

PET OVERPOPULATION

LESSON 1: Grades K-3

HELP! THERE ARE TOO MANY DOGS AND CATS AND NOT ENOUGH HOMES!

Show-Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6 & 4.7; Communication Arts: 1, 4, 5 & 6; Mathematics: 1 & 3; Science: 7 & 8; Social Studies: 3, 5 & 6; Fine Arts: 1

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

Activity Overview: There is a serious pet overpopulation in the United States today. Millions of unwanted animals are being *euthanized* (humanely put to death) each year simply because not enough homes can be found. This is a very difficult concept for young children to understand. It is our duty as educators to introduce the concept gently, and encourage students to develop a bond with animals, therefore as they mature, they can proactively make choices that will help the pet overpopulation problem.

Materials:

- Crayons
- Scissors
- Animal faces coloring page
- An empty shoe box or similar box

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.

(Note to teacher: Every year, tens of millions of stray animals struggle to survive. Nationwide, it is estimated that eight of every ten cats, and six of every ten dogs, must be put to sleep because there are not enough homes for all that are being born. Knowing these steep statistics, you can see the importance of instilling the values of responsible pet ownership, like spaying and neutering, to your students at a very young age.)

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 get in fights. 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, to live as a stray, or being euthanized.

Call To Action: Explore these questions with your students:

- What does being kind to animals mean?
- How can we be kind to animals?
- If every home had one dog and one cat, would all the dogs and cats have a home? Why or why not?
- What responsibilities do we have to animals that we have made our pets?
- What do animal shelters do?

Have students choose a coloring page of animal faces and color them in their favorite shades. Cut the faces out and choose the one they would like to have as a pet. The others will be put in a box labeled "ANIMAL SHELTER." Discuss with students the uncertainty of the future of those that are not "chosen." According to national statistics, will they all find homes? What responsibilities do we have to those that are unwanted? Let the children explore options, gently leading them to the realization that there are simply too many wonderful animals being born and not enough responsible homes available.

Were your students made aware of a problem in your community? State? Country? The World? If so, how do they perceive their role in helping to solve this problem? Do your students realize that all animals deserve a good home? Do they understand that all animals that are born are unable to be placed in a permanent home?

Attention Teacher: See the following activity sheet “Pet Overpopulation”

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.

