Appropriate and Inappropriate Pets

by Willow Soltow

The content of the November 1985 issue of Kind News, NAAHE's children's publication, relates to the theme of this article. If you receive Kind News, we suggest you use it as hands-on material to support the activities covered here. If you do not receive Kind News and would like more information about it, write to Kind News, Box 362, East Haddam, CT 06423.

Unwise pet choices can have catastrophic results. The euthanasia of unwanted pets; the accidental death of pets; and, unfortunately, even the death of owners and their children can and do result. Last year in Reno, Nevada, a "pet" snake killed a baby sleeping in her crib. Such events are extremely rare but are preventable. Usually inappropriate pet choices do not produce such catastrophic results for humans but do involve guilt, frustration, grief, disappointment, and financial costs. The pet suffers even more. We hope you will find time during your busy school days to include this unit. An added benefit to you is the wonderful teaching techniques incorporated in this unit - precision thinking, writing with a purpose, and the multiple-response technique. These are techniques that are still new to many teachers but are as versatile as flash cards and usually a lot more fun!

Wild: An animal that, in its natural environment, usually does not need food and shelter from humans in order to survive. Although some wild animals live in cities (like squirrels and birds), most live in areas where there are fewer people (the countryside, forests, and jungles). In their native habitats, their breeding is not controlled by humans, and they do not like and are not meant to live with people.

Domestic: An animal that is bred by people over hundreds and hundreds of years to live comfortably with humans; to depend upon them for their food, shelter, and care; and to meet certain human needs (like companion animals and farm animals). People are generally capable of satisfying the needs of these animals, which is not the case with wild animals.

Mini Unit Overview

Early Childhood and Primary Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Humane Concept</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1: Domestic or Wild?</td>
<td>Animals may be domestic or wild.</td>
<td>definition recognition identification categorization use of small motor skills</td>
<td>science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 2: Yes or No: Wild Animal Pets</td>
<td>Some animals make appropriate pets. Others do not. Wild animals are never appropriate as pets. Appropriate pet choices are based largely on an owner's ability and desire to meet fully the needs of an animal.</td>
<td>definition recognition recall identification categorization analysis application discussion use of small motor skills</td>
<td>science social studies (family living)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 3: Yes or No: Domestic Animal Pets</td>
<td>Some domestic animals are inappropriate as pets for some people. Wild animals are never appropriate as pets. Appropriate pet choices are based largely on an owner's ability and desire to meet fully the needs of an animal.</td>
<td>definition recognition recall identification categorization analysis discussion use of small motor skills</td>
<td>science social studies (family living)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 4: Pets and Owners</td>
<td>Appropriate pet choices are based largely on an owner's ability and desire to meet fully the needs of an animal.</td>
<td>matching analysis recall identification use of small motor skills</td>
<td>reading social studies (family living)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Childhood and Primary Grades (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Humane Concept</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 5: Our Pet Choices</td>
<td>Choosing an appropriate pet involves many decisions about what is best for the animal and the owner.</td>
<td>writing, strategy, recall, analysis, application, writing, discussion, oral expression, use of small motor skills</td>
<td>social studies, family living, language arts, math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intermediate and Junior High Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Humane Concept</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1: Precision Thinking</td>
<td>Animals may be wild or domestic. Wild animals are considered inappropriate as pets.</td>
<td>critical thinking, classification, identification, analysis, application, discussion</td>
<td>science, language arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 2: Starting Statistics</td>
<td>Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade.</td>
<td>understanding and computing mean, median, and range, estimating reading and visualizing large numbers, analysis, comparison, interpretation</td>
<td>math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 3: Captive Animal Game</td>
<td>Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade.</td>
<td>running, movement, analysis, interpreting</td>
<td>physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 4: Writing With a Purpose</td>
<td>Animals suffer when their needs are not met.</td>
<td>writing, description, analysis, explanation, synthesis, formulation</td>
<td>language arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 5: Problems List</td>
<td>Pets depend on responsible owners to fulfill their needs. Appropriate pet choices are based largely on an owner's ability and desire to meet fully the needs of an animal. Some domestic animals are inappropriate as pets for some people. Inappropriate pet choices cause suffering for both humans and animals.</td>
<td>categorization, hypothesis, testing, interpreting, analysis, inference, comparison</td>
<td>language arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 6: Rules To Choose</td>
<td>Humans have the responsibility to make appropriate pet choices.</td>
<td>description, interpretation, summarization, analysis, hypothesis, testing, critical thinking</td>
<td>language arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early Childhood and Primary Grades

Our beginning activities make use of a teaching technique known as the multi-response technique. All students will be actively involved at the same time in identifying animals as domestic or wild, and as appropriate or inappropriate pets. Although all students will respond at once to your questions, you will be able to identify quickly each student's individual response!

Lesson 1: Wild or Domestic

- **Preparation:** Collect a number of pictures of wild and domestic animals from books, magazines, old, animal-related calendars, and other sources. Have an index card for each student.
- **Activity:** 1. Prepare students for the activity by having them read the November 1985 issue of Kind News and/or reviewing the definitions of domestic and wild offered at the beginning of this article. Simplify the definitions as appropriate for your students. 2. Pass out the index card to each youngster. Have each child mark a large W on one side of the card for wild, and a large D on the other side for domestic. One at a time, hold up the animal pictures you have collected and ask students to answer whether the pictured animal is wild or domestic by holding up the W side or the D side of their cards. Discuss the pictures that you notice are difficult for the class. With this technique it is easy to spot individual children who are not grasping the concept and may need some individual tutoring. Have students save their W/D cards for use in Lesson 2, which follows.

Lesson 2: Yes or No: Wild Animal "Pets"

- **Preparation:** Same as Lesson 1. Also have on hand tape and two large pieces of paper, paper.
- **Activity:** 1. Pass out new index cards to your students. On one side of the cards have them mark YES, on the other side, NO. Meanwhile, tack up two large pieces of paper. At the top of one paper write YES, and at the top of the other write NO. 2. As in Lesson 1, hold up one at a time the animal pictures that you have collected. This time, however, have students identify whether each animal would make an appropriate pet. You can assist students in their decision making by asking questions such as, "Can you buy food for this animal at a pet store?" "Is this animal used to being around people?" "Does this animal need lots of room?" "Could this animal do all the things it likes to do if it were your pet?" "Do you think many people know how to take care of this animal?"

After students have identified each animal to be appropriate or inappropriate as a pet, have a student tape the animal picture to one of the large papers under YES if the animal would make an appropriate pet, under NO if the animal would not make an appropriate pet.

3. Next, ask students to get out their W/D index cards. Point to each animal picture and have students indicate whether the animal is domestic or wild. Write the appropriate letter beside each picture. As you complete this activity, students should begin to see a pattern. All of the animals listed in the YES column will be domestic animals. Of the animals listed in the NO column, some may be domestic; but most will be wild. As you go along, discuss with students: "Are the inappropriate pets mostly domestic or wild?" "Are the appropriate pets mostly domestic or wild?" With teacher assistance, students should be able to form the conclusion that wild animals are inappropriate as pets.

4. When the activity has been completed,
Lesson 5: Our Pet Choices (adapted from "The Pet Census" by Beverly Armstrong)

**Preparation:** You will need a large piece of paper to make a classroom chart; or have students make their own individual charts using rulers, pencils, and paper.

**Activity:** 1. Begin by helping students to define the word census—a count of the population of individuals in a given area. Explain that students are going to take a census of the kinds of pets they might choose when they are older and can acquire a pet (or pets) themselves. Be sure to point out that this is an exercise focused on future choices rather than current ones to avoid encouraging students to pester parents for a pet!
2. Have students turn their paper lengthwise and set up a Pet Choice Census chart similar to the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOGS</th>
<th>CATS</th>
<th>RABBITS</th>
<th>FISHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson 6: Physical Education and Captive Wild Animals

**Preparation:** Use our article “Sharing the Spotlight: Physical Education and Captive Wild Animals” to reinforce the concept that wild animals suffer as a result of the pet trade.

**Activity:** 1. Have students count off into 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, and 4’s. Have them form groups, with each group having at least one 1, one 2, one 3, and one 4. (“I-tellers”) students may join other groups as extra 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, or 4’s. Explain that the 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, and 4’s have a writing assignment today. The 4’s will complete an assignment tomorrow.

Hand out the descriptions of the pet/people situations.

1. Assign one pet/person situation to each 1 group. The 1’s, 2’s, 3’s, and 4’s will each write a solution to the problem situation for the judge in their group (the 4) to consider. Have the 4’s write their solution from the point of view of the pet owner or someone else? Why?
2. What is a solution from the point of view of the pet owner or someone else? Why?
3. What is a solution from the point of view of the pet itself?

All solutions must be written in the form of testimony, which should include answers to the following:

1. What are the problems for you in the situation?
2. Who is responsible for these problems—“the pet” or the pet owner or someone else? Why?
3. What is a solution to the problem? Tell why it is a good solution.

The following day give each judge the testimony from all the members of his or her group. The judge should read all the testimony, then decide whose solution is best and why. The judge’s decision should be prepared in written form and include answers to the following questions:

1. What are all the problems identified in the testimony?
2. Which solution solves the most problems?
3. Which solution meets the needs of the animal?
4. Which solution did you choose and why?

Have the judges’ written decisions photographed and handed out to all the students who submitted testimony. Allow students time to read the judges’ decisions. A lively discussion is almost sure to follow.

Lesson 7: Problems List

**Preparation:** None

**Activity:** 1. Reinforce the concepts from the preceding activity by discussing with students: “Are all domestic animals appropriate pets? What are some situations in which even a common pet such as a cat or a dog is not appropriate for a particular person?”
2. Have students conduct a brainstorming session to create two lists. The first list should enumerate problems that can result for people from inappropriate pet choices. The second list should enumerate problems that can result for animals (both domestic and wild) because of inappropriate pet choices.

Lesson 6: More Critical Thinking

**Preparation:** To conclude your unit on appropriate and inappropriate pets, refresh students’ memory regarding the critical thinking rule-making exercises they carried out in Lesson 1.

**Activity:** Turn to our article “Sharing the Spotlight: Critical Thinking and Captive Wildlife” for Lesson 6. Have students design their own pet/person situation in determining what is or is not an appropriate pet for his or her current and anticipated lifestyle.

Inappropriate pet choices cause heartache and suffering for people and pets alike. With the title of the article “Kind News Feature,” you may be able to prevent some of suffering before it becomes a reality.

Wilford Solomon
We hope you’ll enjoy applying our Kind News Feature teaching unit in your own classroom. If you’d like to share your experiences, please contact Wilford Solomon, Editor, Child & Animals, Box 562 East Hampton, CT 06423.