

**PET OVERPOPULATION**  
**LESSON 2: Grades K-3**  
**IF THIS CAT COULD WISH UPON A STAR,**  
**WHAT OH WHAT WOULD SHE WISH FOR?**

**Show Me Standards:** Academic Goals: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6 & 4.7; Communication Arts: 1, 4 & 6; Mathematics: 1, 2 & 5; Science: 3, 4 & 8; Social Studies: 4 7 6; Fine Arts: 1 & 4

**Objective:** To help students realize the needs of animals – the most fundamental need being a loving home.

**Materials:**

- “If This Cat Could Wish” handout
- Crayons or colored pencils

**Method:** Introduce this lesson by reminding students that responsible pet owners spay and neuter their pets. Every year in the United States, more than seven million dogs and cats must be humanely euthanized at animal shelters because they are unwanted. So many people allow their pets to breed babies they do not want to keep that there are literally millions more animals than there are homes to go around. The result is an excess of loving, wonderful pets that are left in animal shelters – waiting for a chance to be a family pet.

The solution is for people to spay or neuter their pets. It is a solution young people can help with because often pets are allowed to breed so that children can ‘witness the miracle of birth.’ Teaching about the need to spay or neuter need not involve complicated descriptions or sex education. The operations involved can simply be described as “the no litters, less cancer operation,” because in addition to preventing unwanted litters, they reduce a pet’s risk of some kinds of cancer later in life. Teachers should also remind students that a pet needs a permanent, loving home for its entire life. Many “middle aged” pets are turned into shelters, simply because they are no longer cute, little babies. These pets have a difficult time finding a new home, as they are competing with countless puppies and kittens.

The following activity will help students explore the needs that animal have. You can then discuss the effect of these needs on the welfare of the animal.

Ask students to imagine the needs of a pet. What makes a pet feel comfortable and loved? Happy? Content? Does a pet need a home for a short period of time or forever? How does it feel to be unwanted or lonely? Sad? Frightened? Are we able to see all things that we need to live? What do we need that can’t be seen, but felt in our hearts? Ask students to imagine themselves as a homeless animal. As a homeless animal, what could make their dreams come true?

Draw these wished on the coloring handout and have students discuss their choices with the class.

**Call To Action:** Ask students to discuss their coloring sheet with their parents, neighbors and friends. Encourage students to observe pets that might lift in their home or neighborhood. Are their dreams coming true?

**Web sites:** For recommended animal-related web sites visit [www.apamo.org](http://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.

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upon a star,  
What would  
she wish for?

