

How do we look after pets?

This lesson focuses on which animals make good pets and how to care for them. It builds on the work from the lesson: *We all have basic needs* (Progression Step 2).
*only for bilingual version

This lesson builds on knowledge that animals have needs just like humans, and that these needs include food, water, companionship, a suitable place to live, being looked after by a vet if they are ill, and the opportunity to behave naturally. Pupils will explore the ways in which humans have a responsibility towards all animals – wild animals, farm animals and pets.

KEY STAGE: 1*Progression Step 3***Worksheets:**[At the vet's: question sheet](#)[At the vet's: teacher's notes](#)[At the vet's: answer sheet](#)[Pets' needs](#)

? Did you know?

- In the wild, budgies and canaries live in large groups so it is unkind to have just one bird. Get a pair or a group of male or female birds at the same time to avoid jealousy.
- From a very young age a female guinea pig can produce up to five litters a year.
- The average lifespan of a dog is 12 years, although many live for much longer.
- The average lifespan of a cat is 14 years, but some can live up to 20 years (and some even longer).

1 Starter activity

Review basic needs

- Run through the basic needs for animals that the class established in the lesson [We all have basic needs – pets and humans](#).
- Some pupils could make a grid to compare the needs of different animals, such as carnivores, herbivores and rodents.

2 Main activity

Good pets

- Show the pupils pictures of different animals (see image collections [Pets](#), [Farm animals](#) and [School grounds](#)) and ask them to say which they would like to have as a pet. Ask them to explain their choices. The pictures of farm animals and wildlife might make the pupils giggle, but it should also make them think about why some animals make good pets and others do not.
- Talk about the way different animals live and what they need to be happy and healthy (see factsheet [The five welfare needs](#)). Could you keep a cow in your bedroom? Would a badger be happy in a cage?

How do we look after our pets?

- Use the photos of the animals from the collection of images [Pets](#).
- With the pupils working in mixed-ability groups, appoint a reader and a leader for each group and give each group a photo of a different pet and a copy of the worksheet [Pets need](#). Talk through any difficult words. Ask them to cut out all the things on the worksheet.
- Give the groups a large piece of paper and attach the photo of the pet in the middle. Ask the reader to read out the cards to the group one by one.

- Ask the groups to discuss each card and decide if it applies to their animal. If it does they can attach it to their sheet.
- If the groups aren't sure what a word means or can't understand the card, they can either leave it to one side or ask.
- At the end of the activity the groups should have created a simple poster showing everything the animals need to be healthy and happy. Any cards that the pupils were unsure of can be discussed at this point

Plenary activities

How hard is it?

- Discuss why some of the pet posters have more needs attached to them than others.
 - Does this mean some pets are more difficult to look after than others?
 - Are there any pets that don't have any needs attached to them?
 - Point out that all pets have needs and it is our responsibility to meet those needs.
- Ask the pupils what they have learned about keeping a pet. Ask them how they feel about people who don't care for their pets properly. Invite them to explain what, if anything, they might do differently as a result of this activity.

What next?

Extension activities

- Set up the vet role-play area in the classroom. Pupils can take it in turns to be the animal's owner and the vet. Ask the pupils to invent questions for each other based on what they have learned about pet care. They can then move on to the questions on the worksheet [At the vet's](#).
- Alternatively, you can cut up the question and answer sheets and ask pupils to match the right answers to the questions.

Display

- Create a vet's corner or surgery. You will need boxes and soft toy animals. Put one animal in a box with a card that says, for instance, 'The dog has a sore paw' or draw a picture and ring where the dog is hurt.
- Add the things that the animal needs to be treated, such as a toy syringe, paper lampshade to stop it biting its stitches and Vaseline for ointment. (Use with the usual health and safety cautions. Please note that Vaseline should never be used on our own pets.)
- You could also provide a toy phone, and writing pads for making appointments. Old white shirts make good vets' coats and a toy medical kit will be popular.

English version

Check out our other pet-related lesson plans:

- Looking after pets takes time
- Campaigning for animal welfare
- Exotic animals as pets
- A nation of animal lovers

Bilingual version

We have relevant resources for each Progression Stage on our website:

<https://education.rspca.org.uk/education/teachers/lessonplanswales>

Useful websites:

- [RSPCA – All about animals – General pet care](#)
- [RSPCA – Science group](#)
- [RSPCA Assured](#)
- [RSPCA – About us](#)
- [Video – What do pets need?](#)