

Animal Overload

Suggested Grade Levels: 4-6

Subject: Math/Art

Character: Responsibility

Materials and technology to be used:

- “15 Dogs, 45 Cats, and YOU!” worksheet – **x1 per student**
- Notebook paper – **x1 sheet per student**
- Writing utensils – **x1 per student**
- Crayons, markers and/or colored pencils – **x enough for each student**
- Sticky notes – **x1 per student**
- 8x8 square pieces of paper – **x1 per student**
- Colorful banner paper or other large reel of paper – **x1 large sheet**
- Scissors – **x1**
- Glue – **x1**

Objective(s):

Students will understand that there is a very serious pet overpopulation problem in the United States with the results being too many dogs and cats and not enough homes. Students will learn the fate of many strays and will understand the term euthanasia. They will learn that the solution to pet overpopulation is spaying and neutering.

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Ask students to close their eyes and imagine living in a house with 60 animals...*How would that look? What would you see? What would it sound like? Smell like?* Tell students that there are 15 dogs and 45 cats for **every** person in the United States. Ask students if they think that they could properly care for that many animals in their home? If they say yes, remind them that each pet requires food, water, daily exercise, yearly vaccinations, flea and tick medicine, heartworm preventatives, leash, collar, tags, etc. Then ask them to think of how many people live in their home and remind them that each of those family members would also have their own 15 dogs and 45 cats...

Lesson Beginning:

1. Provide each student with a “15 Dogs, 45 Cats, and YOU!” worksheet. Have them write the number of people that live in their home at the top of the page and circle it.
 - Ask them to multiply 15 by the number of people in their home to get the number of dogs that would live with them.

- Ask them to multiply 45 by the number of people in their home to get the number of cats that would live with them.
 - Add the solutions from these last two mathematical problems to get the total number of dogs and cats that each of your student's households would have to care for.
 - Then ask them to imagine what their home and their life would be like if they cared for all these animals. Have students write a three-sentence summary at the bottom of their paper. Have students turn these papers in at the end of the lesson for grading.
2. Have five different students share their summaries with the class. Reiterate the hardships, unrealistic conditions, and neglect that would result from this many animals.
 3. Explain to students that there is a very serious problem in our country called "pet overpopulation". Write the word on the board.
 - Ask students to give a thumbs up if they have ever heard this term before. Have students turn and talk with a neighbor about what they think this term means regarding animals. Call on a couple of volunteers to share their thoughts.

Pet overpopulation = There are too many dogs and cats and not enough homes.

4. Ask students: "What do you think happens to most of these animals that do not have homes?" Call on a few volunteers to share their ideas. Tell students that they are going to explore this question further...

Middle of Lesson:

1. Pass out a sticky note to each student. Provide the following statistic to students and have them attempt to fill in the blanks on a sticky note: "Only _____ out of every _____ animals find a life-long home." Have students write down their ideas and post the note on the board. Read through all sticky notes and discuss as a class.

Answer: "Only 250 out of every 1,000 animals find a life-long home."

- Explain to students that the *remaining 750 animals are either lucky enough to find care, food, water, and shelter in an animal shelter or end up as "strays". Strays are homeless domestic animals that have no owners or a place to call home.*
 - Review the term "domestic." **Domestic** animals have been taken into homes as pets and no longer have survival instincts and depend on us to provide food, shelter, water, and care.
2. Tell students that the lives of homeless stray animals are very difficult because many things can threaten their lives. Ask students to brainstorm what these threats may be and then have them write down as many as they can think of on notebook paper. Share and discuss. Some threats include (write these on the board):
 - a. Starvation
 - b. Bad weather
 - c. Loneliness
 - d. Vehicles (hit by a car)
 - e. Abuse by people
 - f. Attacked by other animals
 - g. Stolen and sold elsewhere
 - h. Eating toxic or harmful substances
 - i. Disease
 3. Ask students: "What should you do if you see a stray animal?" Discuss. Have an adult call the **Nebraska Humane Society** and give them the location of the animal so they can find it.
 - Tell students that *many strays that are evaluated by shelters and animal control facilities are found to be healthy and are put up for adoption. So, you can help the strays chance of survival by having them picked up.*
 - Ask: "If you see a stray animal, do you approach it to help?" Have students answer with a head shake. **NO!** *Never approach a stray animal. If a stray animal approaches you, you know to stand still like a tree, look straight ahead and not at the animal, and the animal will usually walk away. If a stray knocks you down, roll into a ball and cover your face.*

Review animal safety lessons about this.

4. Tell students that *although animal shelters are safe places for animals that are staffed by caring people who provide great care for them, millions of animals that arrive at shelters around the world have to be euthanized simply because there are not enough homes for them. Reiterate the huge problem that is "pet overpopulation".* Explain that not all shelters euthanize for pet overpopulation, however, it can happen. For example, the Nebraska Humane Society will not euthanize a pet strictly due to overpopulation at the shelter.
5. Define "**euthanized**": humanely put to death
6. Tell students that *there are many countries that are not lucky enough to have many animal shelters and have many animals that have suffered the fates above.* Take a moment to allow the students to ask questions about euthanasia.

-Write the term and definition on the board.

-Validate their feelings of anger, sadness, or disbelief but give hope that there is something they can do to stop this!

End of Lesson:

1. Have students "Stand Up, Hand Up, and Pair Up" for the next question: "How can we stop pet overpopulation?"

"Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up" Kagan Structure:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOUPvzaY7H0>

- Call on volunteers to share their ideas out loud. Discuss.
 - Tell students that *they can stop pet overpopulation by having their pets "spayed" or "neutered". This simple operation prevents them from having babies. This procedure is done under anesthetic, so the animals feel no pain. They can also help by encouraging others to have their pets spayed and neutered as well.*
2. Get students excited to make a class "Pet Overpopulation Quilt" to educate others about the problem...
 3. Have each student refer to their earlier equations on their "15 Dogs, 45 Cats, and YOU!" worksheet.
 - Give them an 8x8 square piece of paper, coloring and writing utensils, and have them draw

their total number of dog and cat heads on their square.

- Encourage them to make it colorful and write the total number of dogs and cats in their household at the bottom of the square.
4. Glue each student's square onto the large sheet of colored paper (do not cut the paper until you have all of the quilt squares lined up). Cut the paper so there is a border around the squares. Then take a marker and draw stitches on each quilt square so it looks like it was stitched.
 5. Hang your "class quilt" in a high traffic area to educate others on the importance of spaying and neutering their pets! Make a title above that says: **Mrs./Mr. _____'s students would have to have _____ dogs and cats in their homes if every dog and cat were to have a home! Stop Pet Overpopulation! Spay and Neuter your Pets!**

Closure:

1. Provide students with one minute to reflect on what they have learned from this lesson.
2. Ask students: "What is pet overpopulation?" and "How will you help others learn about the importance of spaying and neutering their pets?" Have students answer these questions in at least two sentences on their notebook paper and then turn this paper in.
3. Have a couple of students share their responses.



NEBRASKA
HUMANE
SOCIETY

Where help becomes hope.

Name: _____

15 Dogs, 45 Cats, and YOU!

Number of people in your household.

Number of people in your household _____ x 15 = _____ Dogs

Number of people in your household _____ x 45 = _____ Cats

Total number of dogs and cats = _____



Imagine what your home and life would be like if you had to care for all of these animals..... Write a three-sentence summary about your home/life below.
