PET OVERPOPULATION

LESSON 2: Grades 4-6

FACT OR FICTION?

Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:

**Academic Goals:**  1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.3, 2.7 & 4.1

**Knowledge Goals:**  Communication Arts: 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6; Science: 3

**Objective:** To help students decipher the truth about spaying and neutering. There are many myths and misconceptions about these necessary procedures to combat the pet overpopulation problem. Students need to be able to separate the facts from the many fictitious beliefs.

**Common Core-Aligned Activities:**

**W.5.2—Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.**

**SL.5.2—Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.**

**W.5.7—Conduct short research projects to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.**

We’ve all heard the statement, “too much of a good thing is not really a good thing.” If we love pets, how can too many pets be a bad thing? What is pet overpopulation all about? Why is this a serious problem in our community?

**Character Concepts:** Responsibility

Being the guardian of another creature is very important. You hold their welfare in your hands. It is vital you do what you are supposed to do, providing humane and compassionate care to your pets.

**STEM initiatives: Thinking critically in the connections to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

**2-LS2-1—**Events have causes that generate observable patterns.

Cause and Effect are powerful observation tools that can predict patterns. How can cause and effect predict the needs of pets?

**Materials:** A copy of the following questions and a leader (teacher) to control the ensuing discussion or questions.

**Method:** Introduce this lesson by reviewing the basics of spaying and neutering with students. 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 born are lucky enough to have loving, caring homes.

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 fight. 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 prevent animals from suffering the tragedy of being born homeless, suffering as a stray or being euthanized.

After you read the statement, ask children to vote TRUE or FALSE. Tally the responses and ask one (or more, if time permits) student that voted TRUE to defend their answer. Why do they think the statement is true? Ask one (or more) student that represents a FALSE vote to justify their answer.

Then announce, “The answer is ………” and give the supporting explanation. Clarify any misconceptions that students might have and back it with the facts.

1.) *My pet will get fat and lazy if I have her/him spayed or neutered. True or False*  (false)

The truth is many animals get fat or lazy because of too much food (or the wrong type of food!) and not enough exercise. To keep your pet active, take your dog for walks or play ball with him. Play interactive games with your cat or rabbit. Cats love to play and can be quite creative in the games they choose. And always make certain your pet is eating a well-balanced, name-brand food.

1. *I love my pet and want her to have babies. She’ll be happy with a family. True or False* (false)

The truth is your pet already has a family—with you! She doesn’t need to experience motherhood to be happy. She is happy with you. You are her “pack” or her family. There are already too many puppies and kittens being born. Your dog, cat or rabbit will be healthier and live longer if she is spayed. She won’t get some diseases that may make her very sick or even die.

1. *My male dog won’t feel like a man if he is neutered. True or False* (false)

Your dog will always be a male, even if he is neutered. Neutering will make him happier to stay near your home. He may bark less. He will be less likely to roam which will help keep him safe from being hit by cars, getting lost or fighting with other animals. He will get fewer diseases and be healthier if he is neutered. He will be happier to be your pet.

4.) *Spaying or neutering are painful and will hurt my pet. True or False* (false)

Spaying and neutering are common surgical procedures (operations) performed by a licensed veterinarian (a doctor for animals.) An anesthetic (medicine that allows the animal to go to sleep for a short amount of time) is given so that your pet feels no pain. A small incision (cut) is made and the operation is completed. Your pet will probably have a few stitches in the incision area and may be told to rest or take it easy for a few days. Your pet may be a little sleepy after the operation. Follow the veterinarian’s advice for your pet and after a few days, your pet will feel good as new!

**Call To Action:** Check our “*Recommended Web Links”* and have students create a few more true and false statements to test each other’s knowledge on the truth about spaying and neutering. Have students then create a true/false test to pass out to other classes followed by a student panel discussion on the truth about these procedures. How do spaying and neutering affect the animals in your community? Have children discuss this with other classes.

**Attention Teacher:**  See the following activity sheet “Writing to Correct a Wrong”.

**Reading:** Visit our section entitled ***Recommended Children’s Literature*** for a comprehensive listing of animal-related books.

**Web sites:**  Visit our section entitled ***Recommended Web Links*** for animal-related web sites.