Pet Overpopulation in the United States
Lesson Plan

Grades: 6-9
Ages: 11-14 years
Time: This series of four lessons can be modified to meet various time constraints.

Character Pillars:

Kindness
Responsibility
Fairness
Respect

Standards:

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Rationale: The number of homeless dogs and cats in the United States, while lower than it has been in the past, is still alarmingly high. It is important that future pet owners, as well as lawmakers and taxpayers, are aware of this issue and able to identify potential solutions to the problem. The requirements and impact of caring for and housing homeless animals are also issues to be considered.

Behavioral Objectives:

Students will:

• Research factors contributing to pet overpopulation.
• Research ways to address pet overpopulation.
• Research the impact of pet overpopulation on the community and the environment.
• Develop a list of questions for interviewing an animal care professional about the issue of pet overpopulation.
• Develop an infomercial on the causes of and ways to address pet overpopulation.
• Experience the character pillars of kindness, responsibility, fairness and respect related to issues of pet overpopulation.

Materials:

• Interview questions
• Any items needed for creating an infomercial, such as video camera, monitor, props, etc.
• Computer with PowerPoint program

Procedure:

Set:

• These lessons are intended to make students aware of issues concerning pet overpopulation.
• Students will participate in the development of an infomercial and develop teambuilding skills.
Lesson 1: Research

Read the following scenario aloud to your students:

You are a producer of many popular infomercials, and you have been asked by a national humane organization to develop an infomercial designed for national distribution that addresses our country’s pet overpopulation issue.

- Break students into teams.
- Have students research information on the causes of, effects of and solutions to the dog and cat overpopulation problem in the United States.
- Organize that information for use in the interview and infomercial.
Lesson 2: Interview

- Contact a local animal care professional who deals directly with homeless animals (animal shelter staff, humane society director, animal control officer, etc.).
- Develop at least 10 questions relating to pet overpopulation.
- Suggestions:
  - How do you think pet homelessness could most effectively be addressed?
  - How much does it cost to house homeless animals at your facility? (Example: Food, staff time, medical care, payroll, education of caretakers, utilities, cleaning supplies, etc.)
  - How are you funded?
  - What would we do without animal shelters?
  - What impact do homeless animals have on the environment, wildlife, etc.?
  - What is the impact of pet overpopulation on the community in terms of money, time, legislation, space, etc.?
  - What legislative steps have been taken, are currently proposed or could potentially impact homeless animals in your community/state/nationally?
  - What happens to an animal when there is no room at the shelter?
  - What is the impact of euthanasia on animal shelter staff?
  - What can the public do to help reduce pet overpopulation?
  - Other topics for consideration may include responsible breeding, backyard breeding, pet stores, puppy mills, early spay/neuter, etc.
  - What is the cost of euthanasia in terms of staff time, medical expenses and handling of remains?
Lesson 3: Infomercial

- Develop a schedule, duty roster and list of supplies for the team, including:
  - Infomercial script
  - Props, scenery and wardrobe
  - Schedules for rehearsals, filming and editing
  - Video/digital camera, monitor
- Research successful infomercial advertising techniques that have proven to be persuasive for audiences.
- Develop a script and film an infomercial that is no longer than five minutes.
  - Focus on the topic of pet overpopulation and how to address it.
  - Appeal to the audience and make an impression within time limit.
Lesson 4: Presentations and Discussion

- Groups will present their infomercials to the rest of the class.
- Questions should be prepared by the audience and answered by presenters.
- Encourage and facilitate group discussion.
- Suggested questions for presenters and/or audience:
  - What was the hardest part of the presentation?
  - What was the best part of the presentation?
  - What could have been done differently regarding research? The presentation?
  - What did you learn that you didn't know before?
  - What aspects made the infomercial convincing?
  - What can pet owners do to make a difference in pet overpopulation?
  - What can the community do to make a difference in pet overpopulation?
  - Did this project change your feelings about pet responsibility?
  - Did you enjoy working as part of a team?
  - Was this project enjoyable?
  - Do you feel you are better prepared to become a responsible pet owner in the future?
Rubric for Infomercial

Elements:

- Accuracy of information
- Creativity
- Sequence
- Performance
- Quality of camera work

Scoring Scale:

4 – Exceeds the Standard
- Data accurately and effectively supports key points and message in a highly effective way.
- The script is creative and original.
- The script and performance have an effective sequence and flow.
- The performance of the actors is convincing.
- The quality of the camera work is clear and steady.

3 – Meets the Standard
- Data accurately and effectively supports key points and message.
- The script is creative and original.
- The script and performance have a good sequence and flow.
- The performance of the actors is good.
- The quality of the camera work is good.

2 – Approaching the Standard
- Most of the data is accurate and somewhat supports the key points and message.
- The script is somewhat creative and original.
- The script and performance do not have a good sequence and flow.
- The performance of the actors is fair.
- The quality of the camera work is fair.

1 – Does Not Meet the Standard
- The key points and message are not supported by accurate data.
- The script is not creative or original.
- There is no logical sequence and flow to the script and performance.
- The performance of the actors is not convincing.
- The quality of the camera work is poor.