**FABULOUS FELINES**

**LESSON 2: Grades 4-6**

**YOUR CAT’S HEALTH**

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:** 1.2, 1.3, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2, 4.7

**Knowledge Goals:** Communication Arts: 1, 6; Mathematics: 1; Science: 3; Health/Physical Education: 3, 5

**Objective:** To introduce students to proper health care for cats. To introduce students to the necessity of professional veterinary care and the impact of such care for their pet.

**Common Core-aligned activities:**

**W.5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.**

**W.5.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences.**

Invite students to research various aspects of caring for the health of a cat. This can include topics such as diet, veterinary care—both preventive and reactive, exercise, grooming and enrichment (toys, play, etc.) After they have collected their information, have them write a narrative describing the impact, positively or negatively, that this care/lack of can have on a pet’s life. Have them present their findings to the class.

**Character Concepts:** Responsibility, Caring

**Responsibility:** Following the “golden rule” to treat another being as you would want to be treated. This includes providing the essentials of a healthy existence, especially for animals that can’t speak for themselves.

**Caring:** Being kind to creatures. Being compassionate and showing you are concerned for their well-being by providing proper veterinary care and practicing appropriate attention to care.

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

**5-LS2-** When caring for a pet, what is the cause/effect relationship and how can your behavior affect the life of an animal?

**5-ESS3-** How can you create a habitat that encourages health and well-being for your pet? When you change the habitat or alter the care, how does this affect the well-being of your pet?

**Call to Action:** Investigate the cost of veterinary care. Talk to a vet in your area to determine prices of the above-mentioned care. Is there a low-cost clinic in your area at a shelter? How do prices compare?

Ask a veterinarian to visit your classroom and speak to the students.

**Materials Needed:**

* DOWNLOAD HANDOUT: “Pet Overpopulation Math Activity”
* DOWNLOAD HANDOUT: “For the Health of Your Pet”
* DOWNLOAD HANDOUT: “Visit From a Vet”
* Optional: Scrubs or white jacket, children’s play medical kit, stuffed animals

**Method:** Whether you have had a cat for many years or are considering getting a new cat or kitten, it’s important to know how to care for kitty’s health. Remember, cats are domesticated creatures that rely on us to take care of them. They can’t take care of themselves. They need preventive health care and special care when they are sick.

There are some basic things any cat owner should know about preventive health care. What should you do each year to be sure your cat stays healthy? Cats need to go to the veterinarian each year for a check-up (just like humans need to go to the doctor once a year). The veterinarian should be one of your cat’s best friends, even if your cat doesn’t think a trip to the vet is fun!

What will the veterinarian do for kitty during a yearly examination?

1. Give shots (FVRCP and rabies vaccinations):

Vaccinations are an inexpensive and painless way to protect your pet against disease. Cats need a yearly FVRCP shot. This protects him against the following diseases: **F**eline **V**iral **R**hinotracheitis, **C**alcivirus, **P**anleukopenia, and **C**hlamydia. A yearly rabies vaccination protects your cat against the rabies disease. If you have a kitten, check with your vet for an individual shot schedule.

1. Look at:

\*teeth for tartar/gum swelling

\*ears for ear mites and other fungus problems

\*body for ringworm/fleas

\*fecal exam for worms

\*eyes for normal pupil response and normal retinal appearance

\*weight, heart rate, temperature

Give the class a chance to practice being veterinarians. Bring in scrubs or a white jacket, a child’s play medical kit, and stuffed animals. Allow students the opportunity to experience giving a pet a medical exam.

What else do you need to do for your cat to keep him healthy and safe?

1. Spay/neuter – a simple operation that will prevent your pet from making unwanted babies. Spaying is for girls/females and neutering is for boys/males. There are many other benefits to spaying and neutering. It protects your pet against certain types of cancer and infections. Neutered cats are less likely to spray to mark their territory. The spayed or neutered pet makes a much better companion. They are less aggressive and more affectionate than unaltered pets. They are less likely to roam and fight. Their attention is focused on you.

These simple surgeries can also significantly help impact the pet overpopulation problem. Millions of dogs and cats are euthanized (humanely put to death) in this country each year because people ignore the fact their pet is contributing to the problem. There are not enough homes for all the puppies and kittens born each year. You can be part of the solution by making sure your own pet is spayed or neutered! Complete the “Pet Overpopulation Math Activity” handout together.

Some shelters practice “early spay/neuter”; this means pets are fixed as early as eight weeks of age. They must also weigh as least two pounds. This ensures that all pets are altered before going home. Too many animals are euthanized to ignore the importance of spay/neuter.

1. Microchip – A microchip is a tiny computer part the size of a grain of rice.

It is inserted under your pet’s skin between his shoulder blades with a special needle. It hurts a little at first, just like a shot, but will stay there for the rest of your pet’s life as permanent identification. After that, your pet won’t even know it’s there. If your pet gets lost and someone brings him to a shelter, they will use a special scanner that can see if a microchip is present. Each microchip has a special one-of-a-kind I.D. number; that special number will be detected by the scanner. Shelters match that number to the owner and help the pet get home.

3) Flea & heartworm prevention – Cats can get heartworm disease in the same way dogs do. Mosquitoes transmit the disease by biting an infected animal, then your cat. The sad truth is that just one worm can cause coughing, breathing difficulties, vomiting, weight loss and in some cases sudden death.

Flea control is very important to the health of your cat/kitten. Flea bites cause discomfort, irritation, and often carry tapeworms, an intestinal worm. Fleas can quickly infect your home and can bite humans.

Control heartworm and fleas through medications available from your veterinarian.

She will help you select the appropriate product for your pet.

For the best protection from heartworm and fleas, keep your cat indoors all the time! This will help ensure he will stay parasite-free!

Find out the date of your pet’s last check-up. If she hasn’t been within the last year, she is due for a visit to the vet.

Distribute the “For the Health of Your Pet” handout for the children to take home.

Use the “Visit From a Vet” handout for a review of spaying and neutering.

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.

**HEY TEACHERS! If your students want more fun, here are some additional hand-outs to download:**

“Meeting the Needs”

“A Shot? Why Not?”

“Caring for Pets”