

5 Pets and Vets



1 Unit summary

Most children love animals and find them intrinsically interesting. This unit capitalises on that interest and invites children to think about what animals need to stay healthy. It also helps them to make the connection between their own needs and the needs of other animals.

Science learning

Children will begin to realise that humans are a type of animal that has the same needs as other animals; they will think about the importance of exercise, food and health care for all animals.

Science for practitioners

All living things are divided into five Kingdoms. Two of these contain microscopic life forms such as bacteria and amoeba. The other three are plants, fungi and animals. The animal kingdom includes all multicellular animals including insects, molluscs, jellyfish, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals. There is a strong tendency for people to use the word 'animal' to refer to reptiles, amphibians and non-human mammals and to not recognise that people, birds, fish and worms are animals too!

Prime areas

Communication and Language

In the activities 'Take me Home' and 'Meet my Pet', children are encouraged to talk to the rest of the class about what they have done with the class 'pet' and about any animals that they have at home. This will give them the opportunity to listen carefully to what others say, to ask appropriate questions and to include relevant details for their listeners.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Thinking about their responsibility towards any animals that are kept as pets will help children

Science progression

In Key Stage 1 children will need to find out about and describe the basic needs of animals, including humans, for survival. They will also need to know that all animals have offspring that grow into adults. In Key Stage 2 they will need to know that all animals need the right types of food and nutrients to keep healthy. They will also learn that living things can be classified into broad groups according to observable characteristics.

Switched on Science links

- Key Stage 1, Year 1, Topic 1 – Who am I?
- Key Stage 1, Year 1, Topic 3 – Polar Adventures
- Key Stage 1, Year 1, Topic 5 – On Safari
- Key Stage 1, Year 2, Topic 1 – Healthy Me

to realise that their own behaviour has consequences for others. The activity 'I Don't Agree with You' will help them to develop the skills needed to listen to, and take account of, other people's ideas and opinions.

Physical Development

This unit will help children to realise the importance for all animals, including humans, of physical exercise and a healthy diet.

Specific areas

Literacy

The veterinary surgery role-play activity will give children a context for writing as they keep records about the animals in their care and make appointments for clients to see the vet.

Mathematics

Administering and prescribing medicines in the veterinary surgery is an opportunity for counting as animals will need to take a certain amount of tablets (or spoonfuls of medicine) each day. Finding out about and recording all of the different pets that children have would be a relevant context for data handling activities. Making the pet carriers out of boxes will necessitate the use of everyday language to talk about the size and shape of 3-D objects.

Understanding the World

Children will learn that different children in their class have completely different experiences of animals; some may have allergies to animals, some may be nervous of some animals, some may not be allowed any pets at all, while others may have a menagerie.

Expressive Arts and Design

The activity 'Make a Pet' involves children making an animal of their choice out of junk and papier mâché. It will help them to gain confidence with a variety of techniques that will enable them to represent their own ideas in design and technology when they choose to make models independently.



2 Getting ready



Resources

Animal cages and carriers, Animal pictures, Clip board, Note pads, Online resources via My Rising Stars, Posters, Stethoscope, Telephone, Toy animals including reptiles, birds, mammals, insects and amphibians, Toy medical equipment, e.g. syringes, bandages.



Key vocabulary

Amphibians, Animal, Birds, Fish, Healthy, Ill, Injection, Injured, Invertebrates, Life cycle, Mammals, Medicine, Mini-beasts, Operation, Reptiles, Tablet, Vaccination, Vet, Veterinary nurse.



Home science links

When families know that you are doing a topic on pets, some are likely to offer to bring their pets in to show the children. Go to the 'Animals in schools' section on the RSPCA website for advice.



Health and safety

Children should be taught to:

- wash hands immediately after handling an animal, including mini-beasts/invertebrates.
- never touch an animal without an adult's permission.

Adults should:

- check if any children have allergies.



Websites and books

Dear Zoo – Rod Campbell

Monkey Puzzle – Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

Dogs – Emily Gravett

The Great Pet Sale – Mick Inkpen

The *Mog* books – Judith Kerr

The Pet Show – Ezra Jack Keats

What Did I Look Like When I Was a Baby? – Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross

You're All Animals – Nicholas Allan

RSPCA website – lesson plans

Pet education resources website

RSPB website teachers resources



3 Explorations

Most of these activities concentrate on mammals. Make sure that children realise that birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, such as snails, are animals too!

Introductory activity

This activity relies on a dramatic build up so that children readily buy into the idea that there is a real animal in the classroom and that they will need to carefully consider its needs. A large toy dog ('Patch' perhaps!) is placed in a pet carrier and placed out of sight of the children. Once the children are quiet and ready the pet carrier is produced and Patch is introduced. Explain that this is the new class pet who

will need looking after. Children are then encouraged to discuss what Patch will need in order to thrive. This includes somewhere to sleep, access to food and water, toys, grooming, company and regular visits to the vet. Children then work together to make a corner of the classroom into a safe place for their new arrival; if you are able to find a real pet bed, feeding bowls, lead and other accessories this will add to the experience.

Focused exploration

Activity 1 – The Pet Show

There are several books about pet shows which involve lots of different animals that would be a useful starting point for this activity, such as *The Great Pet Sale* by Mick Inkpen. Each child will need to bring in a toy animal. Each entrant will have to complete their entrance form (available on My Rising Stars), so children will have had to work with their families

to decide a name and age of their pet and to inform the judges of any other important information. On the day, children can work together to think of a prize for each entrant (the biggest, the smallest, the oldest, the prettiest, the most hugged, etc.) and make and award rosettes and certificates. Ensure that families know about the show well in advance.

Activity 2 – Take Me Home

The class pet makes an ideal candidate for children to take turns to take home at weekends and during the holidays. Encourage families to take photographs of Patch, perhaps meeting existing family pets or visiting local parks. A diary could be sent home for families to contribute to. However, it should be stressed

that children are not expected to write in it unless they would like to and that drawings are welcome. Perhaps most valuable is the opportunity for children to tell the class about what Patch has been up to this weekend, and for their classmates to ask questions about the experience.

Activity 3 – Pets Need Vets

As part of caring for Patch, the class will have ensured that there have been regular visits to the vets for micro-chipping and for vaccinations.

For this activity, however, Patch will need to make an unscheduled visit due to an illness or an accident. You may well want to tailor the illness to fit your class; if someone has recently been treated for a broken bone, it could well be that Patch breaks a limb.

As you discuss Patch's symptoms with the class and talk about what you will need to do, children will begin to understand the importance of observing their pets closely at all times. They will also begin to realise the importance of acting promptly if they are worried about an animal's health. This activity emphasises the links between humans and other animals, as children realise that all animals have similar needs and occasionally can become ill.

Activity 4 – I Don't Agree With You

For this activity you will need two adults who are well known to the children. The two adults will take an opposing viewpoint and have a staged discussion in front of the children, in this case about whether it is a good idea to keep pets. You can also have adults use puppets for this. It will help children begin to realise that there can be more than one valid point of view.

The adult who thinks that it is not a good idea to keep pets might point out that the pets might be lonely while their owners are at work, or point out

that they would not like to be kept in a cage. The one who supports keeping pets might argue that for some people a pet might be their only companion, and that cages are only a problem if they are too small. By ending the discussion by 'agreeing to disagree' but pointing out that they are still friends, adults can demonstrate that it is OK to have different ideas to each other. Later, encourage children to explain what each adult thought as this will give them the experience of articulating opposing points of view.

Activity 5 – Let's Make a Pet!

It is worthwhile occasionally giving children a lot of support to make a junk model, although it can be time consuming. Help children to plan what animal they will make and what distinguishing features it will need (see examples online). As they stick their pieces together they may find it helpful to look at pictures of real animals to help them to decide exactly where

to place different items. When the model is complete do encourage the children to evaluate them and to say what they like and what they would change next time to make it look even more like the real animal. This amount of adult support will enable children to achieve much better results next time they choose to make a model independently.

Free-flow exploration

Activity 1 – The Vet

Setting up the role-play area as a veterinary surgery is a useful way for children to learn more about the science of keeping healthy and treating illness in all animals, including humans. Children's level of engagement will be much higher if a visit to a real vet's surgery can be arranged. As part of the preparation, children could be supported during lessons, with a design and technology focus, to spend time making animal cages and carriers out of old boxes. Ensure that there is a phone for booking appointments and somewhere for owners to wait. Some of the class toys can be bandaged to look like injured animals.

You may also wish to plan for several adult-guided sessions including those with a maths focus (prescribing medicine, measuring doses and taking temperatures), an English focus (writing notes about patients, making posters to advise pet owners about animal care) and a science focus (learning about the needs of living things, the role of medicine in the health of animals). This will ensure that children gain the maximum learning from the experience and are likely to access the activity at a higher level than when they are playing independently.

Activity 2 – Meet My Pet

Encourage children to bring in photographs of their pets from home. Let families know in advance that children will be asked about what their pets eat, what else they need to keep them healthy and any other interesting information about their pet. This will enable them to prepare children to be able to talk confidently to the class. It's great if you can focus on unusual pets that people have. Some children will not have pets at home, so do make it clear that they can bring pictures of neighbour's pets or a picture of a pet that they would like to have.

Once you have a collection of photographs these can be used for a number of activities, e.g. children could

be supported to sort the pictures according to what they eat, their colour or how many legs they have. Another activity is 'pelmanism'. For this you will need to take photographs of the children, too, so that you have matching pairs of cards; one with a picture of a pet owner, and one with a picture of a pet. Turn them all face down and take turns to turn over two cards and then put them back. Players keep each matching pair that they turn over. This is sometimes known as 'memory game', as by remembering the position of different cards players maximise their chance of turning over matching pairs.

Taking it further

Encourage children to notice the animals around them. Even in an urban environment you will almost certainly be able to see birds and mini-beasts/invertebrates. In less built-up areas children may see evidence of other animals including hedgehogs, toads and farm animals. Help children to realise that these animals also need our care and respect.

Children, especially those who do not have pets of their own at home, may enjoy doing things to care for the animals in their environment, e.g. making a mini-beast/invertebrate hotel, or feeding the birds. If the classroom windows are near some cover such as shrubs it may well be worth fixing a bird feeder to the window to enable children to see them close up.



4 Characteristics of effective learning

Playing and exploring

- Children act out their own experience of caring for animals in role-play situations.
- Children are able to repeat, develop and change activities from adult-guided sessions in their independent play.

Active learning

- Children are able to concentrate on adult-initiated activities such as pelmanism or sorting pictures for a period of time without adult support.
- Children are able to persevere through the different stages of model-making to achieve a worthwhile result and they are proud of the way they have worked.

Early learning goals

ELG 1 Listening & Attention: All activities, especially Focussed exploration 2, 4; **ELG 2 Understanding:** All activities, especially Focussed exploration 2, 4; **ELG 3 Speaking:** All activities, especially Focussed exploration 2, 4 and Free-flow exploration 2; **ELG 4 Moving & Handling:** Focussed exploration 5; **ELG 5 Health & Self-care:** Introductory activity and Focussed exploration 3; **ELG 6 Self-confidence & Self-awareness:** All activities, especially Focussed exploration 2, 4; **ELG 7 Managing Feelings & Behaviour:** All Free-flow explorations; **ELG 8 Making Relationships:** All Free-flow explorations; **ELG 9 Reading:** Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 10 Writing:** Focussed exploration 1, Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 11 Numbers:** Focussed exploration 3, Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 12 Shape, Space & Measure:** Focussed exploration 3, Free-flow exploration 1; **ELG 13 People & Communities:** N/A; **ELG 14 The World:** All activities; **ELG 15 Technology:** Focussed exploration 2 and Free-flow exploration 2; **ELG 16 Exploring & Using Media & Materials:** Focussed exploration 5; **ELG 17 Being Imaginative:** Focussed exploration 1, 5.

- Children show high levels of interest and enjoy the challenge of finding out additional information about their pets or researching other animals.

Creating and thinking critically

- Children are able to listen carefully to the child who has taken Patch home and then ask sensible questions based upon what they have heard.
- Children are able to make links between their own experience of being ill and what is happening to Patch, perhaps reassuring him that they know that he will feel better when he has taken his medicine, because they did when they took theirs.
- Children are able to think of their own categories for awards, e.g. furriest, longest tail.