

FABULOUS FELINES

LESSON 2: Grades 4-6

YOUR CAT'S HEALTH

Show-Me Standards: Academic Goals: 1.2, 1.3, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2, 4.7

Knowledge Goals: Communication Arts – 1, 6; Mathematics – 1; Science – 3; Health/Physical Education – 3, 5

Objective: To introduce students to proper health care for cats.

Materials:

- “Pet Overpopulation Math Activity” handout
- “Caring for Your Pet” handout
- Optional: Scrubs or white jacket, children’s play medical kit, stuffed animals
- “For the Health of Your Pet” handout
- “Visit From a Vet” handout

Method: Whether you have had a cat for many years or are considering getting a new cat or kitten, it’s important to know how to care for kitty’s health. Remember, cats are domesticated creatures that rely on us to take care of them. They can’t take care of themselves. They need preventive health care and special care when they are sick.

There are some basic things any cat owner should know about preventive health care. What should you do each year to be sure your cat stays healthy? Cats need to go to the veterinarian each year for a check-up (just like humans need to go to the doctor once a year). The veterinarian should be one of your cat’s best friends, even if your cat doesn’t think a trip to the vet is fun!

What will the veterinarian do for kitty during a yearly examination?

1) Give shots (FVRCP and rabies vaccinations):
Vaccinations are an inexpensive and painless way to protect your pet against disease. Cats need a yearly FVRCP shot. This protects him against the following diseases: **Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis**, **Calicivirus**, **Panleukopenia**, and **Chlamydia**. A yearly rabies vaccination protects your cat against the rabies disease. If you have a kitten, check with your vet for an individual shot schedule.

2) Look at:
*teeth for tartar/gum swelling
*ears for ear mites and other fungus problems
*body for ringworm/fleas
*fecal exam for worms
*eyes for normal pupil response and normal retinal appearance
*weight, heart rate, temperature

Distribute the “Caring for Your Pet” handout. This will help students visualize what a pet examination will look like when they go to the vet with their own pet. You may also wish to give them a chance to practice being veterinarians. Bring in scrubs or a white jacket, a child’s play medical kit, and stuffed animals. Allow students the opportunity to experience giving a pet a medical exam.

What else do you need to do for your cat to keep him healthy and safe?

1) Spay/neuter – a simple operation that will prevent your pet from making unwanted babies. Spaying is for girls/females and neutering is for boys/males. There are many other benefits to spaying and

neutering. It protects your pet against certain types of cancer and infections. Neutered cats are less likely to spray to mark their territory. The spayed or neutered pet makes a much better companion. They are less aggressive and more affectionate than unaltered pets. They are less likely to roam and fight. Their attention is focused on you.

These simple surgeries can also significantly help impact the pet overpopulation problem. Millions of dogs and cats are euthanized (humanely put to death) in this country each year because people ignore the fact that their pet is contributing to the problem. There are not enough homes for all the puppies and kittens born each year. You can be part of the solution by making sure your own pet is spayed or neutered! Complete the “Pet Overpopulation Math Activity” handout together.

Some shelters practice “early spay/neuter”; this means pets are fixed as early as eight weeks of age. They must also weigh as least two pounds. This ensures that all pets are altered before going home. Too many animals are euthanized to ignore the importance of spay/neuter.

- 2) Microchip – A microchip is a tiny computer part the size of a grain of rice. It is inserted under your pet’s skin between his shoulder blades with a special needle. It hurts a little at first, just like a shot, but will stay there for the rest of your pet’s life as permanent identification. After that, your pet won’t even know it’s there. If your pet gets lost and someone brings him to a shelter, they will use a special scanner that can see if a microchip is present. Each microchip has a special one-of-a-kind I.D. number; that special number will be detected by the scanner. Shelters match that number to the owner and help the pet get home.
- 3) Flea & heartworm prevention – Cats can get heartworm disease in the same way dogs do. Mosquitoes transmit the disease by biting an infected animal, then your cat. The sad truth is that just one worm can cause coughing, breathing difficulties, vomiting, weight loss and in some cases sudden death.

Flea control is very important to the health of your cat/kitten. Flea bites cause discomfort, irritation, and often carry tapeworms, an intestinal worm. Fleas can quickly infect your home and can bite humans.

Control heartworm and fleas through medications available from your veterinarian. She will help you select the appropriate product for your pet.

For the best protection from heartworm and fleas, keep your cat indoors all the time! This ensures he will stay parasite-free!

Find out the date of your pet’s last check-up. If she hasn’t been within the last year, she is due for a visit to the vet.

Distribute the “For the Health of Your Pet” handout for the children to take home. Use the “Visit From a Vet” handout for a review of spaying and neutering.

Call to Action: Investigate the cost of veterinary care. Talk to a vet in your area to determine prices of the above-mentioned care. Is there a low-cost clinic in your area at a shelter? How do prices compare? Ask a veterinarian to visit your classroom and speak to the students.

Web sites: For recommended animal-related web sites visit www.apamo.org and choose “Animal Issues” from the left-side menu, then choose “Links” from the top of the page. Or [click here](#) to launch your browser and link directly to the list.

PET OVERPOPULATION MATH ACTIVITY

How did we get so many?

18 million homeless cats and dogs are brought to animal shelters each year. The answer to this math problem will help us understand why there are so many homeless pets.

DIRECTIONS: After reading each sentence, write the correct number of cats in the box.

1. Pretend you own ONE unspayed female cat. Her name is Misty.

2. In January, Misty has FOUR kittens; two males and two females.

3. In June Misty has her second litter of FOUR kittens.

4. AND her TWO daughters have FOUR kittens each (2 x 4)

5. In November Misty has her third litter of FOUR kittens.

6. Her FOUR daughters each have a litter of FOUR kittens. (4 x 4)

7. AND her FOUR granddaughters each have a litter of FOUR. (4 x 4)

Subtotal A

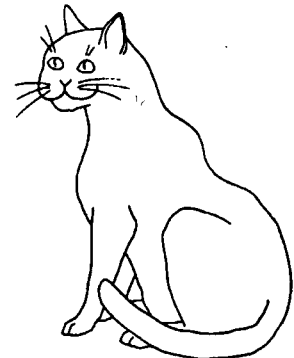
Subtotal B

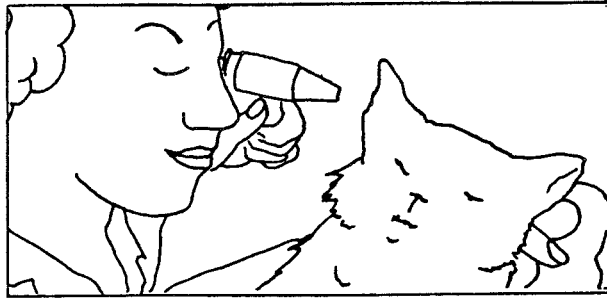
Subtotal C

B. ADD SUBTOTALS

A + B + C = _____ This is the total number of cats born just because ONE cat was not spayed!

What should you have done for Misty, so that at the end of one year you would have just one cat? Write your ideas here:





looking for mites

Activity: Pets have to have regular health checkups, just like us. When you visit the animal clinic, the veterinarian gives your pet a thorough examination. Look carefully at what the veterinarian is doing in each of these illustrations. Then fill in the right caption from the list below.

taking the temperature

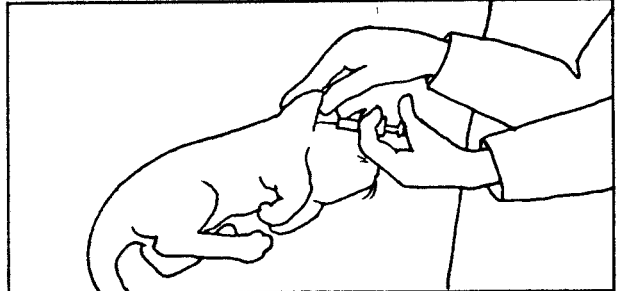
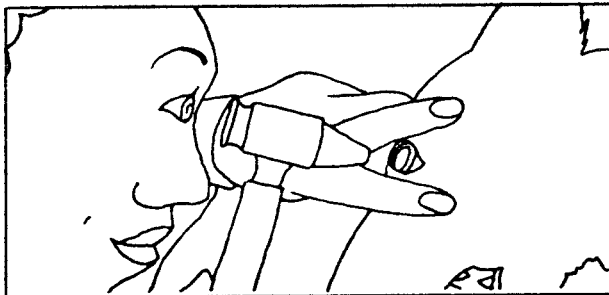
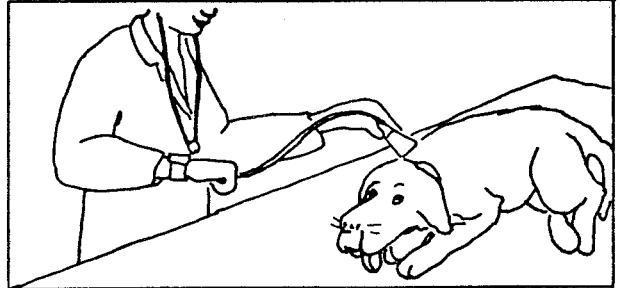
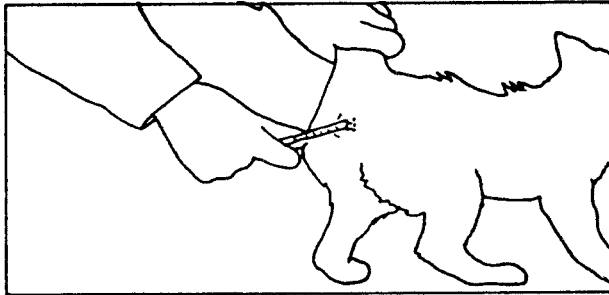
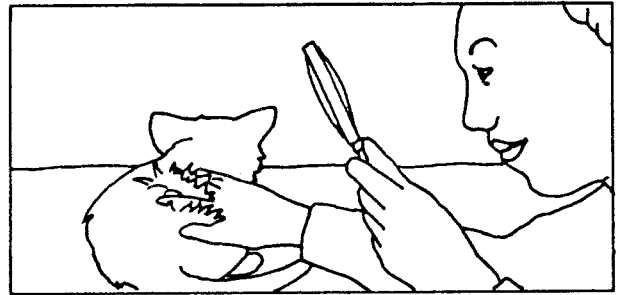
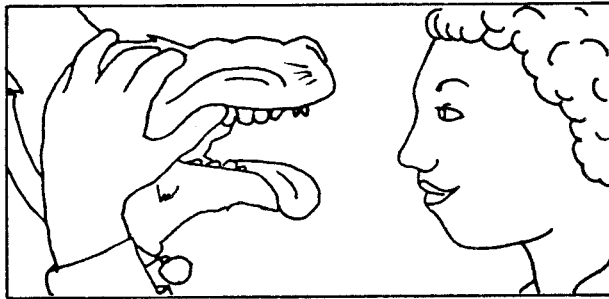
examining eyes

checking teeth for tartar

listening to the heart beat

checking for fleas

vaccinating against disease



For the Health of Your Pet... How to Tell if Your Cat or Dog May Need Veterinary Care

This information sheet lists the more common signs of health and illness in dogs and cats. Dogs and especially cats can "hide" illnesses and other ailments, so try not to let them fool you!

EYES

Good Signs

- clean
- clear and bright
- responsive to visual stimuli

Warning Signs

- watery
- red
- filmy
- cloudy
- discolored
- dry
- inflamed (swollen)
- hypersensitive to light
- pupils are unequal in size
- pupils are overly dilated or
- overly constricted
- showing third (or middle) eyelid
- showing discharge
- itchy (animal rubs at eyes)
- painful (animal squints)

BREATHING/ RESPIRATION

Good Signs

- respiration is regular
- respiration sounds clear
- respiration rate is normal

Warning Signs

- breathing is irregular, rapid, shallow or labored
- animal is sneezing, coughing, wheezing
- moist lung sounds
- breathing is through open mouth

EARS

Good Signs

- clean (both outer and ear and canal)
- pink and clean (inner ear)
- responsive to noise

Warning Signs

- showing discharge (waxy or other)
- crusty
- red or inflamed
- hair around ear is matted
- scabbed
- fly-bitten
- itchy (animal shakes head/scratches ear)
- foul odor
- painful (animal cries when ear is touched)

NOSE

Good Signs

- clean
- free of discharge

Warning Signs

- scabbed
- showing discharge
- crusty
- cracked
- congested or blocked



**For more information
or veterinary clinic care,
call or visit our shelter.**

*APA of Missouri
1705 S. Hanley Road
St. Louis, MO 63144
314-645-4610
www.apamo.org*

MOUTH

Good Signs

- free of odor
- teeth are clean
- gums are pink
- animal appears to swallow normally

Warning Signs

- unusually red or pale
- dry
- salivating (animal is drooling)
- foul odor not caused by food
- foreign bodies
- showing discharge
- swollen or inflamed
- gums are pale, white, purple, or inflamed
- teeth are loose, pitted, broken, or tartar-covered
- animal has trouble swallowing

SKIN/HAIR

Good Signs

- coat is bright and glossy
- coat appears well-groomed
- skin is clean, free of oil
- skin is free of swelling, lumps, and lesions

Warning Signs

- coat is dull
- coat is oily, dirty
- coat shows areas of hair loss or thinning
- hair is matted
- skin is dry or flaky
- skin shows swelling, lumps, or lesions
- skin is scabbed
- skin is red, irritated
- animal has fleas, ticks, lice, or other parasites

LEGS/FEET

Good Signs

- legs support weight evenly (no limp)
- pads are clean and smooth
- nails are healthy looking

Warning Signs

- animal favors one leg
- animal has limited motion
- animal is weak or uncoordinated
- joint feels tender
- pads are cracked or hard
- pads have matted hair between them
- nails are long, short, or ingrown
- legs show swelling, lumps or lesions

ANAL/GENITAL

Good Signs

- area is clean and free of discharge
- stool is normal

Warning Signs

- area has discharge
- stool is watery and bloody
- animal is constipated
- area around anus shows swelling or lumps
- one or both testicles are not descended (not in scrotum)
- one testicle is harder and/or larger than other



GENERAL

APPEARANCE

Good Signs

- animal is bright, alert, and responsive
- skin is elastic
- animal is balanced, coordinated
- temperature is normal
- animal is interested in surroundings, oriented

Warning Signs

- animal is very thin or obese
- animal has wounds or abscesses
- animal has swelling, lumps, or bumps
- mammary glands are swollen or oozing discharge
- skin does not spring back (animal is dehydrated)
- animal appears uncoordinated
- animal tilts head
- animal repeatedly circles
- abdomen is bloated
- animal appears lethargic
- animal appears hyperactive
- animal appears disoriented

NORMAL RANGES FOR TEMPERATURE, HEART RATE, AND RESPIRATORY RATE FOR HEALTHY CATS AND DOGS

Temperature (rectal)
100-102.5 Fahrenheit

Heart rate (at rest)
Large dogs
80-100 beats/minute

Medium dogs
100-120 beats/minute

Small dogs and cats
120-180 beats/minute

Respiratory rate (at rest)
16-26 breaths/minute

Name _____

Visit from a Vet

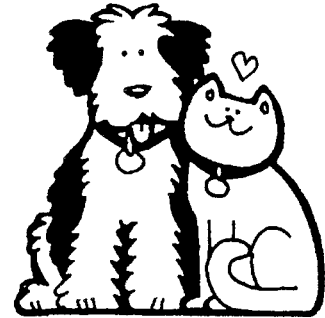


Hi! Joe Sly, private eye, here. Help me crack "The Case of the Visiting Vet." Here's the situation. Dr. Hart, a

local veterinarian, visited our school yesterday. She asked the following question:

What one thing can you do to make your cats and dogs...

- less likely to bite?
- less likely to roam, run away, or get into fights?
- less likely to spray and mark their territory?
- become better, friendlier companions?
- AND live longer, healthier lives?



Use the grid to find the answer. Each letter in the alphabet has its own two-digit number. The first number marks the *row* in which you'll find the letter. The second number marks the *column* it's in. We've done the first one, 44, for you. (We found row four, then followed it across to column four. The letter in that box is S.)



	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	K	L	M	N	O
4	P	Q	R	S	T
5	U	V	W	X	Y



We can S _____ them!
 44 41 11 55 35 43 34 15 51 45 15 43

Using the grid above, make up your own puzzling pet puzzle.
 Challenge family and friends to crack the code!