



Your homeless pet club should be a fun highlight to everyone's week! As you are celebrating pets, supporting your chosen rescue group or shelter, and promoting your homeless pet, you may wish to include some educational topics of discussion in your meetings. Here are some discussion ideas for your clubs. They can be adjusted to suit any grade level as needed, but obviously some topics lend themselves more to specific ages. You can look to our additional resources link for more about these topics. Topics require little materials or preparation; they are simply jumping-off points.

DISCUSSION TOPIC	DISCUSSION IDEAS AND IMPORTANT POINTS	POSSIBLE MATERIALS
<p>Topic 1: Greeting a Strange Dog</p> 	<p>Students do not always realize that greeting a new person can be scary for a dog. Discuss ways to be safe around new dogs, especially if you plan to have furry visitors to your club.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do NOT put your hands directly into their faces. This is threatening to a dog. 2. Never run towards a strange dog. This is also threatening. 3. Do not stare at a dog; this is a challenge. 4. Never put your face into a dog's face. 5. Allow the dog to approach you. Be calm and still. If the dog is in a relaxed posture, then you may be able to pet them gently on their back or along their neck. When a dog exposes its belly, this can sometimes mean, "I am afraid. I surrender. Please go away." 6. ALWAYS ask the owner or handler if you can approach or pet the dog. <p><u>Questions for discussion:</u> What could happen if you threaten a dog? Why isn't this fair to the dog? How does the dog feel if you are highly excitable or are crowding its space?</p>	<p><i>a large stuffed toy dog to practice interaction</i></p> <p>Citizen Canine: Dog Safety http://www.citizencanine.org/safety.htm</p> <p>PetSource http://www.petsource.org/dog-behaviour/844-dog-behaviour.html</p> <p>Short video http://www.videojug.com/film/how-to-approach-a-dog-safely</p>

Topic 2:
Understanding Dog
Language



People often get into trouble with dogs because they don't understand how dogs are communicating. A dog's body language tells you everything you need to know about how the dog is feeling.

1. Observe their posture. There are several resources listed here that show different postures and how they indicate a dog's mood. Students can role play those different postures to get a feel for the dog's state of mind in their own bodies.
2. Pay attention to eye contact. Staring is aggressive; turning away can mean avoidance, which can also lead to aggression if you approach.
3. The tail is important; a relaxed tail is a good indicator to approach.
4. The ears are a great indicator; ears back can be submissive or aggressive depending on the rest of the posture (see pictures).

An addition to this lesson: if a dog starts to chase you, generally running away IS NOT A GOOD IDEA. The best options are (this is straight from Victoria Stilwell, who is a participant with Homeless Pet Clubs):
A) Be a tree...stand perfectly still and straight, arms crossed. Be as uninteresting to the dog as possible, and usually it will go away unless it is in full aggression mode.

B) Be a rock...if you are on the ground, curl up like a rock, and again, be still and as uninteresting as possible.

There are lots of resources and videos on this topic available. Students can research and create their own posters for this topic.

Question for Discussion:

What should you do if an unknown dog is loose in your neighborhood?

illustrated images from Modern Dog
<http://www.moderndogmagazine.com/articles/how-read-your-dogs-body-language/415>

photos of real dog postures

<http://www.diamondsintheruff.com/diagrams.html>

ASPCA PDF

http://www.aspcare.org/pet-care/kids-and-pets/~media/files/pet-care/kids-and-pets/caninebody_language.pdf

See attachment at the end of this document.

Topic 3: How to Take Care of Your Dog/Cat/Pet



Even today, many pet owners do not properly care for their pets. As you discuss pet care, you will be surprised to learn at the lack of knowledge that many families and students have. Share information about the following with your club:

1. EVERY dog/cat needs a rabies shot YEARLY, even indoor pets. This is extremely important. A bite or scratch from an unknown animal can be deadly to your pet. Rabies is destructive to the brain and is lethal. It is also deadly to humans. If a person is bit or scratched by an animal without a rabies vaccination, that person will have to go through a series of painful shots.
2. Pets should be regularly treated for fleas, ticks, mites, or any other parasite. These creatures are annoying to pets and humans too. There are several different options for treatment, both topical and in pill form. Usually these treatments are administered monthly.
3. All pets should be treated to prevent heartworms. This is a parasite that left untreated can kill a dog and/or cat painfully. Again, this is usually a pill. It is transmitted by mosquitoes.
4. Pets should receive distemper/PARVO vaccines.
5. Annual vet exams are imperative to insure the health of your pet! There are local resources that provide low cost vaccinations; check at your local pet store because many offer these for a low cost, or free.
6. Every pet should be spayed or neutered. Breeding is the reason we have so many homeless pets.
7. Getting your pet's teeth cleaned is a good idea.
8. Grooming is also important to the health of your pet.
9. Microchip and/or have an ID tag on your pet at all times!

American Heartworm Society
<http://www.heartwormsociety.org/pet-owner-resources/heartworm.html>

CDC: about rabies
<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

a vet can provide you with samples to show; this would be a great lesson to have before inviting a local vet to visit

role play grooming a stuffed toy dog

Topic 4: Disciplining Your Pet: Be Positive!



Many times we are at a loss about how to discipline our pets. Many people still punish their animals. This is NOT effective, and often sends the wrong message to the pet, as well as frustrates the owner.

Discuss what NOT to do:

1. Do not "spank" your pet; it will not understand or associate the pain you are inflicting with its behavior.
2. Do not yell at your pet. Raising your voice adds to your pet's anxiety level, and it still will not understand what it did wrong.
3. Throwing your pet outside after it relieves itself inside is useless; it will think it is the "order of operations" after a few times. This is not a solution to any unwanted behavior.
4. Do NOT bind your pet's snout because of barking or chewing. Sadly, this happens more than we would like to think, resulting in serious damage to the pet.

Discuss what you SHOULD do:

1. Use positive reinforcement. Provide small treats often when the pet does what you want it to do. Even when a dog is incessantly barking, give it praise or a treat when it stops. It will make the connection.
 2. Watch your pet closely; when it shows any signs of relieving itself, immediately calmly take it outside, and offer praise.
 3. Offer your dog safe alternatives to chew instead of your shoes, your baseboards, etc. Kong offers a lot of great products.
 4. Provide your pet with a safe place to go when it is stressed.
 5. Offer cats something to scratch besides your furniture...a scratching post, corrugated cardboard scratchers, etc.
- Remember, there are no bad pets, just bad behaviors.

Victoria Stilwell's site:

<http://positively.com/>

video of Victoria
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-NBJfZM_RY

It's Me or the Dog website
<http://animal.discovey.com/tv/its-me-or-dog/>

HSUS info:
http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/dog_training_positive_reinforcement.html

attached cartoons

Topic 5: Puppy Mills: Why You Should Adopt



The ugly truth: many dogs from pet stores come from puppy mills. Puppy mills are inhumane and do not care for the animals they are breeding. Pure bred animals often have health issues because of inbreeding and poor health conditions. Some facts:

1. Pets at puppy mills are rarely handled.
2. Most puppy mills do not clean the cages. Feces and urine build up or drop through wire bottoms. Many puppy mill dogs never come out of the cage, except for breeding. They do not ever feel the grass under their feet. They are kept in wire cages.
3. Medical issues are ignored. Dogs live in severe pain that goes untreated and ignored.
4. Many puppy mill dogs are starving and dehydrated.

What you can do:

1. Don't buy from pet stores! Adopt!
2. Spread the word about puppy mills!
3. Write letters to Congress to increase legislation against puppy mill breeders.
4. Peacefully protest outside a pet store.
5. Sign a pledge: I will never buy a puppy mill pet! I will not support organizations that utilize puppy mills.

HSUS puppy mill information
http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/puppy_mills/

Best Friends: lots of information
<http://network.bestfriends.org/initiatives/puppymills/pages/Resources.aspx>

video
<http://video.bestfriends.org/community/m/programs/1344.aspx>

ASPCA puppy mills
<http://www.aspca.org/PUPPYMILLS>

see attached image

Topic 6: Dog Fighting: The Ugly Truth



Believe it or not, dog fighting is still alive and well everywhere. Especially in low-socioeconomic areas, dog fighting thrives as a way to earn money, show power and dominance, and as entertainment. This is inhumane and cruel treatment of our nation's dogs.

Sadly, there is actually detailed information available about how to train and "care" for dogs to prepare them for dogfighting. There is an app called "Dog Wars" that does just that. You would be surprised how many students have seen or heard about dog-fighting; it is often engrained into a subculture.

American pit-bull terriers are often used in dog fights. This is because their nature is highly oriented towards pleasing people; they will do whatever they can do please their owner. They were originally bred to be family dogs and take care of children, but unfortunately their loyal nature has been abused and misused.

Dogfighting dogs are often underfed, tied out on heavy chains, neglected, and abused. Their ears are docked to make it more difficult for their opponent to find something to hold. Their wounds usually go untreated. If they lose and are badly injured, they usually are abandoned to die a slow and painful death, often tossed out somewhere.

Bait dogs are used to train the fighters. Docile, friendly dogs are the ones chosen for this awful job. Because they are friendly, they are easily led, and the fighters are trained to kill these bait dogs. Sometimes they survive and are used again.

There are lots of groups dedicated to rescuing these fight dogs. Many have to be euthanized because the cost to rehabilitate them is prohibitive. However, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah is a great example of success stories; they have rehabilitated and adopted out

some videos a bit graphic; preview first (very sad; not appropriate for elementary)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_zOVc_kAaM

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CcM8wcspmM&feature=related>

Pitbulls and Parolees

<http://animal.discovery.com/tv/pitbulls-and-parolees/>

<http://www.aspc.org/fight-animal-cruelty/dog-fighting>

most of the Michael Vick fighting dogs. The few that are dangerous have a promise to live out their lives at Best Friends.

What can you do?

Report dog fighting! Call your local sheriff's office or police department immediately if you suspect dog fighting in your neighborhood!

Here is a link to a great document by the HSUS to download, print, and share everywhere. It includes phone numbers to report dogfighting, including a reward offer. It also includes pictures of what to look for that indicates dog fighting:

*heavy chains

*scarred dogs

*fighting pits with scratch lines

*treadmills

*washtubs

*vitamins/supplements

*harness for chasing small animals

*"breaking" sticks

*spring pole

http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/animal_fighting/dogfighting_how_to_recognize.pdf

Excellent source of signs of dogfighting:

<http://animalcontrol.chathamcounty.org/PetResources/DogFighting.aspx>

Topic 7: Laws About Animal Welfare



There are national, state, and local laws about animal welfare. There are usually people within your community that would be willing to talk to your club about laws in your county, including your sheriff's department and local lawyers who are involved in animal cruelty cases.

One interesting way to share this information is by having students engage in a mock trial that emulates a real animal cruelty case in your county. This would require a little research and would be most appropriate for high school, but it is a very eye-opening experience.

Topics/laws to think about and discuss:

1. food, water, shelter, and kennel space
2. appropriate interaction
3. tethering/chains/pens
4. other animal care: livestock raised as food and humane care of these animals (laws are woefully behind in this category; California is leading the country in terms of laws to protect these animals)
5. humane transport of animals
7. stray pet advocacy
8. prosecution: how are animal cruelty cases prosecuted in your community? Usually the punishments are mild
9. hoarding

It is important for students to be aware that there are laws about proper animal care, and consequences for not only abuse, but neglect as well. There are many organizations dedicated to passing laws to protect animals and prosecute those who break the laws, but our country is understaffed in this aspect. Animal welfare law is a growing need in a humane society.

link to many national animal welfare laws
<http://awic.nal.usda.gov/government-and-professional-resources/federal-laws/animal-welfare-act>

Georgia animal protection
http://www.animalaw.info/statutes/stusgacodeann4_11_1_17.htm

stray pet advocacy
http://www.straypetadvocacy.org/cruelty_laws.html

Topic 8: Humane Treatment of All Animals



We are always concerned about our pets. But what about all the other animals out there? What about livestock? Wild animals? All animals deserve a safe and happy life. Some further ideas for discussion:

1. livestock as food animals: ability to engage in "natural behaviors"= certified organic and humane
 - *improper, inhumane crating of pigs, chickens, etc.
 - *slaughter of cows for beef...the law about the animal being able to "walk" into the slaughterhouse is often loosely interpreted
 - *use of hormones to fatten up animals
2. animals used in experiments for human products, especially cosmetics
 - *testing on animals often results in illness, burned skin, mental issues, deadly diseases (cancer), etc.; there are alternatives; look for humane products not tested on animals
3. Zoos and circuses: humane?
4. Marine life: water pollution, boats, oil, trash, etc.; invasion of their habitat; coastal development
5. wildlife: endangering habitats; human expansion; trapping and hunting
6. exotic pets
7. protecting endangered animals

American Humane Association

<http://www.americanhumane.org/>

The Animal Welfare Institute

<http://awionline.org/>

Wildlife Conservation Network

<http://www.wildnet.org/?qclid=CNPxvJCe77ICFQgGnQodyBkAoQ>

World Wildlife Fund

<http://worldwildlife.org/>

Zoos

<http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/zoos/facts/zoos.html>

Topic 9: Animal Hoarding: When Does Helping Become Inhumane?



Many people who become animal hoarders started out trying to help save lives. Eventually conditions get out of hand, and the person trying to help becomes overwhelmed as the animals take over, often losing sight of the health of the animals. The animals begin reproducing and the home becomes overrun.

Signs of animal hoarding include:

1. multiple animals, sometimes of different species but often the same species
2. a strong smell of urine and feces
3. feces everywhere
4. injured animals
5. sick animals
6. the person cannot use their home in a normal capacity anymore
7. the person does not see the severity of the situation
8. inappropriate nutrition
9. damaged property
10. wandering animals

Community factors that contribute to hoarding:

1. people "dumping" animals
2. loose laws
3. lack of available law enforcement to follow through on enforcing laws
4. lack of reporting by other members of community

We often encounter students who do not care properly for their pets, particularly cats, who are often expected to fend for themselves.

Discuss how unhealthy this is for the animals.

<http://www.animalhoarding.com/>

<http://animaldiscoversy.com/tv/confessions-animal-hoarding/>

http://www.pet-abuse.com/pages/animal_cruelty/hoarding.php

Topic 10: Careers
Related to Animals



Fun topic! Students in your club are probably animal lovers already. Here is a great chance for them to research and share animal-related careers.

Here are some ideas:

- *veterinarian
- *shelter manager
- *rescue coordinator
- *wildlife rehabilitator
- *service dog trainer
- *K-9 officer
- *physical therapist for pets
- *animal cruelty investigator
- *pet trainer
- *pet sitter
- *dog walker
- *animal cruelty prosecutor
- *vet tech
- *marine biologist
- *park manager
- *groomer
- *humane educator
- *lobbyist
- *animal control officer
- *photographer

The possibilities are endless. As our community becomes more aware of the value of animals in our lives, hopefully our students will become future animal advocates and help protect our best friends.

<http://www.aspcakids.org/aspcakids/animal-careers>

http://www.arkanimals.com/index_unusual_animal_careers.html

great video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xrgd4BRQ2Mg>

Topic 11: Wildlife Protection



Our focus is homeless pets, but we want our students to be aware of wildlife protection as well. Many animals are endangered because of humans. When most people think of wildlife protection, they do think of exotic animals, such as tigers, elephants, grey wolves...these animals deserve protection. But so do our local wildlife.

Discussion topics:

1. Endangered wildlife: how are humans harming?

*habitat destruction

*poaching

*hunting

*illegal pet sales

What are we doing to help these animals? There are lots of rescues for exotic and wild animals. Many people dedicate their lives to helping protect wild animals and assure that they are treated humanely. Often exotic pets are cared for inappropriately, then are blamed when they follow their instincts. There are wildlife rehabilitation centers, sanctuaries, and trap/release programs. Look in your local area for more information.

2. Endangered local species: how are humans contributing to the loss of these animals? Are we treating them humanely?

*habitat destruction

*hunting

*trapping/killing

How can we live in harmony with wildlife? What can we do to protect it?

Think of how we dispose of trash. Take the time to cut apart plastic soda or drink bindings. Cut apart small containers in which animals can get trapped (like yogurt containers; wildlife often gets their heads stuck in these). Try to dispose of trash properly. Make sure trash is secured so that wildlife cannot get to dangerous substances.

If you must eliminate wildlife from your home or yard, try to do so humanely. Poison is a painful death. Use a trap and release attitude.

endangered animals

<http://www.earthsendangered.com/>

The Elephant Sanctuary: a great sanctuary for formerly abused elephants
<http://www.elephants.com/>

big cats

<http://www.bigcat.org/>

Hawaii exotic sanctuary

<http://www.threeringranch.org/>

http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/wild/animal-intervention/?source=SEM:Google:G_AnimalIntervention_ShowSpecific:Brand

Topic 12: How Animals Help People



Animals are often used as service pets. They are great additions to the family, and can make unique contributions to the well-being of humans without being abused or misused. Here are some ideas for discussion about how animals can help humans. There is a great deal of training involved for these animals.

1. service dogs for the blind and deaf, and other disabilities
2. service dogs for people with epilepsy or diabetes
3. K-9 officers
4. emotional support for returning soldiers
5. pet therapy in hospitals
6. pet therapy in nursing facilities
7. reading dog programs



<http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org/index.php>

funny Norwegian video: Don't Disturb the Ones Working

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_Vb7y8Omf8

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NNKODpcqf60#!

<http://www.tdi-dog.org/>

<http://www.rightpundits.com/?p=2861>



CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



signals



ALERT



SCARED



"PLEASE..."



"PEACE!"



"PEACE!"



"PEACE!"



I'LL BE NO THREAT



I'LL BE NO THREAT



I'LL BE NO THREAT



BEING FRIENDLY



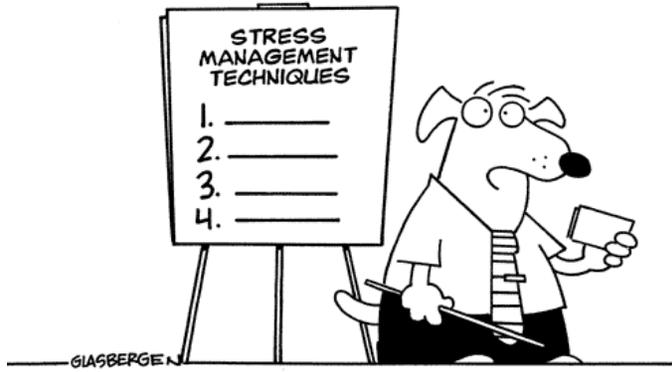
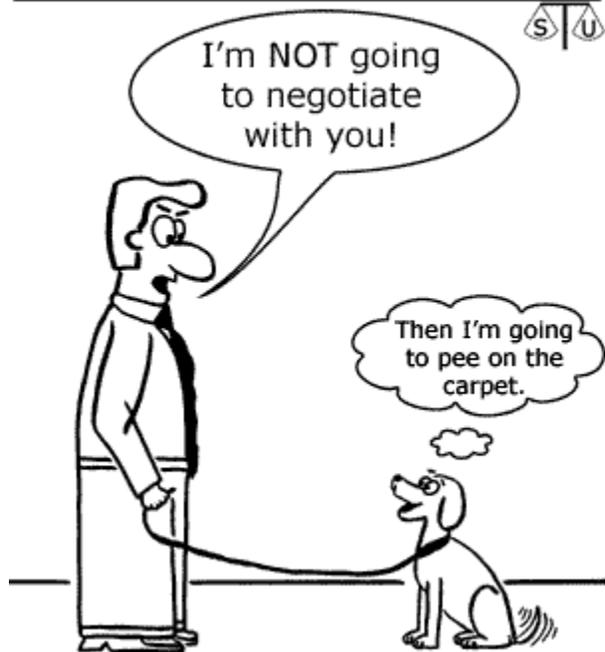
LET'S PLAY!



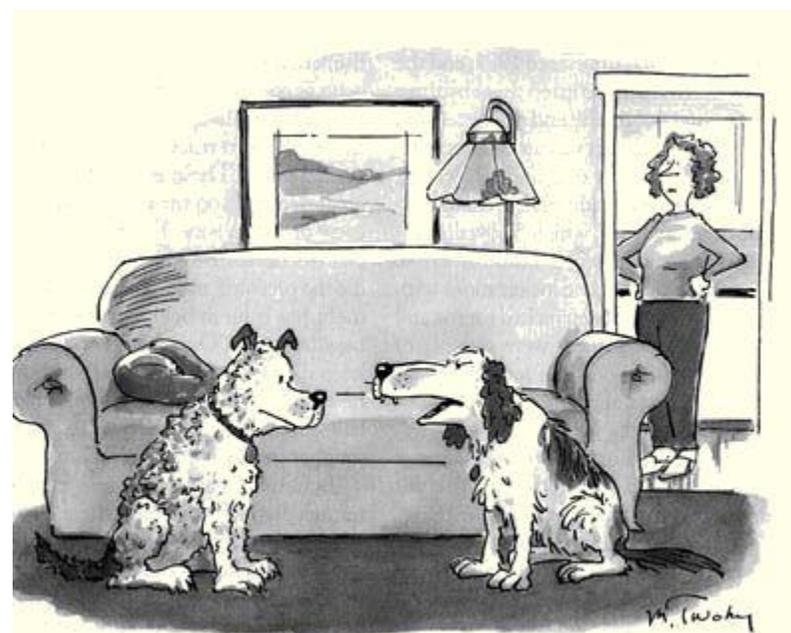
SUBMISSION



CUTE HARMLESS PUPPY



**"Howl at an ambulance or fire siren every chance you get.
Run around the room in circles with a sock in your mouth.
Eat a messy meal without using your hands or utensils.
Ask a friend to scratch your belly..."**



"I actually know more commands than I respond to."



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**Puppies
aren't
products**

PuppiesArentProducts.com