help students decipher the truth about spaying and neutering. There are many myths and misconceptions about these necessary procedures to combat the pet overpopulation problem. Students need to be able to separate the facts from the many fictitious beliefs.

Materials: A copy of the following questions and a leader (teacher) to control the ensuing discussion or questions. (Note to teachers...for information to back the answers and additional facts on spaying and neutering, consult the suggested web sites listed on this site.)

Method: Introduce this lesson by reviewing the basics of spaying and neutering with students. 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. 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.

After you read the statement, ask children to vote TRUE or FALSE. Tally the responses and ask one (or more, if time permits) student that voted TRUE to defend their answer. Why do they think the statement is true? Ask one (or more) student that represents a FALSE vote to justify their answer.

Then announce, "The answer is" and give the supporting explanation. Clarify any misconceptions that students might have and back it with the facts.

1.) *My pet will get fat and lazy if I have her/him spayed or neutered. True or False* (false)

The truth is many animals get fat or lazy because of too much food (or the wrong type of food!) and not enough exercise. To keep your pet active, take your dog for walks or play ball with him. Play interactive games with your cat or rabbit. Cats love to play and can be quite creative in the games they choose. And always make certain that your pet is eating a balanced, name-brand food.

2.) *I love my pet and want her to have babies. She'll be happy with a family. True or False* (false)

The truth is your pet already has a family—with you! She doesn't need to experience motherhood to be happy. She is happy with you. You are her "pack" or her family. There are already too many puppies and kittens being born. Your dog, cat or rabbit will be healthier and live longer if she is spayed. She won't get some diseases that may make her very sick or even die.

3.) *My male dog won't feel like a man if he is neutered. True or False (false)*

Your dog will always be a male, even if he is neutered. Neutering will make him happier to stay near your home. He may bark less. He will be less likely to roam which will help keep him safe from being hit by cars, getting lost or fighting with other animals. He will get fewer diseases and be healthier if he is neutered. He will be happier to be your pet.

4.) *Spaying or neutering are painful and will hurt my pet. True or False (false)*

Spaying and neutering are common surgical procedures (operations) performed by a licensed veterinarian (a doctor for animals.) An anesthetic (medicine that allows the animal to go to sleep for a short amount of time) is given so that your pet feels no pain. A small incision (cut) is made and the operation is completed. Your pet will probably have a few stitches in the incision area and may be told to rest or take it easy for a few days. Your pet may be a little sleepy after the operation. Follow the veterinarian's advice for your pet and after a few days, your pet will feel good as new!

Call To Action: Check our “*Recommended Web Links*” and have students create a few more true and false statements to test each other's knowledge on the truth about spaying and neutering. Have students then create a true/false test to pass out to other classes followed by a student panel discussion on the truth about these procedures. How do spaying and neutering affect the animals in your community? Have children discuss this with other classes.

Attention Teacher: See the following activity sheet “Writing to Correct a Wrong”.

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: Use this creative writing exercise to introduce a discussion about responsible pet ownership. Students will need paper for this assignment.

Name _____

Writing to Correct a Wrong

Anna and Adam volunteer at an animal shelter that's planning a low-cost spay and neuter clinic. (Spaying and neutering operations keep pets from having unwanted babies.) On the day of the clinic, people will be able to have their pets spayed or neutered at a lower price.

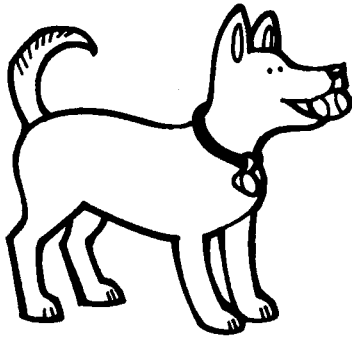
Anna and Adam have been asked to write an announcement about the upcoming clinic. The

announcement will be read on the radio. Help the kids organize their notes below, choose what information to include, and write the announcement. Use your imagination, and add any information you think is important. Be sure to include the name and phone number of the animal shelter. Also tell where and when the clinic will be held.

Spayed or neutered pets are less likely to bite or wander away from home.



Having your cats and dogs spayed or neutered helps stop pet overpopulation.



Spaying and neutering are operations that keep cats and dogs from having kittens and puppies.



Pets who are spayed or neutered are often healthier. They have a smaller chance of getting some kinds of cancer.



Every pet deserves a good home. But there are not enough homes for millions of puppies and kittens born each year.

Design a poster encouraging pet owners to bring their pets to the spay/neuter clinic.

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