PET OVERPOPULATION

**LESSON 4: Grades 4-6**

**EVERY NUMBER TELLS A STORY**

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:** 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6 & 4.7

**Knowledge Goals:** Communication Arts: 1 & 6; Mathematics: 1 & 3; Science: 4 & 8; Social Studies: 7

**Objective:** To help students understand the work being done by local animal shelters on behalf of the pet overpopulation problem. To help students understand the importance of community involvement in the work to combat pet overpopulation.

**Common Core-Aligned Activities:**

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

**SL.5.1c—Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.**

There are thousands of companion animals in shelters throughout the state of Missouri. Each animal is identified by a number, but behind that number is a story of a real life. Why did they get lost? Why were they unwanted? Why were they abandoned? Do they have a name? Why was the bond between the owner and the animal broken? Did anyone ever love and care for them? Do they know what it is like to be loved and happy? Why were some abused and neglected? How do they feel in a shelter or animal control facility? If they could talk, what would they say?

Help students to explore these questions and to realize that animals are NOT just statistics or numbers, but living, feeling, breathing creatures---just like we are. Each one deserves to have a full life, and the reason the numbers are so high at shelters is a direct relation to the pet overpopulation problem. Until the number of animals being born is lowered, shelters will be full of unwanted animals---but behind each number, is the story of a life.

**Character Concepts:** Responsibility

We are either part of the problem or part of the solution. Allowing animals to breed with no regard for the puppies and kittens produced is irresponsible. What can YOU do to help draw awareness to this problem? How can you help to shoulder the responsibility?

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

**3-5-ETS1-1—**Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.

**5-PSI-4—**Cause and effect relationships are routinely identified, tested, and used to explain change.

Break down into working groups and ask each group to design a solution for the problem posed above. Remember…this is a REAL problem and is widespread across the United States (actually worldwide!!) What kind of solutions can your group design? How will they work? Do you have a source for the funding of your design? The manpower to make it happen? Can your community accept your plan?

**Materials:**

* Computer
* Telephone
* Paper and pencils
* List of questions (those provided and those developed by the students)

**Method:** The teacher will review details regarding the pet overpopulation problem in their community and throughout the entire United States. Additionally, review the questions presented in Lesson One, exploring the role of humane organizations and animal shelters in your community.

Instruct the children to consult the computer for a listing of animal welfare and animal shelters in your local community. After compiling the list, help students to identify pertinent questions regarding animals in your community. The following questions can be used as a starting point:

* What different kinds of animals are brought into the shelter?
* How many animals are brought in every day?
* Why do you call it “adopting” animals instead of “buying” an animal?
* What is the most unique “story” that accompanied an animal to your shelter?
* What kinds of jobs do the employees and volunteers do for the shelter and animals?

Create additional questions to gain insight into the unique and necessary work animal shelters provide for the community.

Look at the number you wrote down for how many animals are brought in every day. If this number is based on seven days a week, how many animals are brought to the shelter each week? Month? Year? In a period of ten years, how many total animals would be relinquished to the shelter?

* How do you feel about the numbers you just calculated?
* What do these numbers tell you?
* What can YOU do to help end the overpopulation problem and the broken bonds between people and their pets?

**Call to Action:** Ask the animal shelter personnel (workers) what children your age can do to make the community a safe, more happy and healthy environment for animals. If the shelter could have a “Wish List” for the animals, what might it include? Do they need toys, chew bones or food? How about cleaning supplies, towels or blankets? Can they use paper towels or bleach? Make a list of items that would help your shelter in their work for the animals and post it at your school. Put a decorated box to collect the items and deliver them to the animals as a gift from your school.

**Attention Teacher:** See following activity sheet “Solving a Problem”.

**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.