



Cats in the Community

CATISTICS

AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES LESSON ON CATS IN THE COMMUNITY

BCSPCA

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Cats in the Community

Catistics is one of four BC SPCA lessons in this series *Cats in the Community*.

Catistics is a social studies lesson in which students interpret survey data and use critical thinking skills to come up with solutions to the pet overpopulation issue.

There are three other lessons:

Community Cats and the Ecosystem is a science lesson about the food chain, invasive species and the effects on the ecosystem.

Cat Math requires students to use multiplication, estimation and graphing skills to calculate the numbers of cats that can be born over a two year period if they are not spayed or neutered.

Catboy: A Novel Study on Pet Overpopulation is based on the novels *Catboy* and *Hunter* by Canadian author Eric Walters. Students will make connections to real situations in their community and think critically about the ideas and information presented to deepen and transform their understanding about community cats.

All four of the lessons are interactive and thought provoking, challenging students to come up with solutions to the community cat overpopulation problem.



Core Competencies

Communication

Children are inherently interested in animals. In our programs, that natural curiosity fuels their engagement and inspires them to connect with others on topics that are relatable such as pets, wildlife and farm animals. Children practise acquiring new information about the animal world and sharing that information both formally and informally in groups or pairs, in presentations, or with the public as advocates. Through our interactive activities students collaborate with classmates to solve problems and create projects, and reflect on their own experiences and how their knowledge has evolved over time.

Thinking

Through our lessons and presentations students have the opportunity to practise creative thinking, generating and developing new ideas about real issues that affect their lives every day. They are challenged to create new ways to change and improve the world around them as they learn more about animal well-being. By exploring their own basic needs and comparing them to the needs of animals, students think critically about how their personal decisions also affect other lives, their community, and the environment. Older students can also begin to consider their own experiences, their culture and the media, and contemplate where their knowledge and opinions come from.

Personal & Social

All of our programs have a basis in empathy building, compassion, and teaching young people to understand and care about themselves and others. Students learn to read the unspoken signals and emotions of animals and practise recognizing and regulating their own actions and emotions in accordance with their surroundings. They will begin to situate themselves in a broader environment that encompasses animals, other people, community and nature. Through games, activities and discussion they learn tangible strategies to peacefully solve problems and develop a sense of accountability that extends beyond the personal to the social.

Catistics

What's behind the cat overpopulation problem?



Big Idea:

Cats are the most common pet in Canada and the majority of owned cats are spayed or neutered. Despite this, the numbers of homeless (abandoned or lost), feral (born outdoors with little to no human contact) and unwanted cats contribute to the large number of cats and kittens in BC SPCA shelters.

The BC SPCA takes in nearly 12,000 cats every year. Of those, 5,500 are stray or surrendered kittens. By comparison, the BC SPCA takes in 7,000 dogs each year, with 1,300 of those being puppies. Seeing these statistics, we know that cat overpopulation is much greater than dog overpopulation. To help solve the cat overpopulation problem, we need to look at how and why these animals end up in shelters, which includes examining society's attitudes towards cats, and then use education to create change.

In this lesson, students will analyze their perceptions of cat issues in Canada and B.C. by answering some multiple choice questions about cat statistics. Once they learn the correct numbers they will be asked to answer some questions that will get them thinking critically about the issues.

The goal is for students to come up with some solutions to the cat overpopulation problem. The BC SPCA model animal bylaws for cats are given as an example of one way to address the problem.

Catistics incorporates curricular competencies and rationale of the new social studies curriculum and presents them with applicable, real-life meaning.

The statistics used for this lesson come from:

For owned animals:

* 2008 Ipsos Reid The Business of Urban Animals Report

For shelter animals:

* 2012 Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) Animal Shelter Statistics report

* 2012 Cats in Canada report

Specifically for B.C.:

* BC SPCA shelter intake reports

Rationale An informed citizen understands key historical, geographical, political, economic, and societal concepts, and how these different factors relate to and interact with each other.

Students must build deep understandings and create their own knowledge through investigations into interesting, open-ended questions, debating and discussing historical and contemporary issues, and developing and supporting their own hypotheses, solutions, and conclusions.

Curricular Competencies

Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions, gather, interpret and analyze ideas, and communicate findings and decisions ▶ Develop a plan of action to address a selected problem or issue ▶ Differentiate between intended and unintended consequences of events, decisions and developments, and speculate about alternative outcomes
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What students will know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Analyze ideas and information around the community problem of cat overpopulation. ▶ Determine multiple causes and consequences of cat overpopulation. ▶ Identify solutions to the community cat problem. ▶ Explain different perspectives on caring for and keeping of cats and dogs as companion animals. ▶ Determine the long- and short-term causes and the intended or unintended consequences of using municipal bylaws to impact cat overpopulation.
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Materials	<p>Worksheets: <i>Cat vs Dog Stats</i> pages 4-5. Answer key page 3. <i>What Do You think?</i> pages 8-9. Answer key pages 6-7. <i>Model Bylaws</i> page 10-11. <i>Take Action</i> project page 11.</p>
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Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are to complete the <i>Cat vs. Dog Stats</i> worksheet individually, in small groups or as a class. This will stimulate thinking about the issues in dealing with pet overpopulation and why there is more of an issue with cats than dogs. 2. Give the class the correct answers using the answer key. Students can correct their own worksheet. 3. The <i>What Do You Think?</i> worksheet can also be done individually, in groups or as a class. The last question is a take-home question where the students are to interview an adult and ask them if they have seen any changes in attitudes towards cats over the past 10-20 years. 4. If students worked individually or in groups, review the questions as a class by creating three mind maps to collect everyone’s answers together. Using three large poster sheets, put one of each title at the centre of each: <i>Cats vs. Dogs</i>, <i>Cost & Adoption</i>, and <i>Community Cats</i>. Ask students to discuss which questions should be under which categories, then split up the class and have them contribute their answers to each chart. The charts can then be put up around the room to refer to steps 6 and 7 of the procedure. 5. A great video about the feral and community cat issue can be found at
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humanesociety.org/issues/feral_cats. This video is produced by the Humane Society of the United States and therefore the statistics and reference to euthanasia of feral cats in shelters are different than in Canada.

6. Discuss some solutions to the cat overpopulation problem. Look at the *BC SPCA's Model Bylaws for Cats* on page 10 and discuss how this might affect the numbers of cats that come into the shelter and those who are reunited with their guardians.

Note that the model bylaws will not solve the issues related to community cats who don't have an official guardian/owner. Discuss some solutions to this issue and assign students a Take Action Project as suggested below.

7. Take Action Project: Two options are outlined in the Take Action section on page 11.



ANSWER KEY



- 1a. What percentage of Canadian households have one or more cats? c. 36
- 2a. Of cats that are owned what percentage are spayed/neutered? e. 79
- 3a. What percentage of cats surrendered to the shelter are spayed/neutered? b. 19
- 4a. What percentage of stray cats get reunited with their guardian in B.C.? c. 20 (7% in Canada; in B.C. 20% cats, 3% kittens)
- 5a. What percentage of surrendered or stray cats have ID? d. 37
- 6a. How many cats and kittens does the BC SPCA take in a year? d. 12,000
- 7a. How many of those are kittens? c. 6000
- 8a. Where do people get their cats from? Rank these in order of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most, 7 being the least.
5. pet store (9%)
 1. friends/relatives/free/giveaway (38%)
 2. humane society/SPCA (17%)
 6. breeder (5%)
 3. adopt a stray (16%)
 4. my pet's offspring (11%)
 7. vet clinic (2%)
- 9a. What percentage of cat guardians paid more than \$100 for their cat? b. 16
- 10a. What percentage of cat guardians take their cat to the vet at least once a year? d. 49



- 1b. What percentage of Canadian households have one or more dogs? c. 32
- 2b. Of dogs that are owned what percentage are spayed/neutered? d. 69
- 3b. What percentage of dogs surrendered to the shelter are spayed/neutered? c. 30
- 4b. What percentage of stray dogs get reunited with their guardian in BC? e. 77 (45% in Canada, in BC 77% dogs, 24% puppies)
- 5b. What percentage of surrendered or stray dogs have ID? c. 54
- 6b. How many dogs and puppies does the BC SPCA take in a year? d. 7000
- 7b. How many of those are puppies? c. 1300
- 8b. Where do people get their dogs from? Rank these in order of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most, 7 being the least.
4. pet store (10%)
 2. friends/relatives/free/giveaway (29%)
 3. humane society/SPCA (13%)
 1. breeder (35%)
 5. adopt a stray (3%)
 6. my pet's offspring (3%)
 7. vet clinic (<1%)
- 9b. What percentage of dog guardians paid more than \$100 for their dog? d. 58
- 10b. What percentage of dog guardians take their dog to the vet at least once a year? e. 78



Cat vs Dog Stats



At the BC SPCA we take in almost twice as many cats and kittens than we do dogs and puppies. We have used statistics from different reports on cats and dogs in Canada and B.C. to compile important information to try to gain an understanding of the pet overpopulation issue for cats.

Test your knowledge about cats and dogs in Canada and B.C. by circling the best answer to the questions below. You may be surprised by the correct answers.

You will then be asked to answer or discuss some questions related to this information as you try to come up with some solutions to the cat overpopulation problem.

1a. What percentage of Canadian households have one or more cats?

- a. 14
- b. 21
- c. 36
- d. 56
- e. 75

1b. What percentage of Canadian households have one or more dogs?

- a. 12
- b. 25
- c. 32
- d. 48
- e. 65

2a. Of cats that are owned, what percentage are spayed/neutered?

- a. 15
- b. 27
- c. 45
- d. 68
- e. 79

2b. Of dogs that are owned, what percentage are spayed/neutered?

- a. 10
- b. 35
- c. 52
- d. 69
- e. 85

3a. What percentage of cats surrendered to the shelter are spayed/neutered?

- a. 5
- b. 19
- c. 25
- d. 68
- e. 70

3b. What percentage of dogs surrendered to the shelter are spayed/neutered?

- a. 10
- b. 21
- c. 30
- d. 42
- e. 55

4a. What percentage of stray cats get reunited with their guardian in B.C.?

- a. 10
- b. 15
- c. 20
- d. 36
- e. 58

4b. What percentage of stray dogs get reunited with their guardian in B.C.?

- a. 10
- b. 27
- c. 56
- d. 65
- e. 77

5a. What percentage of surrendered or stray cats have ID?

- a. 8
- b. 17
- c. 21
- d. 37
- e. 65



5b. What percentage of surrendered or stray dogs have ID?

- a. 19
- b. 38
- c. 54
- d. 61
- e. 72



6a. How many cats and kittens does the BC SPCA take in a year?

- a. 400
- b. 950
- c. 5,000
- d. 12,000
- e. 21,000

6b. How many dogs and puppies does the BC SPCA take in a year?

- a. 100
- b. 500
- c. 5,000
- d. 7,000
- e. 10,000

7a. How many of those are kittens?

- a. 100
- b. 300
- c. 6,000
- d. 8,500
- e. 10,000

7b. How many of those are puppies?

- a. 50
- b. 200
- c. 1,300
- d. 2,100
- e. 5,000

8a. Where do people get their cats from? Rank these in order of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most, 7 being the least.

- pet store
- friends/relatives/free/giveaway
- humane society/SPCA
- breeder
- adopt a stray
- my pet's offspring
- vet clinic

8b. Where do people get their dogs from? Rank these in order of 1 to 7, with 1 being the most, 7 being the least.

- pet store
- friends/relatives/free/giveaway
- humane society/SPCA
- breeder
- adopt a stray
- my pet's offspring
- vet clinic

9a. What percentage of cat guardians paid more than \$100 for their cat?

- a. 5
- b. 16
- c. 21
- d. 58
- e. 63

9b. What percentage of dog guardians paid more than \$100 for their dog?

- a. 5
- b. 16
- c. 21
- d. 58
- e. 63

10a. What percentage of cat guardians take their cat to the vet at least once a year?

- a. 2
- b. 10
- c. 32
- d. 49
- e. 75

10b. What percentage of dog guardians take their dog to the vet at least once a year?

- a. 7
- b. 18
- c. 37
- d. 52
- e. 78

ANSWER KEY

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but some suggested answers to these questions are listed below.

PART ONE

1. If 79% of owned cats and 69% of dogs are spayed or neutered, why do you think there are so many more kittens in shelters than puppies?

- ▶ Cats are allowed to be loose outside.
- ▶ Kittens in heat escape and get pregnant.
- ▶ People don't spay kittens before they are six months old.

2. If only 17% more dogs have ID than cats that end up at our shelter why do you think so many more dogs (77%) get reunited with their guardians than cats (20%)?

- ▶ People look for their dog right away because dogs are usually kept within a yard or in the house and therefore they notice right away that their dog is missing.
- ▶ People don't worry about cats right away because they may give them more time to find their way home.
- ▶ Cats have large territories and can hide easily.

3. Why do you think shelters end up with so many more kittens than puppies even though dogs can have their first litter at six months of age and their gestation period is the same as a cat?

- ▶ Cats are left outdoors, unsupervised
- ▶ There are more cats in household than dogs so kittens can get pregnant if any of the household cats/kittens are not neutered.

4. Do you think that where people get their pet affects their decision to spay/neuter the animal? Explain.

- ▶ Most people selling animals over the internet, newspaper, etc don't care if the animal is spayed or neutered and don't inform the new guardian about the need to spay and neuter so they may not even think about it.
- ▶ If a person gets an animal for free they may not have the money to spay/neuter their pet.

5. Do you think that overall people value cats and dogs equally as companion animals? Why or why not?

People tend to have different expectations of dogs and cats as pets. Society's attitudes have changed more towards dogs than cats over the years. This doesn't necessarily mean they value them less but it is debatable.

6. Do you think that the amount of money spent on a pet indicates the commitment/value of the animal? Explain.

Not necessarily. Overall food, bedding etc. for cats tends to be less expensive than for dogs.

7. How can you tell if an outdoor cat is stray, abandoned or has a home?

- ▶ Abandoned and stray cats are used to being around humans so they are more likely to seek out humans and be friendly.
- ▶ If you see a cat that does not have ID but seems in good shape and used to humans, put a cat collar on him with a tag on that says, "If this is your cat call (your phone number)."
- ▶ If you see a cat that is friendly but is not in good shape, bring it in and take it to a shelter or vet. They can check for a microchip or tattoo and take care of the cat's health issues.
- ▶ If there is a feral cat, one that not in good shape and unfriendly, use a humane trap to trap him/her and take them to the vet to be spayed/neutered or check with a local feral cat group for help.

PART TWO: What about cats that live on the street, in colonies or have no home?

8. Where do cats who live in colonies or on the street come from?

- ▶ Kittens from cats that have been abandoned.
- ▶ Kittens from cats that live completely outdoors and have little to no contact with people.

9. Who is taking care of these cats? Do they contribute to the numbers of cats and kittens in the shelter?

- ▶ A kind individual or feral cat group will often feed feral cat colonies. Many groups will also trap, neuter, vaccinate and release the cats so that more kittens will not be born.
- ▶ Kittens under the age of eight weeks that are born from feral mothers can be socialized and adopted, so shelters will take in kittens from feral cat colonies.

10. What affects does cat overpopulation have on a community?

- ▶ More feral cats can cause a nuisance for people, defecating in gardens, sandboxes, killing birds etc.
- ▶ More kittens in community shelters means less money spent on other issues.

11. What things affect a person's attitudes toward cats? (Culture, community, age, experience) Explain.

Answers will vary.

TAKE HOME:

Research: Ask an adult who is 30 years or older the following question.

How have things changed for cats in terms of attitudes towards them in the last 10 or 20 years?

Do more people keep their pet indoors, take them to the vet, spay/neuter their cat?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Answer the questions below and think critically about the issue in order to come up with some solutions to the cat overpopulation problem in B.C.

PART ONE:

1. If 79% of owned cats and 69% of dogs are spayed or neutered, why do you think there are so many more kittens in shelters than puppies?
2. If only 17% more dogs have ID than cats that end up at our shelters, why do you think so many more dogs (77%) get reunited with their guardians than cats (20%)?
3. Why do you think shelters end up with so many more kittens than puppies even though dogs can have their first litter at six months of age and their gestation period is the same as a cat?
4. Do you think that where people get their pet affects their decision to spay/neuter the animal? Explain.
5. Do you think that overall people value cats and dogs equally as companion animals? Why or why not?
6. Do you think that the amount of money spent on a pet indicates the guardian's commitment to/ or value placed on the animal? Explain.

7. How can you tell if an outdoor cat is stray, abandoned or has a home?

PART TWO: What about cats that live on the street, in colonies or have no home?

8. Where do cats who live in colonies or on the street come from?

9. Who is taking care of these cats? Do they contribute to the numbers of cats and kittens in the shelter?

10. What effects does cat overpopulation have on a community?

11. What things affect a person's attitudes toward cats? (Culture, community, age, experience) Explain.

TAKE HOME:

Research: Ask an adult who is 30 years or older the following question.

How have things changed for cats in terms of attitudes towards them in the last 10 or 20 years?

Do more people keep their pet indoors, take them to the vet, spay/neuter their cat?

BC SPCA Model Bylaws for Cats

Below is a simplified version of the BC SPCA's model animal control bylaws. There are two options for identification and registration or licensing. Discuss the pros and cons of each and then decide if this will help the cat overpopulation issue.

MUNICIPAL BYLAWS FOR CATS

Definitions:

at large - means an animal in a public place or on the lands or premises of any person other than the owner of the animal without consent of that person.

intact - not spayed or neutered.

owner - means any person

- (a) to whom a licence for a cat has been issued according to these bylaws
- (b) to whom a breeder's licence for a dog or cat has been issued according to these bylaws or
- (c) who owns, is in possession of, or has the care and control of any animal;

Regulations for the Keeping of Cats

Identification

Every owner of a cat is to always have sufficient and reliable identification on the cat by way of a collar, harness, traceable tattoo or microchip so that a person finding the cat at large in the Municipality can identify and contact the owner. The form of identification used must indicate if the cat has been spayed or neutered.

Spay/Neuter

Option 1: Mandatory Spay/Neuter of all Cats

No person shall own, keep, possess any cat over the age of six (6) months in the Municipality unless

- (a) the cat has been spayed or neutered by a veterinarian; or
- (b) a valid breeder's licence for the current licence year has been obtained for the intact cat under this bylaw.

The owner of an intact cat may apply to the Municipality for a breeder's licence and pay the applicable fee. The breeder's licence expires at the end of each calendar year and a new licence must be applied for if the owner wants to keep the cat intact.

No owner of an intact cat shall permit or allow it to be at large in the Municipality.

Option 2: Mandatory Spay/Neuter of Free-Roaming Cats

No owner shall permit a cat that is over the age of six (6) months, to be at large, unless such cat, is spayed or neutered.

Registration or Licensing

Option 1: Mandatory Free Lifetime Registration without Tag

No person shall own or keep any cat aged six (6) months or more within the Municipality unless such a cat is registered as provided by this Bylaw.

Any owner of a cat must register their cat by:

- (a) submitting a registration application in the form provided by the Municipality and
- (b) ensuring that the cat has identification and providing that to the Animal Control Officer.

The Municipality will keep a complete registry of all cats, indicating the dates of registration, the name and description (photograph) of each cat, and the name and address of each owner.

The owner of any registered cat shall, within thirty (30) days of owner's change of address, notify the Municipality of change of address.

Option 2: Mandatory Cat Licensing

Cats older than three months must be licensed. The licence is valid for the year in which it was received and must be renewed each calendar year and the applicable fee paid. Any licence issued after August 1st, the fee will be reduced by half.

A reduced licence fee will be given for cats that are spayed or neutered. Proof of spay/neuter is a certificate signed by a qualified veterinarian indicating that the cat has been spayed/neutered.

TAKE ACTION PROJECT

Option 1

Research your municipality's bylaws to see if there are any that apply to cats in regards to spay/neuter, ID or licensing. If there are none or they need improving, create a petition, write a letter to city council or attend a city council meeting to recommend changes or new bylaws.

Option 2

Come up with a different solution to the cat overpopulation problem. For example, create an infomercial, poster campaign, etc.

