

Animal Heroes

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

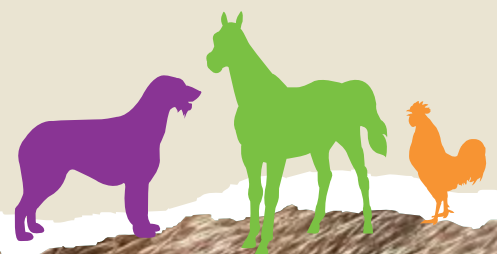
- To identify some of the different jobs and roles that animals have in our lives
- To explore whether an animal's needs are being met when animals are used for human benefit
- To recognise the differences and similarities between humans and animals, and that animals have feelings and emotions
- To identify the variety of ways animals and humans can work together and appreciate how amazing animals can be

RESOURCES

- Interactive PDF 'Animal Heroes' to guide pupils through the activities

Due to the topics covered in the Compassionate Class programme, it is important to consider how different children may react. For more information on creating a safe teaching and learning environment, see guidance on pages five to seven of the Teacher Overview downloadable at: rspca.org.uk/ccresources.

These activities could be delivered in the same lesson or spread over a few sessions, depending on the needs of your students. We have not specified timings to allow for flexibility for different settings.



Animal Heroes

STIMULUS

This session will help children understand all of the amazing ways that animals help humans, whilst recognising that because animals can't choose to help us, we have a responsibility to make sure they are healthy, happy and have their specific needs met.

Start by exploring with the class: what is a hero? Can they think of one? They might think of heroes in films and stories first, and if possible use pictures to give visual support. Explore what made their suggestions heroic. Extend the discussion to real life heroes: soldiers, police officers, Captain Tom. Again, use pictures and news articles to support. Do they know anyone personally who they think is a hero?

Ask: can an animal be a hero? Record their thoughts in the box on **slide two** or use a whiteboard. This can be used as a baseline assessment to capture pupils' initial understanding and we encourage you to revisit these thoughts at the end of the session.

WHAT IS A LANDMINE?

Discuss what is happening in the picture on **slide three**, and explain what a land mine is. What could happen if a person stepped on a mine. Key things to make sure are covered (as we will explore them in the next slide) are:

KEY FACTS ABOUT CLEARING LAND MINES

- Landmines are still buried in lots of countries around the world, and finding out where they are is really important to stop people getting hurt. Use slides four and five to explain how long it takes for a soldier to clear a landmine.
- They are very dangerous and can harm anyone or anything that comes near to them.
- Some mines might be missed. Local people, children and animals may step on them thinking the area is clear.

**SLIDES
2-5**

Is it possible for an animal to help? If an animal could help, would this make them a hero?



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STIMULUS

News story about Mandy the hero rat.

Cover this to the developmental ability of the class.

This is based on a real story covered in a BBC documentary.

In areas affected by landmines humans usually use metal detectors to search the area and identify possible mines under the surface. This is dangerous and takes a long time. An African Giant Pouched Rat can be trained to cover the area the size of a tennis court in just 30 minutes, which would take humans four days. Hero rats use their sense of smell to find the explosives and dig the surface when they detect one and get rewarded with a treat. The rats are too light to set off the mines when they step on them making it much safer for them to do this than humans. Hero rats must pass a series of tests before being taken to work in a live landmine area.

If you have the time and the video is at the right developmental level, you could use the options below to help as further enhancement:

1. Introducing hero rats
2. Training hero rats
3. See them at work

Mandy the record-breaking hero rat

June, 2014

Mandy, the African Giant Pouched rat, is making history as one of the fastest hero rats to complete her training.

Hero rats have an important job to do sniffing out landmines so they can be removed and not

harm the people who live near them. Hero rats are light so they don't set the mines off when they stand on them and they can smell the explosives buried deep in the ground. They dig to show the people where the mines are and get rewarded with a treat.

A hero rat's training usually takes a year, but Mandy has passed in just 8 months!



SLIDES
6-8



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STIMULUS (CONTINUED)

PROMPT QUESTIONS FOR MORE ABLE STUDENTS

- What does it mean to be a hero?
- Do animals choose to help humans?
- Do you think Mandy wants to do this job?
- How might Mandy feel as she heads off into the minefield?
- Should the trainers send Mandy into the minefield when they know she would not survive an explosion?

Ask the children if they can think of some other ways that animals help humans.

Make a list first then look through **slides 9-12** as examples.

You can search online for more examples, and ask the group if anyone has an assistance dog at home.

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DISCUSSION

Discuss the information on **slide 13** with the class.

WHAT DOES THE RSPCA THINK ABOUT ANIMALS?

- Humans have responsibilities towards all animals
- Humans should make sure the needs of animals are always met
- All animals have feelings, emotions and can feel pain
- Animals are intelligent and can think for themselves
- All animals in experiments that cause pain, suffering or distress, should be replaced by humane alternatives

Show **Archie and Woody's Fire Investigation Adventure** animation, inspired by real fire dogs from Cornwall.

Ask the class what would happen if we didn't look after Mandy the rat and Archie the dog properly.

Explain that both are intelligent social mammals, learn quickly, bond closely with humans, are sociable with their own species, don't cope on their own, and may well suffer in the occupations we have given them. Explain that the people training and looking after Archie and Mandy do everything they can to make sure they are healthy and happy, and that all their welfare needs are met.

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CLASS DISCUSSION: COMPASSION

For those who are able, explore the following topic.

Should we put animals in danger to help humans?

Use a whiteboard to record their answers. They might need a little help understanding the concept so using the example of Archie or a police dog may help unlock some other ideas.

Prompt questions for those with higher language levels:

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- How might Archie feel when he is investigating the causes of a house fire?
- Do you think Archie and Mandy know that they are heroes?
- Does it make a difference that Mandy didn't have an owner before becoming a hero rat?
- Ask the class to suggest how their work might be negatively affected if their needs were not met, for examples, no dinner break, play time, not enough sleep.

Split the class into groups and ask them to imagine that they can present a 'bravest hero' award to an animal. They can choose to focus on one of the animals in the images or take an example from real life if they have one. They could design a certificate or medal.

FURTHER CONSOLIDATION:

The class could prepare a short play for assembly showing their learning and the roles animals have in helping us.

Re-visit **slide two** and see if they have any further ideas about whether animals can be heroes or not.

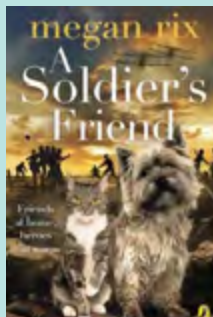
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EXTENSION RESOURCES

To take the learning from this discovery session further, you could explore our suggested extension activities.

Books

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**A Soldier's
Friend by
Megan Rix**

© Foundation Max Velthuis 1995



**Frog is a Hero
by Max Velthuis**

Online Resources

- Explore more real-life animal heroes by watching the RSPCA's **'Four-legged heroes'**
- Research the roles that other animals have played in helping humans, for example those who served their country in war using information found on the **RSPCA website** and **animalsinwar.org.uk**

WHAT NEXT?

If this is your first Discovery activity, pick another stimulating activity to complete with your pupils.

If you've already completed at least two Discovery activities, choose an Advocacy activity that will provide your pupils with an entry for the Compassionate Class competition.



Advocacy Activities

IF YOU LIKED THE 'ANIMAL HEROES' DISCOVERY ACTIVITY, WHY NOT TRY THESE ACTIVITIES



JOB FOR A TOP DOG

Create a job description inviting animals to join the police force. How would you persuade the animals that all of their needs will be met? What might the benefits be, and what would you pay them in?

- Challenge pupils to create an adventure story, comic strip or film which describes how a service animal becomes a hero.

WHEN I RULE THE WORLD

In groups, children imagine they are in charge of caring for all the animals in the world. Challenge them to discuss and design an expanded set of rules for animal welfare.

- Design posters, banners or digital resources using creative design ideas to attract attention, hold an assembly, or write an article for the school website or newsletter which explain the children's animal welfare rules
- Discuss where to display the information about the animals' needs to inform the wider community, e.g. website, playground, school reception, library
- Present the information at a school council meeting or in an assembly. Meet with the headteacher to discuss if the rules could be displayed on the school website or be part of the school's safeguarding policy (suitable for older pupils)

