

# Meow!

Intermediate  
Level

Vol.6  
[spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca)

BCSPCA Teacher Guide to Integrating Animals into the Classroom



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EDUCATION**

# PIVOTING TO VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

This year, like everyone else, the BC SPCA switched gears and moved to online learning. We transformed our in-person humane education visits for classrooms into an online format. The presentations were updated and rebuilt into interactive virtual ones. Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Matthews tried the revamped, virtual **Kindness Counts** presentation and remarked, “The presentation involved the students, and made connections to their lives. It empowered them to recognize how they can be kind to animals.”



## Invite us into your classroom - from anywhere!

While the switch to virtual delivery has had its challenges, the silver lining has been the ability to engage youth in parts of the province where we have never been able to reach before.

Moving forward, we will now always be offering virtual presentations as an option for teachers. In locations where we have a regional educator or volunteer presenter, we will continue to offer in-person presentations as well.



## Keeping students engaged

With every presentation, we also include activities to reinforce the concepts and expand on the ideas we presented. All activities include the BC Ed Curricular Competencies and Content and Core Competencies that can be met for the activity. Nicole Holland used the **Kind Acts for Animals** activity with her grade 2/3 students and said, “I used this activity to teach students about kindness. It worked well to put the students in groups with one student as the writer/documenter. We then had a sharing circle where each group could share their kindness ideas from each scenario.”

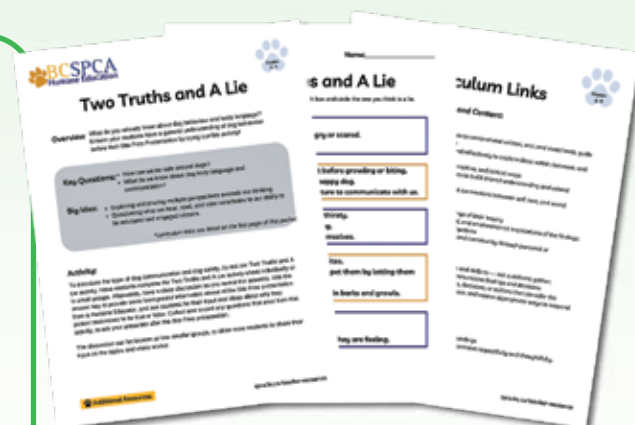
Kathryn Als said this about the **Two Truths and a Lie**, **Bite Free** activity for grades 6+, “Clear instructions and prompts help scaffold the information and their understanding, modifications and extensions are inclusive for all learners to keep them engaged.”

**Worksheet note:** The worksheet on page three is an abbreviated activity to demonstrate the content and links that are made to the B.C. curriculum.



## On the cover

Amanda Wheeler and her little dog, Tank, both benefit from Tank's need to burn off energy by hiking and biking. They also get in a daily snuggle, which has the added bonus of decreasing Amanda's stress after a busy day of teaching.





# What Animals Need

Animals, like humans, have basic needs that must be met in order to be happy and healthy. The BC SPCA believes that all animals need, at a minimum, the Five Freedoms (see next page). With this activity, students will first consider the needs of pets as they pertain to the Five Freedoms. Next, they will practise empathizing with an animal by writing a journal entry from that animal's perspective.

- Key questions**
- What are the Five Freedoms?
  - What do we need to provide a pet to keep them happy and healthy?

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

**Activity** Discuss with your class what animals, like humans, need to live happy, healthy lives. First introduce the concept of the Five Freedoms for animals (see next page), then choose a type of pet and complete the chart together. Have students write a journal entry from the perspective of the chosen pet, then use the discussion questions on this page as a springboard to extend their learning. Next, have students pick a more challenging pet (e.g. a snake, sugar glider, parrot or other exotic pet) and complete the same process (chart, journal). Discuss the questions again to see if their answers have changed.

## Discussion questions



Are there some animals that are more difficult to provide with the Five Freedoms?  
Why is it important to give animals the opportunity to express natural behaviours?  
Can any animal be kept as a pet?

## Curricular Competencies and Content

### Social Studies

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Differentiate between intended and unintended consequences of decisions and speculate about alternative outcomes (cause and consequence)

### English/Language Arts

- Sensing and responding: other animals
- Access and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources and from prior knowledge to build understanding

### Core Competencies

#### Thinking

- I can think critically about how my personal decisions also affect others and the environment.

# What animals need

**Directions** Choose an animal that you might like to have as a pet. Answer the questions under each freedom for that animal (you may have to do some research). Think about their natural behaviours and the space they need to do these things.

Next, write a journal entry about the animal arriving in their new home with humans. What do they need? How do they communicate? Are there things that are missing? What does a typical day look like from their perspective?

Type of animal	
 <b>Freedom from hunger and thirst</b> What foods does this animal eat? How much do they eat?	
 <b>Freedom from pain, injury and disease</b> What illnesses can this animal get? Is there a vet nearby who can care for this type of animal?	
 <b>Freedom from distress</b> What scares or makes this animal anxious? How does this animal show they are stressed or scared? What can you do so they don't get stressed?	
 <b>Freedom from discomfort</b> What kind of environment does this animal like to live in? What do they need to be comfortable?	
 <b>Freedom to express natural behaviours</b> What does this animal like to do? How can we make sure they are able to do these things?	



# Volunteer opportunities for teachers

**H**ave you ever thought you'd love to volunteer for the BC SPCA... if only you had more time, or didn't have to worry about ending up with a houseful of animals? Good news! We have two volunteer opportunities specifically for teachers that will fit right into your schedule – while not tempting you to add a new critter to your family.

**1. Teacher Representative:** Help us communicate our message! In order to teach kids all over the province about the importance of animal welfare, our goal is to have a teacher representative in every school across B.C.

As a **representative**, you will serve as a point person for the BC SPCA to receive materials on behalf of your school. We ask that you distribute the materials to your colleagues, which include school presentation brochures, new lessons for the classroom and posters for upcoming youth events in your region.

**2. Teacher Activity Reviewer:** If critical thinking, empathy development and kindness tools make you want to jump for joy, this is the volunteer position for you! Assessing our lessons by using them in your classroom will provide valuable feedback to BC SPCA staff for future program success.

As a **reviewer**, you will have access to all of our classroom materials to choose from. Test out BC SPCA-created activities and lessons with your students, then provide feedback using our evaluation form.

All volunteers will receive a welcome package full of materials you can use right away in your classroom.

If you would like to volunteer, please email us at [education@spca.bc.ca](mailto:education@spca.bc.ca).

Debbie Dykes, a retired teacher/TOC, became a teacher activity reviewer in 2020. She was immediately impressed with the connections the lessons made to the B.C. curriculum's Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies and Content. "Everything the classroom teacher needs is laid out in the lesson plans, including modifications. I wish I had known about these when I was a full-time classroom teacher," says Debbie. She tried the *Animal Reflection* prompts activity with Grade 4 students, noting, "They produced some lovely stories, poems and cartoons telling what they thought the animals felt being in quarantine." She also shared the lessons with colleagues, who she says were equally impressed.

*Right: Debbie Dykes with her Chihuahua-mix pup she adopted from the Victoria SPCA.*

*Above: Debbie volunteering at the Victoria shelter to help socialize puppies from a puppy mill seizure.*







## TEACHER FEATURE: AMANDA WHEELER

Amanda Wheeler has invited the BC SPCA into her classroom to do presentations both in-person (*Farm Food Connection*) and virtually (*Making the Right Choice*). Both experiences were eagerly anticipated by Amanda's students. After the first two sessions of their three-part presentations by a BC SPCA educator, the students chose a topic from the presentation to explore further. The projects on these two pages are the result of what they learned.

Amanda Wheeler's love of animals and her experience as a veterinarian technician, prior to becoming a teacher, led her to explore ways to teach her students about animals. She wanted the information to be relatable to her students' own lives while also meeting the B.C. education curriculum.

In January 2020, Amanda invited the BC SPCA into her grade 5/6 class at McGirr Elementary in Nanaimo to do a three-session *Farm Food Connection* presentation. She wanted her students to learn how farm animals are raised for food. She thought it would be a powerful way to have students think and question how we view animals and treat them in society.

Another lesson Amanda hoped the students would take away was empathy for another being. "Empathy can be a tough skill to learn," Amanda says. "Children are at different levels of developing empathy so any opportunity to reinforce this is important."

As for learning about the lives of farm animals, Amanda notes, "The students were engaged in the content and were interested in what they were learning about. After the first session, many students debriefed about their previous lack of awareness of the

reality of industrial farms. Some students went home and asked their families about where their food came from and shared what they learned."

After the second session, the students were able to transfer their deep concern for the welfare of animals into a well-thought-out and informative final project that they shared with the school community. "I really liked that the students had an end project to focus on and show their passion and learning."

Asked if she would recommend the program to other teachers, Amanda remarks, "These SPCA programs are wonderful. Our presenter was well prepared, knowledgeable, and even had great classroom management. The hour-long sessions had movement breaks and were paced well. The content can be tied into curricular outcomes. Many students formed connections between the learning from the SPCA presentations and other topics we have covered."







Later in 2020 Amanda moved school districts, from Nanaimo to Comox Valley. She was happy to learn that the BC SPCA was still doing presentations through the COVID-19 pandemic, though virtually. This time she chose the three-session *Making the Right Choice* presentation for her grade 4/5 class at Valley View Elementary. “Initially I was concerned about a potential lack of engagement with a virtual presentation and my busy class, but I was happy to see the creative ways the facilitator engaged my students for the entire hour. Both in person and virtual provided students with information that they discussed days after with each other,” says Amanda.



During the *Making the Right Choice* presentation series, students learn about what all animals need to live a happy and healthy life. They hear stories about different animals kept as pets, including some that people think are “easy” but actually require more space, care and money than they expected. One example is the story of how a health emergency took Shelly the turtle and her guardian on a long road trip to find an experienced reptile vet. “These real world

examples kept the students engaged in and connected to the content,” Amanda remarks.

After the first virtual session, Amanda’s students shared stories about their own pets and enjoyed talking about what animals would not make a good pet due to our inability to care for them the way they require. “We had many discussions about how ‘loving’ an animal is not enough when it comes to caring appropriately for them” she says.



With the third of the three sessions being the chance for the students to share their project with the BC SPCA presenter, they were motivated to complete their project, share the information they learned with others and expand their knowledge further. Amanda adds that “both the in-person and virtual presentations were highly anticipated by my class.”

When asked about the virtual experience, Amanda says, “I would absolutely recommend these presentations to every classroom teacher. There are resources available to support students in their work at school and additional activities to supplement their learning between sessions too. I know that every year I teach I will seek presentations from the BC SPCA.”

# Testimonials



## HERE'S WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS:

"It was super neat for the students to have the opportunity to talk to experts outside the classroom and they were given plenty of opportunity to inquire away."

– Jamie Koch  
Upland Elementary (*Cat Tales*)

"Kids got a fuller understanding of the costs and responsibilities of owning a domestic animal. The real-life examples were relevant."

– Maple She  
R J Tait Elementary  
(*Making the Right Choice*)

"The students were engaged. The presenter's kind and gentle demeanor welcomed student participation – even some of my reluctant speakers participated."

– Louise Dilasser, Cloverdale Traditional School (*You Can Make a Difference*)

"I loved the energy the presenter had. The videos and visual aids helped to engage the kids and really helped tie the concept of the needs of humans and animals."

– Laurinda Roberts,  
Doncaster Elementary  
(*The Farm-Food Connection*)

"The presenter was so enthusiastic and engaging, and she went above and beyond by sending us a video answer to extra questions we had about the SPCA. The students LOVED the presentation and the post-presentation video!"

– Jessica Suurallik, Davidson Road Elementary, Kindergarten  
(*Kindness Counts*)

Right: Jessica Walker at the Little Red Barn Micro Sanctuary.

Below: A sample of virtual BC SPCA camps featuring Gandalf the goat and creating pet treats!



## EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS



Not only have our classroom presentations gone virtual, but all of our extracurricular youth programs have too. Going virtual has enabled us to host events that reach kids all around the province, incorporate amazing guest speakers, play live Kahoots (trivia games) and introduce even more animals to participants.

One of our initial concerns with the switch to online programs was that kids would miss getting up close and personal with the animals. However, we were pleasantly surprised at how excited they were to meet the variety of animals in the care of guest speakers and fellow participants, as well as farm animals, dogs, cats and small animals at BC SPCA facilities – all on-screen. One stand-out animal guest? Gandalf the goat, who was adopted from the BC SPCA and now lives with his new best horse friend at the Kamloops Therapeutic Riding Centre.

Our virtual programs have also hosted experts on a wide variety of topics. A vet, vet tech and wildlife rehabilitator have all shared career advice. Animal advocates like the teen founder, Jessica Walker, of the Little Red Barn Micro Sanctuary and the wildlife campaign manager from Humane Society International have spoken about how they're working to make a difference.

In 2020/21, some favourite virtual youth program themes included *Careers with Animals*, *Endangered Species*, *Pet Care Advocacy*, *Wildlife Wonders* and *All About Dogs*. For the 2021/22 school year, we will offer a mix of both live and in-person Pro-D day events, afterschool programs, Saturday workshops and of course – everyone's favourite – summer camps.



# Social and emotional learning and humane education: Two sides of the same coin

**S**ocial and emotional learning (SEL) is critically important for success in school and life. As a teacher, you've likely been asked to implement SEL to support your students' development. One problem: You love animals and use humane education lessons in your classroom. How do you choose between the two? Well, you actually don't have to choose because SEL and humane education overlap.

## What does SEL have to do with humane education?

In a word: everything.

The B.C. Ministry of Education breaks down SEL into three core competencies. **Communication** refers to positive interactions with others. **Thinking** means our intellectual development, including self-awareness and habits of mind. **Personal and Social** includes developing healthy identities, caring about others, and achieving goals.

The BC SPCA defines "humane education" as teaching responsible animal care and fostering compassionate and respectful attitudes towards people, animals and the environment to create peaceful and inclusive communities. Clearly, these are different ways of talking about the same ideas! Healthy identities, caring about others and positive relationships manifest in compassionate and respectful attitudes towards others. In order to create peaceful and inclusive communities you also need to set goals, regulate behaviours and make responsible and constructive decisions.

Here are more examples:

- When you teach students about what animals need to be happy and healthy, students learn about prosocial behaviour



### About the writer

Melvin Chan is a PhD student who studies humane education at York University. He recently completed his master's degree in social and emotional learning at UBC, and has been involved with the BC SPCA in both volunteer and employment capacities since 2012.



and collaboration for solving problems (e.g., provide animals with food and water so they do not suffer; advocate for animals). This is part of the **Communication** competency.

- When you teach students about stereotypes and how to challenge beliefs with regard to acceptable animal welfare practices, students examine their biases and begin linking their emotions, thoughts, values and behaviours. This is part of the **Thinking** competency.
- When you teach students about the feelings and lives of dogs, students develop self-control so they do not run up and pet the animals. Students may also foster their perspective-taking skills and empathy. This is part of the **Personal and Social** competency.

## The BC SPCA's SEL and Humane Education Program

To help you with SEL during your busy day, the BC SPCA has developed resources that bridge SEL with animals. Check out the lesson plans and presentations available on the BC SPCA's website to learn how you can bring SEL and animals to your classroom. You don't have to choose between SEL and animals: SEL and humane education are two sides of the same coin.

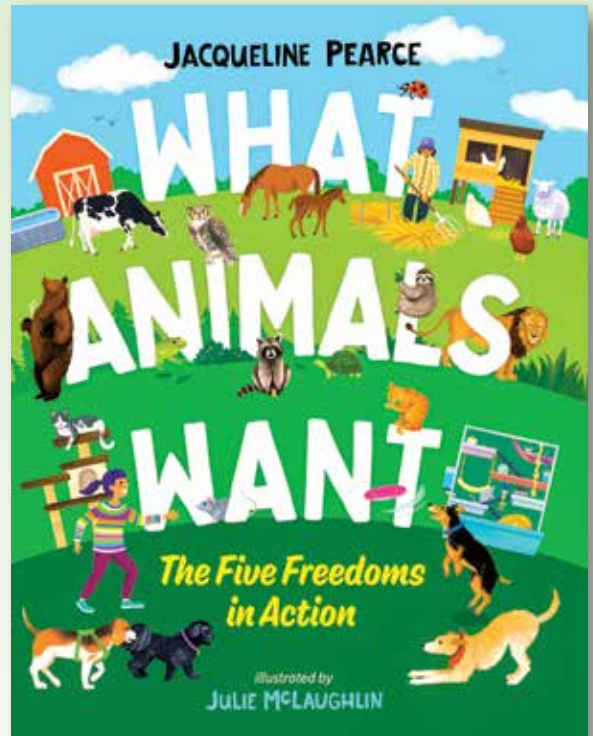
# What Animals Want: The Five Freedoms in Action

by Jacqueline Pearce, illustrated by  
Julie McLaughlin (Orca Publishing, 2021)

*What Animals Want* is a new animal-care book with a difference. Everyone knows animals need food, water and shelter. But what about their social and emotional needs? Modern science tells us that animals experience a wide range of emotions – from fear and anxiety to friendship and happiness.

In *What Animals Want*, renowned Canadian children's book author Jacqueline Pearce introduces students ages 8-14 to the **Five Freedoms**, an internationally recognized tool for evaluating the welfare of animals. The **Five Freedoms** were first developed in 1965 in response to the way farm animals were being treated on factory farms. Today, the **Five Freedoms** are being used by animal groups all over the world to help ensure animals experience good physical and emotional welfare.

*What Animals Want* is the first book about the **Five Freedoms** for youth. It helps young people apply the **Five Freedoms** to pets at home and to other situations where people keep animals. For example, what kind of habitat best meets the emotional and behavioural needs of a hamster, rabbit or guinea pig? How do farmers ensure their cattle have access to fresh water on the summer range? Are aquarium whales protected from sunburn? Do rodeo animals suffer from fear and distress and how would you know?



Using examples from animal welfare scientists, Pearce explores how we know what animals really want and need. The book also gives lots of inspiring examples of youth who are making a difference for

animals in their communities all over the world. Providing a fresh, science-based perspective, while also encouraging empathy, the book challenges students to look critically at how our society treats and cares for animals.

The BC SPCA has distributed copies of *What Animals Want* to all school and public libraries in B.C. If you would like your own copy, you can purchase one directly from the BC SPCA at [shop.spca.bc.ca](http://shop.spca.bc.ca), or from Orca Publishing at [orcabook.com](http://orcabook.com) (with partial proceeds to the BC SPCA), or wherever you buy your books.

## the FIVE FREEDOMS





# CELEBRATING CANADIAN INDIGENOUS AUTHORS



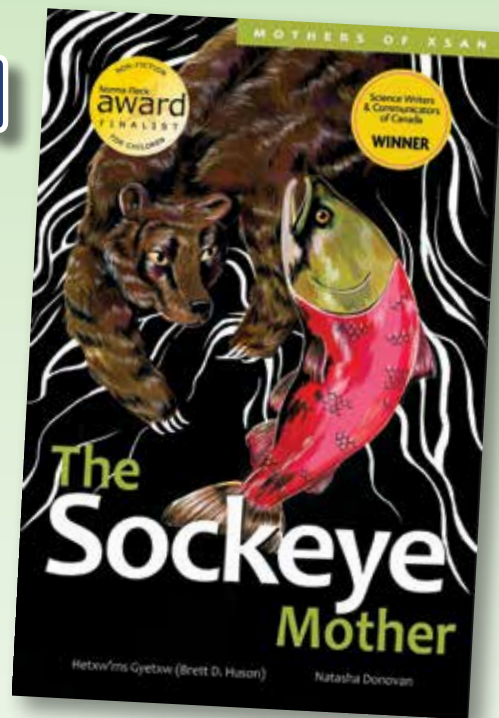
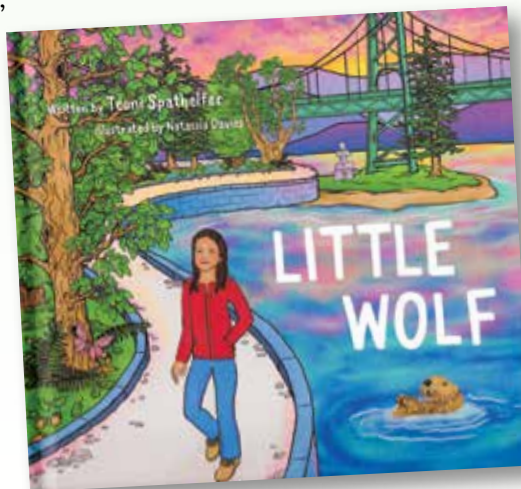
## ***Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast* (Garfinkel Publications, 2010)**

*Sharing Our World* is an introduction to Indigenous Peoples' rich connections and ways of knowing about local animals of the Pacific Northwest. Written for young readers (K-2), this book offers a window into the individual gifts, supernatural powers and cultural significance of an animal as told by Indigenous artists from the Nuxalk, Namgis, Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, Heiltsuk, Haida, Bella Bella, Tsimshian, Kwa Na Ki Nulth and Nuchatlant Nations. From the wolf to owl, and frog to whale, each special relationship and learning is shared through vivid drawings and colourful designs, and would be an excellent starting point for a curricular unit on language arts (recording personal, family and community histories), social studies (stories and traditions), art and design (works of art and artistic traditions) or science (features and behaviours of living things).

## ***Little Wolf* by Teoni Spathelfer, illustrated by Natassia Davies (Heritage House, 2021)**

*Little Wolf* is a picture book for K-3 about a young Indigenous girl's challenges as she adjusts to moving to the city. Little Wolf misses her wilderness home and her connections to family. To top it off, she is the only Indigenous student in her school and is teased by classmates. Her mother helps her build inner strength by connecting Little Wolf with her cultural heritage.

Little Wolf also finds strength in discovering the urban wildlife no one else seems to notice and in her connection to her dog adopted from an animal shelter. This renewed confidence inspires Little Wolf and sets her on a positive life course. *Little Wolf* can be used to help students better understand what it can be like to be from an Indigenous background and should inspire thoughtful discussion on celebrating each person's cultural heritage.



## ***The Sockeye Mother* by Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett David Hudson), illustrated by Natasha Donovan (Portage & Main, 2017)**

This artfully illustrated book is an exploration of the interconnectedness between animals, the natural landscape and its people. The author shares the cultural lens of the Gitxsan, describing the life cycle of the sockeye salmon and its significance to the people of the Pacific Northwest Interior. We are guided through the seasons as we follow the Sockeye Mother's life cycle down the Xsan (Skeena) river to reach the ocean, through to

her later return upstream to the spawning grounds where she experiences a "replenishing death." With the increasing decline of salmon habitat in British Columbia, the knowledge this book shares is of particular current significance. Throughout the book, Gitxsan terms for places, seasons and animals are accompanied by English translations, allowing the reader to glimpse how the Gitxsan language is closely connected to the natural world.



# Animal-themed Teacher Resources

[spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher)

## CURRICULUM UNITS FOR K-12

**Kindness Counts** (Gr. K-2) – Focuses on empathy for animals and people.

**Making the Right Choice** (Gr. 3-5) – Focuses on pet care, guardian responsibility and choosing the right pet.

**You Can Make a Difference** (Gr. 3-7) – Connects youth to animal issues in their community. Ideas for projects in which students can learn skills in responsible advocacy are included.

**The Farm/Food Connection** (Gr. K-2 & 3-10) – Introduces students to farming practices, promotes critical thinking about where their food comes from and encourages respect for animals.

**Including Animals in Social Justice** (Gr. 6-12) – Uses animal issues to discuss social justice issues and eases students into more sensitive social justice topics such as racism, inequality and stereotyping.

**Bite Free** (all grades) – Teaches children how to behave safely around dogs and helps those afraid of dogs.

**Cat Tales** (Gr. 3-6) – Students will connect to real-life issues facing our feline friends. They will be challenged to use critical thinking skills to question socially accepted norms and find creative solutions to the issues.

**NEW! Virtual presentations are now available for all units. In-person presentations can be booked in select B.C. locations. Visit [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) for details.**

## Stay informed with e-Teacher

Sign up for **e-Teacher**, our monthly newsletter for educators, to stay informed and get new ideas on bringing animal themes into your classroom. Receive book reviews, tips for class/school club projects, current event updates and reviews of each upcoming *Bark!* issue. You can even request a class set of *Bark!*. Sign up at [spca.bc.ca/newsevents/enewsletters/e-teacher-newsletter](http://spca.bc.ca/newsevents/enewsletters/e-teacher-newsletter).

## Additional Teacher Resources

**Violence Link** – Background resources on the link between animal abuse and family violence.

**Cluck! The Life of an Egg-laying Chicken (video)** – Tour an egg-laying chicken barn where you learn about the natural behaviours of hens and the different types of housing systems (available at [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) under intermediate and secondary students).

**Bite Free (video)** – A 9-minute video on dog bite safety (available at [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) under primary students).

**Book reviews** – We have a list of recommended picture books, novels and non-fiction books, all of which have been reviewed and vetted for humane content.

**Bark!** – BC SPCA youth magazine about animal care, welfare issues and more for students ages 13 and under.

**AnimalSense** – Adult-directed magazine featuring articles about the BC SPCA and animal issues.



Student Resources: [spca.bc.ca/youth](http://spca.bc.ca/youth)

**School Club Manual** – Ideas and activities to help students take action for animals.

**Pet care guides** – Care sheets on companion animals.

**BC SPCA summer camps** – Week-long day camps virtually and in-person in communities across B.C.

**School holiday workshops** – Animal-themed activities both virtually and at select BC SPCA shelters for students ages 7-16.

**BC SPCA Kids Club** – A \$20 membership for youth ages 13 and under. Includes *Bark!* (4 issues/year), e-Kids newsletter (12 issues/year) and a welcome package.



# BCSPCA



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