

PET OVERPOPULATION

LESSON 5: Grades 4-6

15 DOGS, 45 CATS AND YOU!

Show Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.8, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, & 4.7; Communication Arts: 6; Mathematics: 1; Science: 8; Social Studies: 6; Health & Phys Ed: 3 & 5

Objectives: Students will understand that there is a very serious pet overpopulation problem in the United States with the results being too many dogs and cats and not enough homes. Students will learn the fate of many strays and will understand the term euthanasia. They will learn that the solution to pet overpopulation is spaying and neutering.

Materials:

- “15 Dogs and 45 Cats” handout
- Large sheet of colored paper (from roll)
- Markers
- Pencils
- Glue stick

Method: Introduce the lesson by playing the theme music Mission Impossible as students get seated and while you are passing out the 15 dogs and 45 cats handout. Shut the music off and ask the students if they know there are 15 dogs and 45 cats for every person in the United States. Ask them if they think they could properly care for that many animals in their home? If they say yes remind them that each pet requires food, water, exercise, vaccination, flea and tick medicine, heartguard, leash, collar, tags, etc. Then ask them to think of how many people live in their home and remind them that each of those family members would have their own 15 dogs and 45 cats.

1. Have students turn their handouts over and write the number of people that live in their home at the top of the page and circle it.
2. Ask them to multiply 15 by the number of people in their home to get the number of dogs that would live with them.
3. Ask them to multiply 45 by the number of people in their home to get the number of cats that would live with them.
4. Add the solutions from these last two mathematical problems to get the total number of dogs and cats that each of your student’s households would have to care for if their family did their part to help every dog and cat find a home.
5. Then ask them to imagine what their home and their life would be like if they cared for all of these animals?

Explain that this is a very serious problem called pet overpopulation and write the word on the chalkboard. Pet overpopulation means that there are too many dogs and cats and not enough homes. Ask them what they think happens to most of these animals. Only 250 of every 1,000 animals find a life-long home. The remaining 750 are either lucky enough to find care, food, shelter and water in an animal shelter or end up as strays. Strays are homeless domestic animals that have no owners or a place to call home. Review the term DOMESTIC: animals that have been taken into homes as pets who no longer have survival instincts and depend on us to provide food, shelter, water and care. The lives of homeless stray animals is very difficult because many things can threaten their lives such as:

1. starvation
2. loneliness
3. vehicles (hit by car)
4. abuse by people
5. attacked by other animals
6. stolen and sold for research
7. disease

If you see a stray animal, call your local animal control officer and give him/her the location of the animal so they can find it. Many strays that are evaluated by shelters and animal control facilities are found to be healthy and are put up for adoption so you can help the strays by having them picked up. Never approach a stray animal. If a stray approaches you, you know to stand still like a tree, look straight ahead and not at the animal and the animal will usually walk away. If a stray knocks you down, roll into a ball and cover your face. Please review the previous lessons about this.

Although animal shelters are safe places for animals that are staffed by caring people who provide care for them, millions of animals that arrive at shelters around the world have to be **euthanized** (humanely put to death) simply because there are not enough homes for them. There are many countries that aren't lucky enough to have many animal shelters and have many animals that have suffered the fates above. Take a moment to allow the students to ask questions about euthanasia and write the term and definition on the board.

Validate their feelings of anger, sadness or disbelief but give them hope that there is something they can do to stop this! They can stop pet overpopulation by having their pets spayed or neutered. This is a simple operation that prevents them from having babies. Males are neutered to prevent them from making females pregnant and females are spayed to prevent them from having babies because their reproductive organs are removed. This procedure is done under anesthetic so the animals feel no pain. They can also help by encouraging others to have their pets spayed and neutered as well.

Call to Action: Make a class Pet Overpopulation Quilt to educate others about the problem. Have each student refer to their earlier equations. Give them an 8 x8 square piece of paper and have them draw that many dog and cat heads on their square. Encourage them to make it colorful and write the total number of dogs and cats in their household at the bottom of the page.

Glue each students quilt square onto the large sheet of colored paper (don't cut the paper until you have all of the quilt squares lined up. Then cut the paper so there is a border around the squares. Then take a marker and draw stitches on each quilt square so it looks like it was stitched. Hang your quilt in a high traffic area to educate others to spay and neuter their pets. Make a title above that says: Mrs. Jones's students would have to have ___ dogs and cats in their homes if every dog and cat were to have a home! Stop Pet Overpopulation! Spay and Neuter your Pets!

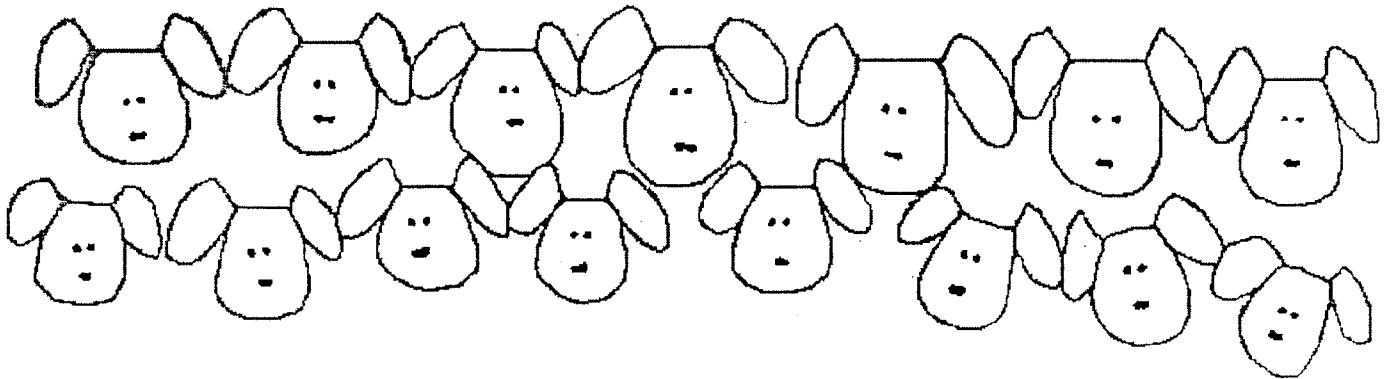
Web sites: For recommended animal-related web sites visit www.apamo.org and choose "Animal Issues" from the left-side menu, then choose "Links" from the top of the page. Or [click here](#) to launch your browser and link directly to the list.

15 Dogs, 45 Cats, and YOU!

For every person that is born,



Fifteen dogs



And Forty-Five cats are also born.



Pet overpopulation is a **BIG** problem! In order to keep up with the current flood of puppies and kittens, every person would have to own 15 dogs and 45 cats during their lifetime.

PLEASE SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR PETS!