



COMPANION ANIMAL

W140A

SKILLS

- Explore pet adoption alternatives ☐
- Learn about animal careers ☐
- Expand companion animal vocabulary ☐
- Develop interviewing skills ☐
- Increase technology skills ☐
- Complete a service project ☐
- Use your knowledge to assess pet adoption practices ☐



LIFE SKILL- Responsibility

Pet care and ownership requires much time, dedication and responsibility. Are you ready? Some of the new skills that you can learn in the 4-H Companion Animal project are listed on the left. Check your favorites and then work with your 4-H leaders and parents to make a 4-H project plan of what you want to do and learn this year.

TO ADOPT OR NOT TO ADOPT

You be the pet expert! The characters in the following scenarios are all interested in adopting a pet rabbit, cat or dog. Read the following scenarios. Based on your knowledge of companion animals, is adoption of a pet the best option? Why or why not? Circle "Y" for yes, if pet adoption is the best option. Circle "N" for no, if pet adoption is not the best idea. Then write your reasoning on the lines provided.

Scenario #1

Amy is an 18-year-old high school graduate headed to college in the fall. She was a "straight-A" student and will be carrying a full academic load. In addition to class, she plans to join a sorority and work part time at a tanning salon. She wants a pet and has fallen in love with a Giant Schnauzer from the pound. She is sharing an third-floor downtown apartment with two other friends who promise to help take care of the dog.

Reason:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

1. Schedule is overloaded
2. Not enough room for dog to run and play
3. Can't always depend on friends; must take personal responsibility

Scenario #2

Christy is a single mom with two young children. The children have begged her for a pet for the last year. She finally agrees to bringing home a rabbit from a local pet shop. Christy really doesn't like pets. Over the past six years she has "adopted" three dogs and has returned all of them to the pound because she felt that the care for them was too overwhelming. She thinks that a rabbit will be easier to care for than a dog.

Reason:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

1. Rabbits require a great amount of care
2. Not the best "track" record with previous pets

Scenario #3

Two years ago, the Patterson family lost their beloved dog named Winston. Winston has been a part of the family for 13 years. With their children now in elementary school, they have decided that they are ready for another dog. The family has talked and divided up the responsibilities of taking care of the new family member. Everyone has a role. They have researched the type of dog that will best suit their lifestyle.

Reason:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

1. Have had past successful and longterm relationships with other pets
2. Children are older and can assist in taking care of new dog
3. Have done their research

Scenario #4

Mr. Allen is looking for a cat who will mouse for his barn. He found the perfect mouser -- a cat named Valentino -- at the local animal shelter. Above Valentino's cage is a sign that says "Does not like children." Mr. Allen is a 35-year-old farmer with young children.

Reason:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

1. Valentino does not like children

ADOPTION ALTERNATIVES

When adopting a pet, it is important to be honest about your lifestyle and open-minded to other pet options. Reread the scenarios below. Based on your “no-to-adoption” recommendations from page 1 of this activity, can you think of other pet adoption options? Write your alternative ideas, where applicable, in the space provided.

Scenario #1

Amy is an 18-year-old high school graduate headed to college in the fall. She was a “straight-A” student and will be carrying a full academic load. In addition to class, she plans to join a sorority and work part time at a tanning salon. She wants a pet and has fallen in love with a Giant Schnauzer from the pound. She is sharing an third-floor downtown apartment with two other friends who promise to help take care of the dog.

Alternative:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

A smaller dog would work better for the living situation, but time is still a concern. Perhaps a pet that requires less personal contact and care, such as a fish, could be an alternative.

Scenario #2

Christy is a single mom with two young children. The children have begged her for a pet for the last year. She finally agrees to bringing home a rabbit from a local pet shop. Christy really doesn't like pets. Over the past six years she has “adopted” three dogs and has returned all of them to the pound because she felt that the care for them was too overwhelming. She thinks that a rabbit will be easier to care for than a dog.

Alternative:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

Not all of the family members are “on board” with the idea of having a pet. Mom has not done her homework in researching all that is involved in taking care of a rabbit. This environment is a potential health risk for the pet and heartbreak for the kids. This family is not ready for a pet.

Scenario #3

Two years ago, the Patterson family lost their beloved dog named Winston. Winston had been a part of the family for 13 years. With their children now in elementary school, they have decided that they are ready for another dog. The family has talked and divided up the responsibilities of taking care of the new family member. Everyone has a role. They have researched the type of dog that will best suit their lifestyle.

Alternative:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

Bow-Wow! This family is ready for a new dog!

Scenario #4

Mr. Allen is looking for a cat who will mouse for his barn. He found the perfect mouser -- a cat named Valentino -- at the local animal shelter. Above Valentino's cage is a sign that says “Does not like children.” Mr. Allen is a 35-year-old farmer with young children.

Alternative:

Reason will vary. May include the following:

While he may be a good mouser, Valentino would not be the ideal family cat. Bringing him into a family with children is dangerous. Mr. Allen needs to find another cat with “mousing” abilities and preferably one that likes children.

SERVICE IDEAS

Share your knowledge with others!
Give a project demonstration about the companion animal project.

Volunteer to “baby sit” a friend, relative or neighbor's pet while he or she is away from home.

Collect items -- food, shampoo, blankets, etc. -- to donate to your local animal shelter.

Volunteer your time to your local animal shelter or provide foster care or hospice care.

RESOURCES

School and public libraries
Companion Dog, Cat or Rabbit manual
4-H project leader/groups

The following Web sites were used to create this activity sheet. To learn more companion animal skills visit:

- www.n4hccs.org
- www.utextension.utk.edu/4h/projects/companional.htm
- www.thecatsite.com
- www.akc.org

Don't forget! For more ideas and info, contact your local 4-H office.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

4-H Demonstration

4-H Skill-a-thon

Area pet shows/competitions

CAREER SEARCH

1. Find a person in your community or a family member who has an animal-related career. Set up an interview. Create a list of questions that you would like to ask. A few examples are as follows:

What do you like best about your job?

What kind of training or education do you have?

What is the most challenging part of your profession?

What other questions would you like to ask? Think about it and write the questions on the lines below.

2. How will you record the interview? Will you write or tape the responses? Will you videotape it?

3. How are you going to share the interview with others? Will you write a report? Create a news article? Design a video, Power Point™ or DVD presentation? Whatever the format, make sure that it is okay with the interviewee! Your 4-H photography project leader can help.

4. What did you learn with this project? List below three new skills you developed.

THE PURR-FECT JOB

There are numerous types of animal-related careers. Unscramble the words below to reveal the job. Use the word list for hints.

WORD LIST

Boarder
Trainer
Groomer
Veterinarian

Handler
Professor
Sitter
Pet Therapist
Animal Control Officer

T T S E I R

SITTER

A N I R E T R

TRAINER

O S O S R R P E F

PROFESSOR

D R B A R E O

BOARDER

L A N I A M

T O N C L O

F O F R I C E

ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

E P T R P A I E T H T S

PET THERAPIST

T N V E A I E R R N A I N

VETERINARIAN

D E L R A N H

HANDLER

M O R E G O R

GROOMER

"Paws" for a "Did You Know?"



According to the American Humane Association, approximately 10 million animals are euthanized in animal shelters every year.