PET OVERPOPULATION

**LESSON 2: Grades K-3**

**IF THIS CAT COULD WISH UPON A STAR,**

**WHAT OH WHAT WOULD SHE WISH FOR?**

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:** 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6 & 4.7

**Knowledge Goals:**  Communication Arts: 1, 4 & 6; Mathematics: 1, 2 & 5; Science: 3, 4 & 8; Social Studies: 4 7 6; Fine Arts: 1 & 4

**Objective:** To help students realize the needs of animals – the most fundamental need being a loving home.

**Common Core-Aligned Activities:**

**SL.K-2.1—Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults.**

**SL.K-2.4—Describe people, places, things and relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.**

Ask students to discuss what feelings are. What affects our feelings? What can make us happy? Sad? Frightened? Lonely? Elaborate, listing all of the ‘feelings’ students mention. Can animals, as living, breathing, feeling creatures, experience any of these feelings? Why? What affects their feelings? How are they similar to our feelings? Discuss.

**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 pet friend.

**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:**

* Crayons or colored pencils
* DOWNLOAD Handout: “If This Cat Could Wish” handout

**Method:** Introduce this lesson by reminding students that responsible pet owners spay and neuter their pets. Every year in the United States, millions of dogs and cats must be *humanely* euthanized at animal shelters because they are unwanted. So many people allow their pets to breed babies they do not want to keep that there are literally millions more animals than there are homes to go around. The result is an excess of loving, wonderful pets that are left in animal shelters – waiting for a chance to be a family pet.

The solution is for people to spay or neuter their pets. It is a solution young people can help with because often pets are allowed to breed so that children can ‘witness the miracle of birth.” Teaching about the need to spay or neuter need not involve complicated descriptions or sex education. The operations involved can simply be described as “the no litters, less cancer operation,” because in addition to preventing unwanted litters, they reduce a pet’s risk of some kinds of cancer later in life. Teachers should also remind students that a pet needs a permanent, loving home for its entire life. Many “middle aged” pets are turned in to shelters, simply because they are no longer cute, little babies. These pets have a difficult time finding a new home, as they are competing with countless puppies and kittens.

The following activity will help students explore the needs that animals have. You can then discuss the effect of these needs on the welfare of the animal. (Cause and effect)

Ask students to imagine the needs of a pet. What makes a pet feel comfortable and loved? Happy? Content? Does a pet need a home for a short period of time or forever? How does it feel to be unwanted or lonely? Sad? Frightened? Are we able to see all things that we need to live? What do we need that can’t be seen, but felt in our hearts? Ask students to imagine themselves as a homeless animal. As a homeless animal, what could make their dreams come true?

Draw these wishes on the coloring handout and have students discuss their choices with the class.

**Call To Action:**  Ask students to discuss their coloring sheet with their parents, neighbors and friends. Encourage students to observe pets that might live in their home or neighborhood. Are their dreams coming true?

**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.