



Animal Caretaker

Goals of this lesson:

Youth will:

- Learn about what pets need to be happy and healthy.
- Decide the steps necessary to care for a pet.
- Recognize the responsibility and work it takes to own a pet.

What You Need to Know:

Every animal has basic (necessary) needs for it to be happy and healthy. Before buying a pet, you should make sure that you will be able to give it these things and that you can handle the responsibility of owning a pet.

Basic pet needs include:

- **Food:** Animals should have a healthy supply of food and be fed at least two meals each day.
- **Water:** Fresh, clean water should be given to them several times a day.
- **Clean Home:** Animals need a place they can go to stay cool, warm or be out of the rain/snow. This also gives them a place they can feel safe. Sometimes this means a house, cage or kennel of their own or maybe it means their own bed in the corner of a room.
- **Exercise:** All animals need different amounts of exercise but they all need some each day. This may mean taking your pet for a walk, playing in the backyard or your living room or, for small animals, taking it out of its cage for a while each day.
- **Grooming:** Animals like dogs need to be brushed several times a week. Other small animals like hamsters, rabbits and guinea pigs also need to be groomed often. Cats need less grooming because they groom themselves. By keeping pets brushed, this keeps them from shedding as much.
- **Attention:** Having someone to play with is always more fun, even for pets. They need lots of attention and to be played with everyday.

Needs for animals are going to be different for every pet. Make sure you investigate the kind of pet you want before you get one. You can find out how much exercise they need, how much grooming you will have to do, what they need to eat and if they need to be indoors or outdoors. This can help you to decide if you can take care of it properly.

Materials Needed:

- Magazines or advertisements from magazines that deal with various animals (dog or cat food ads, kitty litter ads, etc.)



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cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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- Animal Care Checklist
- Paper
- Crayons, colored pencils or markers to draw and color their animal
- Glue
- Scissors

Learning Activity:

1. Choose an animal you would like to have as a “pet.” Why did you choose this pet?
2. Draw that animal. What does the animal look like? What color is it? How big is your pet?
3. What does that animal need to be happy and healthy? (Food, shelter, water, exercise, grooming, attention)
4. Find pictures in magazines or draw and color a picture that show the basic needs of your pet. (ie. Dog- pictures of dog food, water bowl, dog house/kennel/carrier/dog bed, dog toys or picture of kids playing with a dog, brush/nail trimmer/dog treats, etc.)
5. Look at the animal care checklist. What would you need to do with your pet each day? What would happen if you did not take care of your animal? Why is it important to think about everything you would need to do for a pet before you decide to get one? Why should some people not have pets?

**You can also make a plan to help a friend care for their pet. This is a great experience if they have a different type of pet than you do or if you do not have a pet at home.

Other Fun Things to Do:

Make homemade dog treats for pets at home:

Doggie Pops

4 cups fruit juice
 1 banana, mashed
 ½ cup vanilla yogurt

Mix ingredients together until well blended. Put in small paper cups or ice cube trays. Freeze. These can be treats for your dog as well as for you.

Read a book:

A Treasury for Children by James Herriot. A collection of animal short stories written by British veterinarian James Herriot which includes such stories as “Only One Woof”, “Moses the Kitten” and “Smudge, the Little Lost Lamb.”

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Animal Care Checklist

Name _____ My animal is _____

Take responsibility for an animal by giving it the right care...food, water, shelter, exercise, grooming and attention. Keep a record for one week of how you care for your animal. Write down each thing as you do it and put it in the correct box on your checklist chart.

| | Food | Water | Clean Home | Exercise | Grooming/ Brushing | Attention |
|-----------|------|-------|------------|----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Sunday | | | | | | |
| Monday | | | | | | |
| Tuesday | | | | | | |
| Wednesday | | | | | | |
| Thursday | | | | | | |
| Friday | | | | | | |
| Saturday | | | | | | |

