

Pet Overpopulation

Teacher Background Information:

Pet overpopulation can be a hard topic to discuss as it can bring up two difficult issues for elementary students - spaying/neutering and euthanasia. For grades K – 2, neither of these topics is appropriate. However, the first activity allows students in the younger grades to understand the concept that not all animals have homes and the role of an animal shelter. For grades 3 – 5, spaying and neutering should just be discussed only as an operation to prevent cats and dog from having puppies and kittens. Regarding euthanasia, it should be explained as a humane alternative to an animal living on the street, having no food or water. Some students in grades 3 – 5 may already be aware that animals have to be put down at their local shelter and may condemn a shelter for this action. In this sense, it is very important to challenge the students on this remark, discuss why so many animals have to be put down (because there are so many and not enough homes) and not put blame on the shelter for having to euthanize its animals.

Grades: K - 2

Objective:

Affective:

- Students will be able to understand that there are not enough homes for all homeless dogs and cats in New York.

Academic:

- Students will add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers.

Motivation: Ask students how many of them like animals. Do any of them have a dog or cat?



Mini-Lesson:

Have students fill out the activity sheet. See Addendum #1.

Small Group Activity:

Have students make up posters/signs for the school walls. Posters can have a theme such as “Animals Need a Home,” “Please Go to Your Animal Shelter to Adopt an Animal.”

Summary:

- 1) Students can show their posters to the class.
- 2) Discuss why animals need a home and why we need animal shelters. Include the name, location and phone number of your local shelter in the lesson.
- 3) Explain that if students encounter a lost or abandoned animal, they should ask an adult to call the local shelter or animal control facility. Children should never approach or touch an animal they do not know.
- 4) Let students know that the animal shelter is a place to look if your family has decided to bring a new pet into the home.

Follow-up Activity:

The students can survey the school to see how many students/teachers have adopted animals from the shelter.

Special Education and English and a Second Language:

Students will probably be able to grasp the concepts of animals needing a home. They may not be able to do the math in the activity but they can draw a line from an animal to a home and there will be four animals that do not find a home. From there, you can discuss the fact that all animals do not have homes and the role of animal shelters.

New York State Standard Addressed:

Standard 3 – Mathematical Reasoning, Number and Numeration

1. Students use mathematical reasoning to analyze mathematical situations, make conjectures, gather evidence and construct an argument.
2. Students use number sense and numeration to develop an understanding of multiple uses of numbers in the real world.

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Grades: 3 – 5

Objective:

Affective:

Students will be able to solve simple addition and multiplication problems to find out how many kittens (or puppies) can result from one unsprayed female cat (or dog).

Academic:

- Students will add and multiply whole numbers.

Motivation:

Ask students if they like puppies? Kittens? What do they like about them?

Procedure:

Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Read each sentence and write the correct number of new kittens in the column to the right. When you finish, add all the numbers. This will help you understand how quickly cats can fill up shelters!

1. Last December, a family adopted **ONE** unsprayed female. She was two months old. Her name is Samantha. _____

2. In March, Samantha had **FIVE** kittens. Two were male and three were female. _____

3. In July, Samantha had her second litter. She had **FOUR** kittens, two males and two females. _____

4. In September, Samantha's **THREE** daughters from her first litter each had **FIVE** kittens. Seven were female. (3x5) _____

5. In November, Samantha had her third litter of **SIX** kittens. They were all female. _____

6. In January, her **TWO** daughters from her second litter each had **FOUR** kittens. Five were female. (2x4) _____

7. In March, **SEVEN** of Samantha's granddaughters each had **FIVE** kittens. (7x5) _____

Total number of kittens that were born because of one unsprayed _____

female cat in one year!

2) When you are finished with the math activity, discuss the following:

- a) How easy do you think it would be to find homes for all of these kittens?
- b) What could the family have done to prevent so many kittens without homes from being born?
- c) What can happen to animals that don't have a home (starvation, hit by a car, go to a shelter)? Have they ever seen any stray cats or dogs in their neighborhood?
- d) What is spaying and neutering?

Small-Group Activity:

The United States Postal Service has a spay/neuter stamp that sends a message to the whole USA that pet overpopulation is a problem. Can you think of any other ways to send a message to your community about spaying/neutering?

Follow-up Activities:

Researching spay/neuter statistics and learning about euthanasia rates may be too overwhelming for kids of this age. Try focusing on the positive and what efforts are being made to reduce overpopulation. The students can ask their local veterinarian/local animal shelter about how many spay/neuter operations they have performed.

Resources:

- www.aspca.org, ASPCA Cares offers free spay/neuter to low-income families in the five boroughs of New York City.
- www.spayusa.org, SPAY/USA, a program of The Pet Savers Foundation, is a nationwide network and referral service for affordable spay/neuter services.
- www.ddaf.org/SpayDay, The Doris Day Animal Foundation supports Spay/Neuter Day. Great ideas about promoting Spay/Neuter in your community.
- www.americanpartnershipforpets.org, Organization responsible for creating the United States Postal Service Spay/Neuter Stamp.

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