

Animals and the law: rights and responsibilities

This activity uses role-play to explore the role of agencies in encouraging people to become responsible pet owners, with a focus on non-domestic exotic animals. This session could follow [Dogs and the law](#). This lesson only applies to legislation in England.

Did you know?

Few reptile species are bred regularly on a large commercial scale in the UK. Most green iguanas are imported as hatchlings from countries in South America, Africa and Indonesia. However, many breeders are able to support their hobby by breeding and selling the young of many other species.

1 Starter activity

Meeting pets' needs

- Students complete the quiz [Pets and the law](#).
- Ask the students to consider what all pets need. Introduce the five welfare needs as defined in [The Animal Welfare Act 2006](#).
- Show the class images of pets from the image collection. Ask them to discuss how you meet the needs of each animal e.g. food for a dog, litter tray for a cat.

2 Main activity

Animal welfare forum

- Read the factsheet [Big cat in Peckham](#) and the [RSPCA statement](#), and discuss the issues.
- Read the factsheet [Non-domestic \(exotic\) pets](#).
- Set up the scenario that there is a local problem with people buying non-domestic pets and then struggling to meet their needs. A number of young people are buying non-domestic pets but they don't always have the knowledge, time and money to care for them properly. Also, some of them are under 16 and are too young to legally buy a pet. The local authority and the RSPCA are having to rescue and rehome a number of animals. The main issue is that people don't know or understand their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (see [The Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) factsheet and teachers' notes for more information).

- It has been decided that a local forum will be set up to address the problem.
- Using the role-play cards, students form five expert groups that will send a representative to the forum.

These are:

1. RSPCA.
2. Environmental services officer.
3. Owner of an iguana.
4. Breeder of non-domestic (exotic) animals.
5. Local person who will act as chairperson.

KEY STAGE 3:
PROGRESSION
STEP 5



Supporting materials:
[Pets and the law quiz](#)
[Big cat in Peckham](#)
[RSPCA Statement](#)
[Pets and the law role-play cards](#)
[Animal Welfare forum agenda](#)
[Pets and the law quiz: answers](#)
[The Animal Welfare Act 2006](#)

- Groups discuss the issue from their point of view. They decide what they will contribute to the forum.
- Regroup to form several mixed forums.
- Using the [*Animal welfare forum agenda*](#), the chairperson runs the role play. The forum creates an action plan to resolve the issue.
- Groups present their action plan to the class.

Plenary activities

What do you think

- Who do the students think is responsible for ensuring the needs of pets are met? Why?
- What measures would they put in place to ensure that only those people who were able to provide the care that pets need were able to purchase them? Would these measures require a new law or do the students think these can be achieved using alternative methods, for example, a voluntary code of practice? A voluntary code of practice is a set of guidelines that organisations choose to sign up to, but it is not compulsory for all.

Assessment

Portfolio opportunities

- Research notes for the role-play.

Assessment questions

- What questions did I want to find out more about?
- How did I find the answers?
- How did I judge the information I found?

What next?

Extension activities

- Could you set up an animal welfare forum for animal welfare issues in the school? Perhaps it could be part of the school council?
- Students could research online pet shops and what information, if any, they provide on the animals' needs.

English version

Want to explore the topic of caring for pets further?

Try these lessons:

- How do we care for animals?
- 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>