

Instructor Introduction

What An Animal Needs (Grades K-2)

Students will identify the basic needs of all animals and compare those needs to our own. Students will learn about specific companion animal needs by species and understand that human guardians (pet owners) are responsible for meeting those needs for the lifetime of the animal.

Excerpts from the MSPCA's Statements of Belief:

"The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that responsible pet owners protect the welfare of animals kept as pets, while at the same time ensuring that their pets do not impact negatively on other animals, the public, or the environment."

The MSPCA defines a responsible pet owner as one who:

1. Provides for the physical, behavioral, and psychological needs of a pet for its lifetime. These needs include, but are not limited to: preventative and curative medical care, adequate and sanitary housing, a nutritionally balanced diet, appropriate grooming, sufficient training to ensure the pet's safety and a comfortable lifestyle, companionship and attention, and adequate exercise;
2. Obeys the laws relating to animal care and control;
3. Is mindful of and does not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem; and
4. Will provide a humane and appropriate alternative for a pet if for any reason he or she can no longer keep the animal.

The following bullets list the important elements behind this lesson plan. For more information on any pet care questions, please contact an MSPCA Education Coordinator.

- all animals (including humans) have the same basic needs: food, water, shelter
- companion animals (pets) have additional physical and psychological needs similar to humans:
 - exercise and play
 - socialization, love, and attention
 - regular grooming
 - veterinary care
- guardians (pet owners) have a responsibility to provide care to their pets; pets are incapable of meeting their own needs
- when acquiring a pet, a commitment should be made for the life of the animal; animal life expectancies vary greatly by species
- when parents buy pets for children, the initial excitement will inevitably wear off, and it is the responsibility of the parent to assume care of the animal when this happens
- pet guardianship is a major commitment in which lifestyle, time availability, housing, family members, children's ages, allergies, general health, and finances should all be considered

Humane Education Lesson Plans

Lesson Title: What An Animal Needs (Grades K-2)

MA Curriculum Strands:

Science Frameworks

Biology K-2 (Characteristics of Living Things)

I. Recognize that animals (including humans) and plants are living things that grow, reproduce, and need food, air, and water.

Social Studies Frameworks

PreK-K, 6. Give examples that show the meaning of the following concepts: authority, fairness, justice, responsibility, and rules. (C)

Grade 1, 8. Give examples that show the meaning of the following words: politeness, achievement, courage, honesty, and reliability. (C)

Grade 1, 11. Give examples of the choices people have to make about the goods and services they buy (e.g. a new coat, a tie, or a pair of shoes) and why they have to make choices (e.g., because they have a limited amount of money). (E)

Lesson Summary:

Students will identify the basic needs of all animals and compare those needs to our own. Students will learn about specific needs of common pets and understand that human guardians (pet owners) are responsible for meeting those needs for the lifetime of the animal.

Preparation: time to make copies, put together “care pack”

Lesson Time: 1-3 lessons, each lasting 45-60 minutes

Materials:

- white board and markers
- “Animal Care Pack” with various animal care items, including food bowls, water dishes, leashes, collars, water bottles, nail trimmers, toothbrush, grooming brushes, ID tags, toys, cat litter scoop, treat pouches, needle-less syringes, cans of high quality dog/cat food, pet shampoo, empty Heartguard & Frontline boxes, hay, empty medicine bottles, pretend money, photo of fenced yard, etc. OR images of these items
- coordinating handouts for students (optional)

Discussion Outline:

Things We All Need

Begin the lesson by asking children to think about the things we, as humans, need to live (food, water, shelter). Ask them to think about other things that we don’t need, but that make us happy (candy,

TV, playing with our friends). Encourage them to think about which of these things animals need, too. It might be helpful to pick a specific animal and think about what it eats and where it lives.

Ask

- Do animals need food, water, and shelter? (Yes!)

- Can animals get these things on their own?
 - wild animals provide their own food, water, and shelter
 - pets need their human guardians (pet owners) to provide these things for them
 - pets need fresh water that is replenished throughout the day and high-quality, nutritious food that is appropriate for that animal
 - pets should live indoors, just like other members of the family

- Are there other things our pets need to be happy and safe? (Yes!)
 - pets like to play, like we do, so they should have toys
 - pets should have exercise, like we do, so guardians should take them for walks (dogs) or take them out of their cages to stretch their legs (small mammals)
 - pets need love and attention, and usually spend many hours each day alone, so we should spend time with them like we do with other members of our families: playing and relaxing
 - just like we take baths and brush our teeth and hair, our pets need to be groomed as well
 - pets should visit a doctor (veterinarian) once a year for a physical and for their shots (vaccines), and also if they get sick or injured
 - pets should be spayed and neutered, which is a surgery that is done so that they can't have babies; this is important to prevent unwanted litters and to help prevent certain illnesses, too
 - dogs and cats should wear collars and ID tags so that we can find them if they get lost
 - when a dog is outside, it should be supervised by its guardian, and either in a fenced yard or on a leash
 - our pets should be taught manners and have some basic training to keep them safe

Specific Pet Needs

Review the theme that companion animals all have the same basic needs, but the exact items they need might be different. Does a rabbit eat the same thing as a cat? Does a bird need the same kind of exercise as a dog?

Demonstrate This is a great time to use the “Animal Care Pack.” You can pull out items from a bin one at a time or ask students to take turns choosing an item from the bin. For each item, ask the students to:

- 1) decide what pet(s) might use each item
- 2) explain what the item does or what need it meets for that animal

To make it a little easier, it might help to restrict the choices: cat, dog, rabbit/guinea pig, and maybe also gerbil/hamster/mouse, and parakeet. You can set up separate small bins for each of these animals with their picture on front, and ask students to organize the items by placing them in each animal's bin.

For example, if a student chooses a small bowl, the class might decide that it belongs to a cat or a small dog, and it is used to hold water or its meals (the need for water and food).

Discuss At the end of the activity, ask the students to think about the things that we can't put in the box- love, attention, time- and stress that these are still very important things that we can give our pets.

Who Gets a Pet?

Wrap up the discussion by asking students to think about what it means to be committed to a pet and the things we should all think about before we get a pet.

Ask

- When we get a pet, how long do we have to take care of that animal? (For the rest of its life!)
 - small mammals like gerbils, hamsters, and mice can live 1-4 years
 - rats and guinea pigs can live 6 years
 - canaries and rabbits can live 10 years
 - parakeets can live 15 years
 - dogs can live for 16 years
 - cats can live for 20 years
 - large parrots (not recommended for pets!) can live 70+ years!

- Before getting a pet, what should families think about?
 - how long will I want to care for this animal?
 - will I have time to clean its cage, walk it, and spend time playing with it/ handling it?
 - can I afford to pay for its food, vet bills, and other things it needs?
 - is this animal a good match for our family's lifestyle?
 - if I have to move, can I take the animal with me?
 - is there someone to take care of my animal when I go on vacation?

Humane Learning Outcome

“Companion animals are entirely dependent on their human guardians and it is the responsibility of human guardians to meet the needs of their pets. Pets are frequently acquired on a whim: because they are young or cute, or as a gift to a child. Guardianship should be considered very carefully, because animals can live a long time, and their dependency on humans lasts for that animal's life.”

Activities:

- Handouts:
- “Dog Collar” Coloring Page (MSPCA)
 - “Pets Need Responsible Owners” Coloring Page (MSPCA)
 - “Helping Hands for Pets” (Kind Teacher, Volume 26)
 - “Pets Are for Life” (Pet Pals, K-2)
 - “Supplies!” (Kind Teacher, Volume 27)
 - “Be Prepared” (Kind Teacher, Volume 29)
 - “Let's Compare” (Kind Teacher, Volume 29)
 - “Terrific Tags” (Kind Teacher, Volume 30)

Story: Before You Were Mine by Maribeth Boelts