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.

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**Mini Unit Overview**

**Early Childhood and Primary Grades**

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<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Humane Concept</th>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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Early Childhood and Primary Grades (continued)

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<td>Lesson 1: Our Pet Choices</td>
<td>Choosing an appropriate pet involves many decisions about what is best for the animal and the owner.</td>
<td>social studies (family living)</td>
<td>language arts (math)</td>
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Intermediate and Junior High Grades

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<td>Lesson 1: Precision Thinking</td>
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<td>science</td>
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<td>Lesson 2: Starting Statistics</td>
<td>Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade.</td>
<td>math</td>
<td>physical education</td>
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<td>Lesson 3: Captive Animal Game</td>
<td>Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade.</td>
<td>running</td>
<td>language arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson 4: Writing With a Purpose</td>
<td>Animals suffer when their needs are not met.</td>
<td>writing</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</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</td>
<td>language arts</td>
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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 in answer 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 on hand for each student.
- Activity: 1. Pass out an 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. At the top of one paper write 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. Having completed this activity, students should be able to form the conclusion that wild animals are inappropriate as pets.
- Activity: 1. Pass out new index cards to each student. Place a picture of the animal you have been working on at the top of each index card. Ask students to identify whether each animal would make an appropriate pet. For example, "Does this animal like to be around people?" "Do you think many people know how to take care of this animal?" Have students save their index cards for use in Lesson 3, which follows.
- Activity: 2. Pass out new index cards to each student. Place a picture of the animal you have been working on at the top of each index card. Ask students to identify whether each animal would make an appropriate pet. For example, "Does this animal like to be around people?" "Do you think many people know how to take care of this animal?" Have students save their index cards for use in Lesson 3, which follows.

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Lesson 3: Choosing a Good Pet

**Preparation:** Have handy your collection of animal pictures. Be sure students still have their YES/NO cards from Lesson 2.

**Activity:** 1. Reinforce the concept that wild animals do not make appropriate pets by sharing information about students about some of the things wild animals need that humans cannot provide for them. Some of these needs include freedom, a natural diet, and an opportunity to interact with members of their own species.

   2. Next, ask students to think about domestic animals. Discuss: “Are dogs good pets? Are horses good pets? Would a horse be a good pet if you lived in a city apartment? Why not?” With your assistance, students can begin to see that while all wild animals are inappropriate as pets, some domestic animals are also inappropriate for people who cannot easily meet those animals’ needs.

   3. To reinforce the concepts above, have students give brief descriptions of possible pet owners and their living situations. Write the descriptions on the chalkboard. Some might include: a person living in a small apartment in the city; a person living in the country; a person who is away from home very often. Hold up or two pictures of domestic animals for each possible pet owner description on the chalkboard. Have students hold up their YES/NO cards to identify whether each domestic animal is appropriate for the pet person in question.

Lesson 4: Pets and Owners Matchup

**Preparation:** Photocopy the “Pets and Owners Matchup” work sheet that follows this article. You will need one for each student.

**Activity:** Have students complete the “Pets and Owners Matchup” work sheet to reinforce the concepts of the unit.

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 encourage students to be pester parents for a pet.

   2. Have students turn their paper lengthwise and set up a Pet Choice Census chart similar to the following.

   3. Each student should make one wide-left-hand column and thirty narrow right-hand column boxes to form small boxes to the right of it. (You will need as many small right-hand column boxes as there are students.) Help pet owners take a census of all the different appropriate pets they might have one day. Assist youngsters in making realistic choices for the future, taking into consideration some of the ways in which their life-styles may change in coming years. Some students may decide that having no pets would be the best choice for them. Students who already have pets should include those pets on the census. If some of those pets seem inappropriate to the other students, stress the importance of being responsible for a pet that has already been acquired.

   4. Have students fill in the spaces on the wide-left-hand column of their charts with names of all the animals that are chosen. Ask them to mark an X in the boxes to the right of each animal for every student who names that animal as their pet choice.

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 rules to aid a person in determining what is or is not an appropriate pet for his or her current and anticipated life-style.

Inappropriate pet choices cause heartache and suffering for people and pets alike. With the help of our “Kind News Feature,” you may be able to prevent some of these situations from becoming more severe.