



Making the Right Choice

KIDS AND ANIMALS

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE EMPATHY AND RESPONSIBILITY

BCSPCA

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Making the Right Choice

A Guide to Happy and Healthy Pets

Big Idea:

People have pets (companion animals) for various reasons: companionship, socialising, exercise, etc; however, some species of animals are better suited as companion animals than others. The relationship between the animal and its human caregiver needs to be mutually beneficial. To ensure a positive relationship, there are many aspects people need to consider when choosing a companion animal. These include how to care for the animal and the cost associated with that care, its natural behaviours, and whether the human caregiver has a compatible lifestyle.

The lessons and presentation will help children understand the great impact and accountability that comes with the decision to get a pet, and the research and thought that such a decision requires. Participants will learn to understand pet guardianship as entering into a reciprocal relationship that requires care and commitment on both sides. In turn, children will value their pets, and all animals, as more than fads or objects of entertainment, thus increasing empathy, compassion, and responsibility.

Making the Right Choice incorporates many aspects of the new curriculum and presents them with applicable, real-life meaning.

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 will practice acquiring new information about the animal world and sharing that information both formally and informally with groups or pairs, in presentations, or with the public as advocates. Through our interactive activities students will 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 units, lessons, and presentations students will have the opportunity to practice creative thinking, generating and developing new ideas about real issues that affect their lives every day. They will be 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 will think critically about how their personal decisions also affect other lives, their community, and the environment. Older students will 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 will learn to read the unspoken signals and emotions of animals and will practice recognizing and regulating their own actions and emotions in accordance to 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 will learn tangible strategies to peacefully solve problems and will develop a sense of accountability that extends beyond the personal to the social.

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What is it all going to cost?

One aspect of having a pet is the cost. Many people are often surprised at the cost of a pet and money is sometimes the reason guardians surrender their animal or at times even allow their pet to experience pain or suffering.

 **Big Ideas** All living things sense and respond to their environment.
Development of computational fluency in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Curricular Competencies

Math Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Model mathematics in contextualized experiences ▶ Develop, demonstrate, and apply mathematical understanding through play, inquiry, and problem solving ▶ Connect mathematical concepts to each other and to other areas and personal interests ▶ addition and subtraction to 1000
Science Grade 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Compare results with predictions, suggesting possible reasons for findings. ▶ Make simple inferences based on their results and prior knowledge.

Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Students will identify items needed to be a responsible pet owner. ▶ Students will gain an understanding of the costs of having a pet. ▶ Students will use mathematical skills such as addition and multiplication to connect mathematical concepts to each other and to other areas and personal interests. (Math 3 Curriculum)
Materials	Worksheet on page 5
Procedure	<p>In small groups or pairs have students come up with a list of items needed to care for their animal in a responsible way. Have them estimate the cost of those items or use local flyers or websites to research the prices. Next, have them compare their findings to the information provided on following pages. Follow up with some discussion questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Were their estimates cheaper, similar, or more expensive than the actual costs? ▶ Items, such as food, have a wide range of prices. Why might those price differences exist? What things should you think about when choosing products for your pet? (ingredients, quality, etc.) ▶ What are some ways you might reduce the cost without sacrificing the welfare of your pet? (DIY toys or treats, having a friends or family pet-sit instead of paying for boarding, adopt a pet rather buy) ▶ Are there any additional costs that we didn't consider? Any special situations or emergencies that may occur?

What's it all going to cost?

The following pages show average costs to keep pets. Students should fill in the worksheet on page [XX](#) and use flyers or other resources to find out the costs. These sheets are for teacher reference.

Costs for a dog

To keep a medium sized, mixed breed dog, the early cost will be approximately

Food	12 bags dog food (18kg) @ \$45	540.00
Biscuit treats	2 boxes per month @ \$10.00	240.00
Veterinary Care	Yearly Visit – exam and vaccinations	100.00
Nail clipping	every month @ \$10.00	120.00
Grooming	every 4 months @ \$45	135.00
Dog License	every year (spayed or neutered)	35.00
Vacation (boarding)	2 weeks dog care @ \$30/day	420.00
Total		\$1470.00

One Time Costs

Adoption fee (includes tattoo & neuter/spay)at the SPCA	295.00-475.00
Cost to purchase a dog	500.00 -1500.00
Spaying (female) and tattoo	200.00
Neutering (male) and tattoo	125.00
Food and water dishes	30.00
Collar and leash	35.00
Brush and comb	25.00
Toys - balls, Frisbees, etc.	25.00
Crate	65.00
Total adopted from the SPCA	\$475.00 - \$655.00
Total purchased female, unspayed	\$880.00-\$1880.00
Total purchased male, unneutered	\$805.00-\$1805.00

These are average basic costs and do not include emergency medical care, initial vaccinations, obedience classes, the cost of fencing or a dog bed.

Costs for a Cat

To keep a domestic long-haired cat the yearly costs will be approximately

Canned wet food	7 cans of cat food every month @ \$2	\$168.00
Dry cat food	1 bag (3.6kg) every month @ \$20.00	240.00
Cat treats	every month \$3.00	36.00
Veterinary Care	yearly visit - exam and vaccinations	100.00
Litter	1 bag of cat litter every month @ \$12.00	144.00
Nail clipping	every month @ \$5.00	60.00
Cat care Vacation	2 weeks @ \$20.00 per day	280.00
Total		\$1028.00

One time costs:

Adoption fee (includes tattoo & neuter/spay)at the SPCA	145.00
Food and water dishes	15.00
Collar, leash and harness	25.00
Brush and comb	15.00
Litter pan and scoop	20.00
Small scratching post	30.00
Cardboard travelling box	15.00
Toys and miscellaneous	20.00
Total	\$285.00

These are average basic costs and do not include emergency medical care, initial vaccinations, the cost of an outdoor cat run or bed.

Costs for a Rabbit

To keep a domestic rabbit the yearly cost will be approximately

5 lb bag of pellets	every months @ \$14	168.00
Fresh veggies & fruit	every month @ \$20	240.00
Timothy hay (not alfalfa)	1 flake every month @ \$5	60.00
23 litres of Care fresh litter/bedding	every month @ \$8	96.00
Annual vet exam	once/year	46.00
Nail Trim	every 2 months @ \$10	50.00
Total		\$660.00

One time costs

Adoption fee (includes neuter/spay)at the SPCA	65.00
Habitat/Hutch	75.00
Spay/Neuter (neuter is less)	75.00
Litter box	15.00
Rabbit care book	15.00
Dishes, water bottle	15.00
Misc. Brush, harness, leash	20.00
Total for rabbit adopted at the BC SPCA	\$205.00
Total for purchased rabbit	\$280.00

These are average basic costs and do not include care for your rabbit if you go on vacation, a large hutch or special medical attention.

What's it all going to Cost?

Decide what type of pet you would like to adopt. Then list all the things you will need to buy for your pet. Remember there are things that you will have to buy regularly like food, vaccinations, grooming and things that you will likely only have to buy once like a crate, spay/neuter, etc. Estimate what you think these things will cost and then check pet stores, flyers and call a vet to see what the actual cost is. It is important to know how much a pet will cost so you are prepared to keep the animal for its entire life time.

One Time Costs for		
Total		

Yearly Costs for		
Total		

Is there enough time today?

In order to make an informed decision about which animal to get as a pet or if you should get one at all, it is important to know if you have enough time to properly care for a pet.

 **Big Ideas** All living things sense and respond to their environment.

Curricular Competencies

Science
Grade 4

- ▶ Compare results with predictions, suggesting possible reasons for findings.
- ▶ Make simple inferences based on their results and prior knowledge.
- ▶ Contribute to care for self, others, school and neighbourhood through individual or collaborative approaches.

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate the time required to properly take care of a pet;
- Assess personal lifestyle to see if they have the time needed to care for a pet.

Materials

Worksheet on page 7

Procedure

Together brainstorm what actions are required every week to take care of a pet. Their list should include things like cleaning cages, bathing/brushing their animal, nail clipping, walking, playing with their pet, feeding, taking their pet out to go to the bathroom, etc. Different types of animals or even different breeds require different care.

Have students fill in the schedule on the following pages with all the things they do on a normal week. Then have them fit their pet care responsibilities for the type of pet they chose, in the remaining spaces on their schedule. Follow up with group or class discussion.

- ▶ Did they have enough time on their schedules to properly take care of their pet?
- ▶ Are there any animals that might be a better fit for your lifestyle than others? Which animals require the most time? The least?


Is there enough time today?

Day/Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Lunch					
After School					
Evening					

Day/Time	Saturday	Sunday
8 a.m. - 11 a.m.		
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.		
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.		
4 p.m. - 6 p.m.		
6 p.m. - 9 p.m.		
9 p.m. - 11 p.m.		

Pet Matching

Matching pets with the right future adopters/owners is very important for creating a harmonious relationship between animal and guardian, and it is the best way to prevent animals from being returned or surrendered to animal shelters.

 **Big Ideas** Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.

Curricular Competencies

English
Language Arts
Grade 4 & 5

- ▶ Access and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources and from prior knowledge to build understanding.
- ▶ Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to text and deepen understanding of self, community, and world.
- ▶ Develop and expanding word knowledge.
- ▶ Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding.

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Students will be able to evaluate the needs of a pet and decide which potential guardian would be best able to care for that pet.
- ▶ Students will work together exchanging ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding of the texts provided.
- ▶ Students will consider different purposes, audiences, and perspectives in exploring texts, as they engage in the matching process through the point of view of pets and pet guardians.

Materials

Worksheets on page 10-12 or 10, 13-20

Procedure

Students are to choose a pet for each guardian scenario and Underline the words in the adopter's description why you chose that animal or why they should not have a pet. * Note: not everyone may be suited for a pet.

You can do this activity in a variety of ways.

1. You can give each student both the adopter profiles and the animal profiles and have them try to find matches or decide that the adopter should not get a pet.
2. You can pair students up to find a match for each family. Cut out the large version of each animal write-ups up on pages 18-24 and place them around the room or across the white board. Have students move around the room individually or in pairs to find a match or decide if an adopter should not have a pet.

Procedure
continued

3. Hand out one adopter card to 10 students. Hand out one animal card to 16 students and have the students walk around and try to find a match. The animals could interview the potential families to screen them.

Once they have matched an adopter with a pet or decided an adopter shouldn't get a pet, students can compare their findings in a group or discuss as a whole class. There is no one right answer for each.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to match pets and adopters?
2. Would there be any questions you would ask the adopters if you could? Would it change your decision if you could get those answers?
3. Are there any families that should not get a pet? What would have to change before they could get a pet?
4. Is it difficult to find a place to rent if you have animals?

Extension

Have the students pick a pet that they think would suit their family and write down why of why their family shouldn't get a pet.

Pet Matching

You are in charge of finding homes for animals at the shelter. There are 10 people interested in adopting an animal and 16 animals up for adoption. 1. Name the pet that you think is a good match or check No if you don't think they should get a pet. 2. Underline the words in the adopter's description why you chose that animal or why they should not have a pet.

1. Evelyn has a fenced backyard. She spends time in her garden. Her two grandsons, aged 12 and 14, live with her. The boys come home every day for lunch and Evelyn works part-time from home.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

3. The Moffles live in a condo that allows pets. They don't have children and like to travel. They have busy jobs and don't spend much time at home.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

5. The Julians live in a pet-friendly apartment. Their son, George, has cat allergies. He spends much of his spare time on the computer. The Julians both work full-time but are home most evenings and weekends.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

7. Mary and Sara live in a house in a small town. They are retired. They often take care of their neighbour's labrador, Lucky, when they go away. Neither of them have had pets before. They like to hike.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

9. John and Marsha rent an apartment. John is allergic to cats. He works part-time and goes to school. She has a new job. They spend time at home when not at work. They plan to have a baby in a year or two.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

2. Ashley lives alone in a small house. She likes to go for walks. She has a good job not far from home. She gets along well with neighbours and depends on them in case of an emergency. She has a young neutered cat.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

4. Kelly has two children and lives in an RV park. The kids are aged 10 and 14. Kelly works full-time. Both kids like animals. No one has allergies.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

6. Lance and Carl own a condo. The condo allows pets, but dogs can only be 32 cm tall at the shoulder. Lance travels for work. Carl works from home. They live near an off-leash dog park. They have an older spayed cat.

Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

8. The Marshall's live on a farm. Their last dog got hit by a car. Dad works on the farm and mom works in town. They have three children ages eight, 11, and 13. No one has allergies. They have an indoor unsprayed old cat.

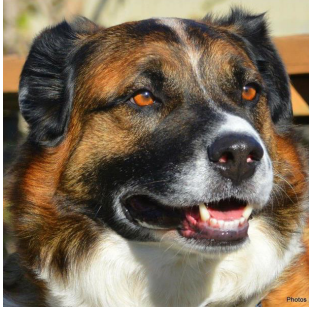
Name of pet _____

☐ should not get a pet

10. Todd lives in a basement suite in his parents' home. He likes to play video games whenever he can. He usually forgets to feed the fish when his parents go on vacation. He is starting an online business.

Name of pet _____

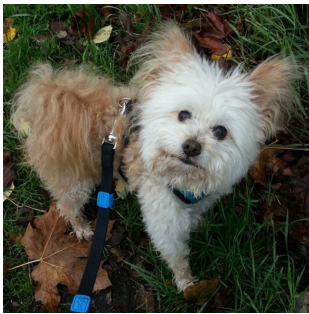
☐ should not get a pet



Spike is a four-year-old neutered German Shepherd/Retriever mix. He is playful, loves toys and enjoys tummy rubs. Spike is not good with other dogs. He gets excited and jumps. He will need training and a home with no young children.



Toffee is a four-year-old neutered long-haired cat. He loves to hang out with people. He is very playful and likes to chase things. He is quiet and is an indoor-only cat. He gets along with other cats and has lived with small children.



Riley is a 12-year-old neutered Pomeranian Poodle mix. Riley barks when left alone so apartment living is not for him. Riley needs a calm adult-only home where he will not be left alone for long.



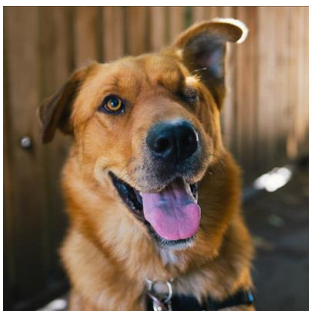
Jamie is a nine-year-old neutered medium-haired cat. He likes to be with people. He purrs very loudly, and will rub up against you to get you to pet him. Jamie is looking for a lap to sit on and a bed to share.



Lacey is a nine-month-old spayed Rottweiler puppy. She is excitable and needs training. She chews things. She needs regular active exercise. She is not house-trained but should not be left outside. She can not be left alone for more than three hours.



Tigger is a two-year-old spayed short-haired cat. She likes to meow to get your attention. She has a loud purr and gives head butts. She is an indoor only cat and is very clean. She gets along with other cats and will let a dog know she's boss.



Tuffy is a two-year-old neutered Chow/Shepherd mix. He has only one eye due to an accident. This doesn't slow him down. He needs lots of exercise. He loves people and would be a wonderful dog for any family with older or teenage children.



Nala is a four-month-old short-haired spayed kitten. She is very active, playful and full of energy. She loves to play with her toys, and bat around a foil ball, as well as snack on some treats. She is well behaved, good with kids and will make anyone an amazing new family pet.



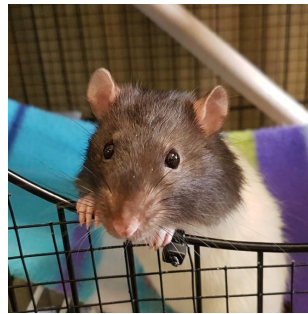
Keisha - is a two and a half year old, spayed female Pomeranian. She can be somewhat fearful and does not like to be left alone for long periods of time. Pomeranians tend to bark alot. Keisha would be best in a calm, quiet home.



Harley is a seven-year-old neutered short-haired cat. He's laid back and gets along with cats, people and dogs. He loves his cheeks scratched and will rub up against you to get attention. He's scared of loud noises, so he needs a home with quiet, older kids or adults only.



Charlie is a long-haired male guinea pig. He is sweet and squeaks to let you know when he is hungry. He has a beautiful long coat, that does need to be brushed regularly, as he gets tangled spots.



Beebs is a six-month-old male rat. He is smart and would love food puzzles and mazes or to learn tricks. He likes people and needs daily attention. He will entertain you if you find interesting things for him to learn.



Juniper is a five-year-old female horse. She likes people but doesn't like to be ridden. She likes to graze in the field and hang out in the barn when people are there. Horses usually live to be 25-30 years old.



Grube is a 12-week-old dwarf hamster. She likes to sleep during the day and is active at night. She doesn't like to be held but if you slowly get to know her in the evenings, she may get used to being pet and held.



Elsa is a two-year-old spayed rabbit. She likes to hop and will chew things made of wood or straw. She is friendly but doesn't like to be held. She should live to be about 10-12 years old.



Honey is a eight-year-old spayed rabbit. She has some issues with her teeth and will need to see a vet once a month. She is friendly and uses a litter box. She needs a quiet, calm home where she can live out her final years comfortably.

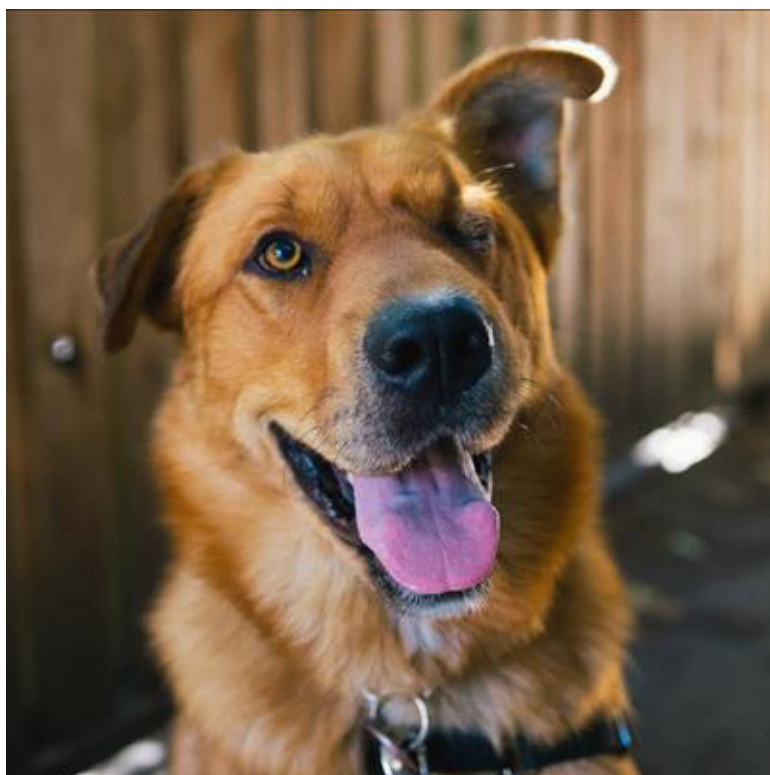
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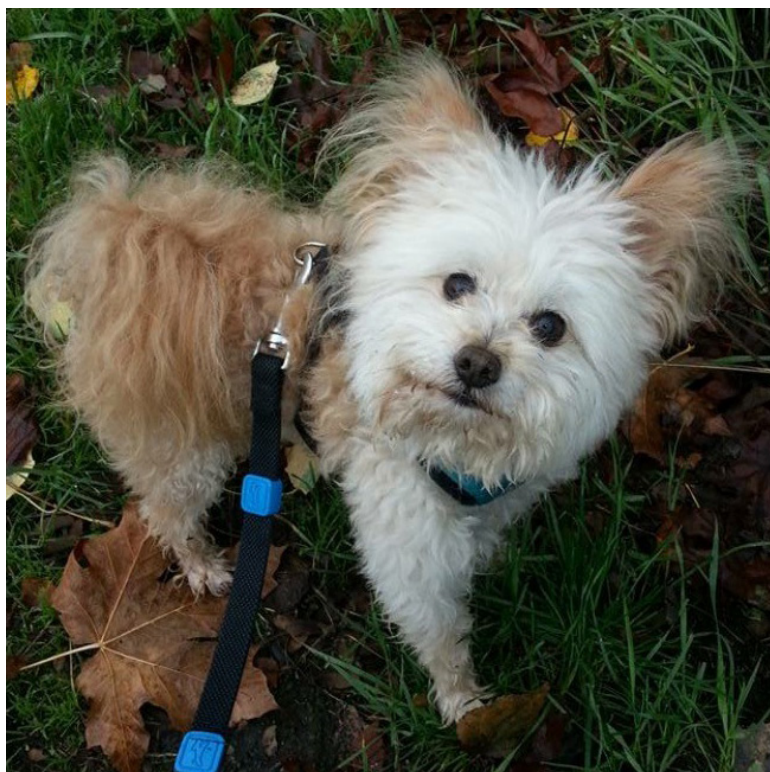
Spike is a four-year-old neutered German Shepherd/Retriever mix. He is super playful, loves toys and enjoys tummy rubs. Spike is not used to other dogs so he needs to get to know them slowly. He gets excited and might jump up so he is not good with young kids and will need training.



Tuffy is a two-year-old neutered Chow/ Shepherd mix. He has only one eye due to an accident. This doesn't slow him down a bit! He needs an active home so he will get lots of exercise. He loves all people and would be a wonderful dog for any family with older or teenage children.



Riley is a 12-year-old neutered Pomeranian/ Poodle mix. Riley barks when he is by himself, so apartment living is not for him. Riley needs a calm adult-only home where he will not be left alone for long.



Lacey is a nine-month-old spayed Rottweiler puppy. She is excitable and will need to go to obedience classes that use treats to train because she really likes food. Being a puppy she will likely chew things. She will need regular active exercise. She is not house-trained but should not be left outside so her owner will have to make sure she gets out every 2-3 hours to do her business.



Toffee is a four-year-old neutered long-haired cat. He is a wonderful boy who loves to hang out with people. He is very playful and still has a young 'kitten like' personality so he is looking for someone to play with. He has a beautiful soft coat and is handsome both inside and out.



Jamie is a nine-year-old neutered medium-haired cat. He is very loving and likes to be with people. He purrs very loudly, and will rub up against your legs, arms, face or any body part to get you to pet him. Jamie is looking for lap to sit on and a bed to share.



Tigger is a two-year-old spayed short-haired cat. She likes to meow to get your attention. She has a loud purr and will give you head butts. She is an indoor-only cat and is very clean. She will need a scratching post and loves to chase toys. She gets along with other cats and will let a dog know she's boss.



Nala is a four-month-old short-haired spayed kitten. She is very active, playful and full of energy. She loves to play with her toys, bat around a foil ball and snack on some treats. She is well behaved, good with kids and will make anyone an amazing new family pet.



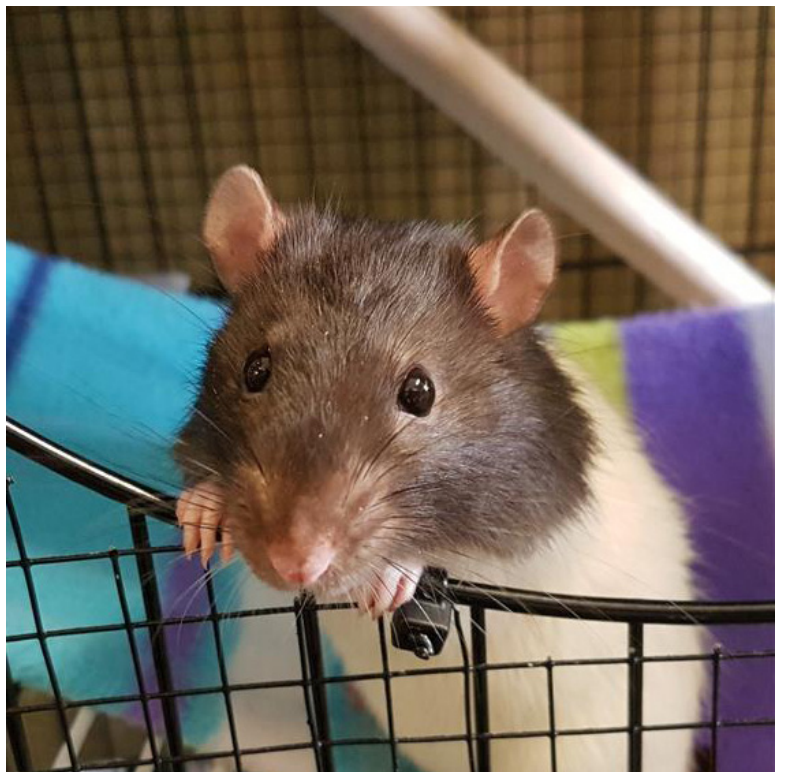
Harley is a seven-year-old neutered short-haired cat. He's laid back, gets along with cats, people and dogs. He loves his cheeks scratched and will rub up against you to get more attention. He gets scared around loud noises so would do better in a home with quiet, older kids.



Charlie is a long-haired two-year-old male guinea pig. He is really sweet, loves his veggies and squeaks to let you know when it is breakfast time. He has a beautiful long coat, that does need to be brushed regularly, because it does get tangled.



Harry is a six-month-old male rat. He is extremely intelligent and would love a home that will give him food puzzles, mazes or teach him tricks. He likes people and needs attention everyday. Rats love to climb and need to be kept busy. Harry will entertain you if you find interesting things for him to learn.



Creamsicle is a 12-week-old dwarf hamster. She likes to sleep during the day and is active at night. She doesn't like to be held but if you slowly get to know her in the evenings she may get used to being pet and held.



Juniper is a five-year-old female horse. She likes people and enjoys her carrots. Juniper doesn't like to be ridden. She likes to graze in the field and hang out with people when they are in the barn. Horses usually live to be 25-30 years old.



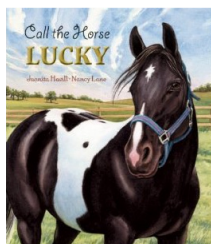
Elsa is a two-year-old spayed rabbit. She likes to hop and will chew things made of wood or straw. She is friendly but doesn't like to be held. She should live to be about 10-12 years old.



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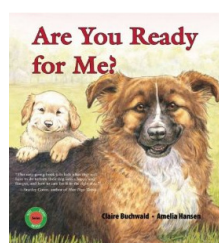
Book recommendations:



Call the Horse Lucky
by Juanita Havill and Nancy Lane

Reading level: Grades 1-3

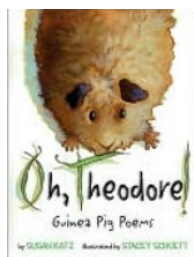
When a young girl aids in the rescue of a horse she learns that, while she cannot keep him as her pet, she can still help him by becoming a volunteer.



Are You Ready for Me?
by Claire Buchwald

Reading level: Grade K-3

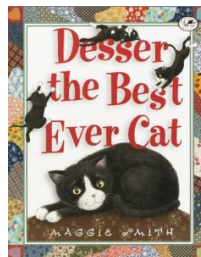
Written from a dog's point of view, *Are You Ready for Me?* illustrates the responsibilities and joys of adopting a dog into your family.



Oh, Theodore! by Susan Katz

Reading level: Grades 2-4

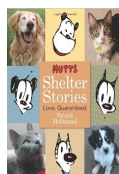
A great introduction to the care of guinea pigs in a fun, poetic format. Kids will love the poems and illustrations.



Desser, the Best Ever Cat
by Maggie Smith

Reading level: Grades K-3

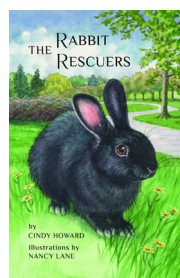
This is a story about a young girl and her cat. It illustrates the care and respect that evolves in a good human-animal relationship.



MUTTS Shelter Stories Love. Guaranteed.
by Patrick McDonnell

Reading level: Grade 3 - Adult

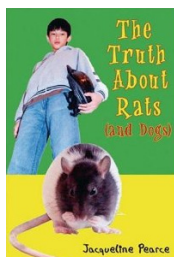
A collection of comic strips dispersed with real stories of adopted pets. The characters are emotive and expound the important issues of shelter animals.



Rabbit Rescuers
by Cindy Howard

Reading level: Grades 3-5

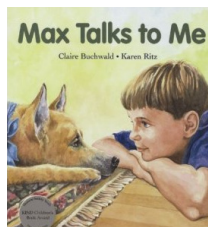
Kate and Zack discover abandoned rabbits in the park. They decide to help them. This story is loosely based on real-life rabbits and their experiences.



The Truth about Rats (and Dogs)
by Jacqueline Pearce

Reading level: Grade 3-5

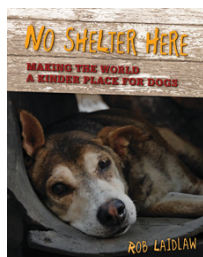
This book deals with stereotypes, both animal and human, empathy and the desire for a pet, when parents have a no pet rule.



Max Talks to Me by Claire Buchwald

Reading level: Grades K - 3

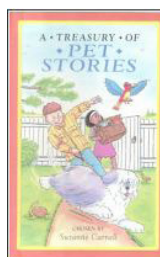
Max Talks to Me explores how a boy and his dog communicate with each other and the bond that is created.



No Shelter Here: Making the World a Kinder Place for Dogs
by Rob Laidlaw

Reading level: Grades 3-6

Exploring the dog welfare issues across the globe and inspire youth to create positive change for canines.



A Treasury of Pet Stories*
chosen by Suzanne Carnell

Reading level: Grades 3-4

With 16 stories all about animals and why we love them, this is a great silent reading choice for students who love animals.



Cat Champions: Caring for our Feline Friends
by Rob Laidlaw

Reading level: Grades 3-6

This book addresses overpopulation and spay/neuter, indoor vs. outdoor cats and the importance of pet ID.



Saving Snowy
by Marilyn Helmer

Reading level: Grades 2-4

Unable to have a feline friend at home, Ali discovers a cat in her backyard clubhouse. When she sees a 'lost cat' sign, she knows she must give the cat back.

