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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<th>Skills</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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| Lesson 1: Domestic or Wild? | Animals may be domestic or wild. | definition  
recognition  
identification  
categorization  
use of small motor skills | science |
| Lesson 2: Yes or No: Wild Animal Pets | 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. | definition  
recognition  
recall  
identification  
categorization  
analysis  
application  
discussion  
use of small motor skills | science  
social studies (family living) |
| Lesson 3: Yes or No: Domestic Animal Pets | 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. | definition  
recognition  
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categorization  
analysis  
discussion  
use of small motor skills | science  
social studies (family living) |
| Lesson 4: Pets and Owners | Appropriate pet choices are based largely on an owner's ability and desire to meet fully the needs of an animal. | matching  
analysis  
recall  
identification  
use of small motor skills | reading  
social studies (family living) |
Lesson 4: Problems List

Early Childhood and Primary Grades

Choosing an appropriate pet involves many decisions about what is best for the animal and the owner. To help students understand the importance of choosing an appropriate pet, you can present a card with a picture of an animal that would make an appropriate pet. You can assist students in analyzing the factors that determine whether each animal is suitable as a pet.

Skills: graphing, listing, writing, critical thinking, analysis, application, discussion, oral expression, use of small motor skills

Curriculum: social studies

Family living

Language arts

Math

Intermediate and Junior High Grades

Lesson 1: Precision Thinking

Animals may be wild or domestic. Wild animals are considered inappropriate as pets. For this lesson, you can prepare several index cards, each with a picture of an animal. Have students determine whether the animals are wild or domestic. You can discuss the factors that make an animal appropriate or inappropriate.

Skills: critical thinking, classification, identification, definition, analysis, application, interpretation

Curriculum: science

Language arts

Lesson 2: Starving Statistics

Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade. To help students understand the impact of this trade, you can present a graph showing the number of animals that are captured each year. Discuss the statistics and the implications of the trade.

Skills: understanding and computing mean, median, and range

Curriculum: math

Lesson 3: Captive Animal Game

Many animals suffer as a result of the captive wild animal trade. To help students understand the impact of the trade, you can play a game where students identify wild and domestic animals. You can also discuss the differences between wild and domestic animals.

Skills: running movement, analysis, description, interpretation

Curriculum: physical education

Lesson 4: Writing With a Purpose

Animals suffer when their needs are not met. To help students understand the importance of meeting an animal's needs, you can have students write a story about an animal whose needs were not met. Discuss the story and the importance of understanding an animal's needs.

Skills: writing, description, analysis, application, synthesis, formulation

Curriculum: language arts

Lesson 5: Problems List

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.

Skills: categorization, hypothesis, interpretation, analysis, comparison

Curriculum: language arts

Lesson 6: Rules To Choose

Humans have the responsibility to make appropriate pet choices. To help students understand the importance of choosing an appropriate pet, you can discuss the factors that determine whether an animal is suitable as a pet.

Skills: description, interpretation, summarization, application, hypothesis, critical thinking

Curriculum: language arts

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

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.

Skills: interpretation

Curriculum: social studies

Language arts

Lesson 1: Wild or Domestic

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.

Skills: interpretation

Curriculum: science

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

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. Meanwhile, tack up two large pieces of paper. On one side 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.

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, at the top of the other write NO.

2. As in Lesson 1, hold up one at a time the animal pictures you have collected. 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, at the top of the other write NO.

2. As in Lesson 1, hold up one at a time the animal pictures 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 3: Choosing a Good Pet

- Preparation: Have handy your collection of animal pictures. Be sure students still have their YS/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 make a good pet for you? Why or why not?" With your assistance, students can begin to see that while wild animals may make good 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 examples may 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 one or two pictures of domestic animals for each possible pet owner description on the chalkboard. Have students hold up their YS/NO cards to identify whether each domestic animal might be an appropriate pet for the 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 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>Feature</th>
<th>Dogs</th>
<th>Cats</th>
<th>Rabbits</th>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. When the charts are complete, tabulate the results of the class. How many pets will the students choose to own when they are older? How many students will choose dogs? After the census has been taken, you may want to make up math problems based on the results. For example: In our census, the total number of dogs and cats chosen is 15.

2. Turn to our article "Sharing the Spotlight: Average and Captive Wildlife," which follows the "Facts Box" feature. If you prefer a shorter version of the activity, simply read to the class the trivia questions offered in the activity, and have each student record his or her own answers. Then share and discuss the correct answers.

Lesson 3: 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.

Lesson 4: Writing With a Purpose

We all know it's fun to write unless someone is going to read what we have written. And it's no fun to read something unless we need or want the information. The following activity provides students with both a reason to write and a reason to read.

- Activity: The second list should enumerate problems of captive wildlife. Have the judges' written decisions include answers to the following:

1. What are the problems for you in this situation? How does it affect your decision making in determining whether or not a particular animal is unsuitable as a pet for your current situation?

2. Is it possible that someone else might have a solution from the point of view of the pet owner? Have the 2's write a solution from the point of view of the pet owner, and then have the 3's write a solution from the point of view of the pet owner themselves.

3. 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 this situation?

2. Who is really responsible for the problem—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 must 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 photocopied 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 5: 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? Students should be encouraged to consider such factors as the amount of time a person can devote to the pet and the kind of home it will have.

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 solution to a problem 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 help of the "Kind News Feature," unit, you may be able to prevent some of these problems before they become a reality.

Willis Solow

"We hope you'll enjoy applying our "Kind News Feature" teaching unit in your own classroom. If you'd like to see more of our "Kind News Feature" units, please contact Willis Solow, Editor, 67 Children's Animals, Box 562 East Hampton, CT 06423."