

Animal Rescuers

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To understand why the RSPCA rescues animals
- To explain why the RSPCA would rehome or release rescued animals
- To describe the responsibilities of caring for animals to make sure they are healthy, happy and their needs are met
- To identify ways to make open spaces better habitats for wildlife

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why might the RSPCA need to rescue and rehabilitate different animals?
- What do animals need to be happy and healthy?
- What responsibilities come with owning a pet?
- How can humans create better habitats for wildlife?

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.

For information on how to adapt Animal Rescuers to support pupils with SEND/ALN, see guidance on page 12 of this document and pages eight and nine of the Teacher Overview.

Animal Rescuers

STIMULUS

Start by asking the class if they know what happens if someone finds an abandoned or injured animal and make a list of responses on **slide two**. This could be used as a baseline activity to gauge pupils' understanding, and could be revisited at the end of the lesson.

If no-one mentions it, introduce the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) as an organisation which can help to rescue and care for animals. Explain that if you find an animal that is injured or abandoned, you should call the RSPCA for information and advice.

Which animals do pupils think the RSPCA might rescue? Record their answers on a whiteboard or flip chart paper. If there's a wide enough selection, ask if there is a difference between the types of animals they have listed (i.e. domestic vs. wild).

Continued overleaf

Animal Rescuers

STIMULUS (CONTINUED)

Short animation about two animal rescues by RSPCA inspectors



As a class, watch the animation by clicking the link on **slide three**. Explain any words they might be unsure of. You could create a 'word bank' on the whiteboard or flip chart, recording new vocabulary and definitions to return to after the session. If you're working with younger groups or those with lower ability, you could create the word bank in advance and ask the class to listen out for these words as they watch.

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- Why might the rabbits have been abandoned?
- How do they think the rabbits and hedgehog might be feeling?
- How do the RSPCA inspectors show care for the rabbits and the hedgehog?
- How do they think the animals might feel when they are cared for?
- What can we do to protect hedgehogs and other types of wildlife?

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INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION: WHAT DOES THE RSPCA DO?

Introduce the words rescue, rehabilitate, rehome and release. Thinking back to the animation, discuss what **rescue** means to the RSPCA using some of the questions below.

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- What types of animals might need rescuing?
- Why does the RSPCA need to rescue animals?
- What happens when someone can no longer meet the responsibilities of owning a pet?
- What might happen if a wild animal is injured or distressed?
- Do humans have a responsibility towards all animals?

If the class want to know more about the RSPCA and their work, see our website at rspca.org.uk/whatwedo

Animal Rescuers

TASK: REHABILITATION

Ask pupils what they think rehabilitation means (e.g. helping a person or animal back to health). Different animals have different needs, so the ways that the RSPCA will help to rehabilitate each animal will be different.

Ask pupils about times they, or their family, have gotten injured or sick. Ask them to discuss what they think the differences in care are when someone breaks a bone opposed to when someone catches a cold. When we visit the hospital or rest in bed to get better, this is similar to rehabilitation for animals. Encourage the class to think about how these differences in care can be applied to animals with varying needs.

Display or print **slide 6** for the class and ask pupils to write down their thoughts about how rehabilitation might differ for each animal. Prompt the differences between each animal (domestic or wild, nervous or friendly) encourage pupils to think about how rehabilitation will differ for each animal.

Ask pupils what they think socialisation means. Explain that with enough socialisation and friendly company, shy or nervous rescued domestic animals can become very happy and social animals again.

Remember to make clear to the class which animals are suitable to have regular social contact with as part of their rehabilitation, i.e. a domestic animal will benefit from social contact, but a wild animal is not used to human contact and should only be handled when it is absolutely necessary for their treatment.

Ask pupils to share back some of the ideas they had for rehabilitating the animals and why.

Watch **this video** to show your class that jobs exist in the RSPCA specifically within rehabilitating animals for rehoming or release.

Animal Rescuers

CLASS DISCUSSION: REHOMING A RESCUED ANIMAL

Rehoming a pet is all about ensuring people are matched with their perfect animal, giving the human a pet they can enjoy, whilst making sure the animal has all its needs met, and is healthy and happy.

It all depends on the type of home and circumstances someone can provide - just because one type of animal might not be suitable, it doesn't mean all animals will be unsuitable.

Split the class into small groups and give each group one of the following scenarios. Ask them to discuss what they think potential owners in these situations should consider before getting a pet; what animals might be suitable or less suitable for them to rehome

Each group should share their thoughts with the rest of the class. If you're working with a younger or lower ability group, you could suggest some pets and ask them which might be suitable for each person, e.g. a small dog, a large dog, a hamster, a pair of rabbits or a cat.

- 1. I live near a main road**
- 2. I am not at home for much of the day**
- 3. I don't have a garden**
- 4. I already have a dog**
- 5. I live in the countryside**

Remind the class that there are many more considerations to be made outside this list and there isn't always an exact match between animal and home. Ask the class to share examples of pets they know and what environments they live in.

Animal Rescuers

TASK: RELEASING WILDLIFE

This activity encourages pupils to think about what considerations are needed before releasing wildlife back into the wild.

Remind pupils of the hedgehog in the animation. Why is it important to release wild animals back into the wild? Can they think of anything which the RSPCA might need to consider before they release the hedgehog?

Show pupils the considerations needed for wild animal releases on **slide 8**, then show them the image on **slide 9**. Working in pairs or small groups, ask them to act as inspectors and identify (by circling, highlighting, writing down etc.) the changes needed to make the school grounds more wildlife friendly.

When they have completed their task, show pupils **slide 10**, the image of the school grounds when the inspectors returned. What changes have been made to make the grounds more hedgehog and wildlife friendly? How many had they identified?

Using the checklist they had come up with, ask your pupils to decide if the grounds are ready for the hedgehog release.

If you wish to end the lesson here, skip ahead to **slide 17**.

Animal Rescuers

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR PET

This task looks at the daily responsibilities of pet care, and what you need to do to look after a pet properly.

Show the class **slide 11** with the word 'commitment' on it, and ask if they know what this means (e.g. a responsibility; something you have to dedicate time and energy to).

Explain that looking after pets is a big commitment that takes a lot of time. Many people get a pet without thinking about what it needs, and how much time they need to spend looking after it every day. Use the question and answer on **slides 12 and 13** with the class to explore the long-term commitment rabbits need throughout their lives.

Thinking about the abandoned rabbits in the film, ask pupils (in pairs or small groups) to write or draw anything they think an animal like a rabbit needs to stay happy and healthy. If they have pets at home, they could also think about the things they do to care for them.

If you have completed some of the other Discovery lessons and your class are familiar with the welfare needs, see how much they can remember. Otherwise, show **slide 14** and discuss the five welfare needs of animals and then see if they can add anything to their list of what a rabbit needs. Explain that rabbits are very social animals so need regular human contact and at least one other neutered rabbit for company. They should have annual visits to the vet, and their teeth and claws must be checked weekly.

Display the information on **slide 15** and ask pupils to make a rabbit care diary showing tasks that need to be done each day to keep rabbits healthy and happy. You can use the diary template on **slide 16**. Once they have completed their diary, ask some pairs to present back, then discuss a selection of the following questions.

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SLIDES
11–16

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR PET (CONTINUED)

- Which do they think are the most important tasks? Which tasks take up the most time? Which take the least?
- What would a pair of rabbits need from their owner after an already busy school day?
- Who is responsible for the rabbits?
- Who will pay for the rabbits' food and bedding?
- What happens if the rabbits get sick?
- How would they feel if they were a rabbit living alone?
- How much time do they think it takes to look after rabbits each week? Are they surprised at just how much rabbits need, and how long it takes to care for them each day?

More information on rabbit care can be found **here**.

Animal Rescuers

SESSION SUMMARY

Return to **slide two** where pupils initially thought about what to do if an animal was injured or abandoned. Can they add anything more to their list that they know now?

Can you think of one thing you can do which shows care for either a wild animal or a pet?

Can you think of one thing we can change at school or at home to make it more wildlife friendly?



Animal Rescuers

FURTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

Good Practice Code for the Welfare of Rabbits in England

Discover the welfare needs of rabbits in England to help you be the best owner for your rabbits.

Code of Practice for Rabbits in Wales

Find guidance in Wales to help you follow the law on the welfare of your rabbit.

Rabbit Awareness Week

Find out how you can contribute to Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW) by learning about rabbit welfare and improve the lives of pet rabbits in your community by spreading awareness.

RSPCA advice and welfare - Hedgehogs

Learn how to create a better hedgehog habitat in your garden by reading advice on hedgehog welfare on the RSPCA website

Hedgehog Friendly Town

Hedgehog Friendly Town rescue, rehabilitate and then release hedgehogs back to the wild. They also go to events and do talks to try and raise awareness of how hedgehogs are suffering and what people can do to help.

British Hedgehogs Preservation Society

British Hedgehogs Preservation society raise awareness of the practical steps we can take to help reverse the decline of hedgehogs in the wild, improve their welfare and safeguard the future of them.

Hedgehog Street

Hedgehog Street want to make sure hedgehogs remain a part of British wildlife. More than 90,000 ambassadors are registered with them, forming a vibrant and enthusiastic community dedicated to helping hedgehogs.

Discover Hedgehogs - mammal.org

Learn about more about hedgehogs by visiting Mammal Society

Animal Rescuers

ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SEND

The activities below are suggestions to help you adapt the Animal Rescuers activities to support your pupils' needs.

REHABILITATION

After viewing [slide 6](#), focus on one animal at a time with the class. Ask pupils to write, draw or share some descriptions of each one including their personality, where they live, and what they might need to be happy. Provide some examples of how these animals might be rehabilitated and see if they can match the animal to the rehabilitation. Focus on the difference between wild and domestic animals and encourage them to think of things that help humans get better when they are sick or injured.

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR PET

After looking at the rabbit care slide ([slide 15](#)), ask pupils to draw a picture of two happy, healthy rabbits, with all the things they need written or drawn around the outside.

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 RESCUERS' DISCOVERY ACTIVITY, WHY NOT TRY THESE ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

AN IDEAL HOME

Using what you have learned about animal homes and habitats, design and create your own 'ideal homes' for either the rehomed rabbits or the hedgehog.

- Create a design on paper or using design software
- Label everything the animals need
- Build their 'homes' using junk, modelling resources or natural materials found in the outside environment.

MAKING THE RIGHT MATCH

Working in pairs, one pupil should play the role of someone getting a new pet, and the other the role of a person who works for the RSPCA.

- Together you should think of a list of questions to ask each other about the best way to care for the new pet
- Explore the best situation for the new pet. e.g. if you have a garden; who can look after it during the day?
- After answering the questions, decide together if the pet is a suitable choice or not.

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Advocacy Activities

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

SCHOOL GROUNDS WILDLIFE PROJECT

Are your school grounds wildlife friendly, or do they need some changes to make them a more friendly environment for wild animals? Organise a project to investigate and change things, using the ideas below:

- Take a walk around your school grounds and make a list of all the things which are wildlife friendly, and a list of all the things that need improvement.
- Draw a plan of the grounds, marking where changes could be made, and identifying which animals will benefit.
- Work out how much any big changes will cost, and how you could raise the money (e.g. by organising a fundraising event).
- Present your plan at a school council meeting or in an assembly. Meet with the Headteacher to discuss it and get permission to make changes.
- Keep a photo diary of before and after images to show the changes and make a list of any animals (or evidence of animals such as prints or tracks) you see using the new areas.

Some improvement ideas to get you started:

- Bird feeders
- Bee hotels
- Sowing a wildflower patch
- Creating a small pond
- Fencing off an area to stop people playing there
- Removing sports equipment when it's not being used
- Litter picking