**PET OVERPOPULATION**

**LESSON 4: Grades K-3**

# EVERY NUMBER TELLS A STORY

**Curriculum Connections, Standards addressed:**

**Academic Goals:**  1.1, 1.2, 2.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6 & 4.7

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

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

**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 they have researched regarding various animals highlighted on shelter websites or through conversations with someone actively working at an animal shelter or control facility. What kinds of stories did they discover? Were there any common themes (i.e., stray animals, people obtaining puppies and kittens but relinquishing them to a shelter when they were older, no longer ‘cute’ babies?) What was the most common reason animals were given to shelters? How can this change? What needs to happen to create happy endings for these countless stories? Discuss.

**Character Concepts:** Responsibility, Citizenship

**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 feline friend.

**Citizenship**: Do your share to make your home, school and community a better place for animals to live. Support your local animal shelter or animal control facility.

**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 welfare of animals in your community through the work of an animal shelter? What happens when there are too many animals and not enough homes? What happens when a shelter gets too many animals and there isn’t enough space to care for all of them? Discuss these events and what effects this may have on the work of those sheltering and caring for homeless animals.

**Materials:**

* Phone directory or access to the internet
* 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.

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? Do they have a name? Why was the bond between the owner and 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.**

Instruct the children to consult the telephone directory or web for a listing of animal welfare and animal shelters in your local community. Additionally, search the internet for animal shelters and the stories highlighted on their websites. Typically there are rescues or stories of lost and found cases highlighted. After compiling the list, help students to identify pertinent questions regarding animals in your community. The below 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 that animal shelters provide for the community.

**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? Make a list of the items that would help your shelter in their work for the animals and post it at your school. Put a decorated box or canister to collect the items and deliver them to the animals as a gift from your school.

**Attention Teacher:** See the following activity sheet “A Shelter Story”.

**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.