**NYSBA Committee on Animals and the Law**

**Humane Education Program**

**INTRODUCTION**

* Brief introduction by educator
  + We are going over this program today because it is very important to learn about animals that may live in your home and to know how to treat them.
* Ask the children to raise their hand if they have any of the following companion animals:
  + Dog
  + Cat
  + Bird
  + Fish
  + Hamster/gerbil/mouse/etc.
  + Something else – if child raises their hand, ask what they have

**RESPONSIBILITY**

* When you have a companion animal, such as the ones we just mentioned, it is important to meet the needs of your companion animal. (*ALL GRADES*)
  + A companion animal is a big responsibility.
    - Ask children (*GRADES 3-6*) what responsibility means
    - Responsibility means something that you have to do even though you may not always want to do it.
      * Give age-appropriate example
  + Everyone says, “But, Mom, I will take care of the dog! I will walk her, bathe her, and feed her.”
  + But, when you take on the responsibility of having a companion animal, like a dog, you must remember that the animal is an everyday commitment, not just a commitment on the days that you feel like giving the animal attention.
    - A dog, for example, may need to go for many walks a day, even on days when it is raining or cold out or when you want to be at your friend’s house all day.
  + A lot of children think they can handle the responsibility of a companion animal and then realize how much work and time it can be to meet a companion animal’s needs. This means it is a big decision to decide to get a companion animal, and it is a decision that should be made together by the whole family.

**DOs AND DON’Ts**

* If you think you are ready to have a companion animal, and you have talked about it with your parents/guardians, you must know what you will need to do to keep that animal healthy and happy! If you already have a companion animal, listen carefully to make sure you are doing everything you should for them. (*ALL GRADES*)
  + We will review the Dos and Don’ts of caring for companion animals
    - *Educator: Make a “Do” and “Don’t” column on the blackboard; as you list each new “Do” and “Don’t,” write it down (GRADES K-2: provide children completed “Dos and Don’ts” Handout/GRADES 3-6: provide children fill-in “Dos and Don’ts” Handout*)
  + Ask the children what kind of things that they should DO to care for their companion animal.
    - Basic answers are feeding, providing fresh water, walking, exercise, playing with them, grooming them, veterinary care.
    - Remind children that what they DO may differ depending on the type of companion animal they have (dog, cat, hamster, rabbit, fish, bird, etc.).
    - Discuss how much time each day to set aside for the care of the animal (based on type of animal).
  + DO provide your companion animal with the right type of food.
    - Animals cannot eat all the same foods that people can eat. In fact, some people food is poisonous to animals.
    - Every type of animal requires a different type of food. Clearly, a dog and a fish eat different foods, but so do a dog and a cat. There are even special foods that are made for puppies and kittens and senior dogs and cats.
    - Ask the children if they know anything that dogs/cats cannot eat. (*GRADES K-2: provide children completed “What Not to Eat” Handout/GRADES 3-6: provide children fill-in “What Not to Eat” Handout*)
      * After going through the list, ask children (*GRADES 3-6*) if they were surprised to see anything on the list.
    - All animals need the right amount of food as well. Animals can become overweight or underweight just like a human, and just like a human, this is unhealthy for them.
      * How do you know how much food is the right amount for your companion animal?
        + Have your parents/guardians check with your veterinarian.
        + Check the food package.
        + Keep a measuring cup in the food bag/container to make sure that you are giving your companion animal the right amount of food.
  + DO make sure that your companion animal eats/drinks from a clean bowl.
    - Ask children (*GRADES K-2*) if they would rather eat from a dirty plate all week long or a new clean one.
    - Explain to children that just like them, a companion animal is happier and healthier eating and drinking from a clean bowl.
    - Explain to children (*GRADES K-2*) that they should pick out special bowls for their animal to eat/drink out of – these should not be the same bowl that a human eats/drinks out of.
    - Explain that if you do not properly rinse out your companion animal’s bowls, then germs and bacteria can develop, which can hurt your companion animal.
  + DO groom your companion animal and make sure their nails are cut (with adult supervision).
    - Ask children why they think this is important
      * Helps companion animal stay clean.
      * Helps keep their hair free of tangles that can hurt them.
      * The companion animal can scratch people, other companion. animals, and themselves if their nails are too long.
  + DO make sure your companion animal has a proper place to sleep.
    - Ask children where dogs should sleep – indoors!
    - Cats should be kept indoors, whenever possible. Discuss that when cats are free to roam outside, they can get lost, get hit by a car, get into garbage and other substances that might make them sick, or they can hurt other animals, such as birds.
  + DO follow animal safety when outside.
    - Keep your dog on a leash whenever you take them outside (unless you have a fenced in backyard).
      * Ask children (*GRADES 3-6*) if they have a fence or an invisible fence.
        + Explain what an invisible fence is, if children are not aware.

Tell them that it does not keep other animals or people from entering the yard; it only keeps dogs in your yard. However, if a dog has enough determination, it can go through the invisible fence.

* + - If you have a backyard, make sure that there are no holes in the yard by the fence, and the gate is always kept shut and/or has a lock on it.
  + DO be aware when friends are visiting your house.
    - Make sure that friends visiting the house understand that the front door and outdoor gate must be kept shut.
    - If your companion animal is afraid of strangers, it may be a good idea to keep them in your bedroom or another room or crate while your friends are over. Tell your friends in advance if your animal is afraid of strangers.
    - Also, check to see if your friend is afraid of your companion animal; as much as you love your animal, they might not want to play with them.
  + DO take action if your companion animal gets lost.
    - Call local shelters and give them a description and picture (go down to the shelter every couple of days); contact local veterinarian and neighbors (with adult supervision); put signs up in the neighborhood with a picture of your animal and a phone number; ask your parents/guardians to put a free ad in the local paper.
    - If you find a lost animal, you do many of the same things you would do if you lost your own companion animal. You should call the shelter, tell them you found a lost animal, give them a description, take a picture of the animal and either bring the picture to the shelter or email it to them for their lost and found book/bulletin board. You can also turn the animal over to the shelter. The shelter and a local veterinarian may be able to find a microchip on the animal (we will discuss in further detail later). Make sure to put up signs in the neighborhood as well.
      * If someone contacts you saying it is their animal, make sure they can provide a detailed description of the animal (i.e. identifying marks).
  + DO make sure that your companion animal visits the veterinarian.
    - Ask children (*GRADES K-2*) what a veterinarian is; if they do not know, tell them that it is an animal doctor.
    - Explain that whenever you first bring home a new companion animal, that animal should go to the veterinarian within the first week of you bringing him/her home – the sooner the better! Ask children why they think this is important.
    - Just like children have to get physicals every year, so do your companion animals.
    - What will happen at the veterinarian?
      * It depends on the animal, but usually the veterinarian will first weigh the animal. Then the veterinarian will listen to its heartbeat, just like a human doctor, and takes its temperature.
      * It is really important to take your new companion animal to the veterinarian quickly, because new companion animals will usually get vaccines at the veterinarian too, in the form of shots, just like you did when you were younger. These will help the animal stay healthy and happy.
        + What’s a vaccine? (*Tell GRADES K-2; Let GRADES 3-6 answer*)
      * After your first visit to the veterinarian, the veterinarian will tell you when the companion animal should return for his/her next visit. Just like humans, younger companion animals, such as puppies and kittens, will generally have to go to the veterinarian more often than adult animals. This is because they are still growing and will need more vaccines and check-ups as they grow up. However, even adult animals should visit the veterinarian to make sure that they stay healthy as they age.
        + For instance, older companion animals should still receive all their shots including their rabies vaccine. This is very important to both your companion animals and your own health!
      * The veterinarian may also suggest your companion animal take monthly medications, such as heartworm and flea and tick medicine. (*GRADES 3-6*)
    - You should also have the veterinarian spay or neuter your companion animal. This procedure prevents your companion animal from being able to have puppies or kittens, which is an important step in preventing pet overpopulation. (*GRADES 3-6*)
  + DO make sure your dog/cat is always wearing all their tags on their collar.
    - Ask students what information should be on the animal’s tags?
      * The tags include your companion animal’s licensing tag, a name tag with your animal’s name and your family’s phone number/address, and your animal’s updated rabies tag. These are all very important if your companion animal gets lost, as it allows it the best chance for him/her to make his/her way back to you.
        + Licensing tag is provided when you license your companion animal with your town/city. Your parents/guardians will have to fill out a form and pay a small fee, and you will then receive a tag that your dog/cat can wear on his/her collar. It’s very important to license your animal.
        + You can buy a name tag at your local pet shop. If your companion animal gets lost, all of your contact information will be on the tag so people can easily locate you and return your animal.
        + Rabies tags are given to you by your veterinarian.
    - Another great way of keeping your companion animal safe is having the veterinarian microchip them. A microchip is a very small tracking device (about the size of a small piece of rice) that can be used to locate you when your animal gets lost. (*GRADES 3-6*)
      * If you do choose to microchip your animal, make sure to put the tag that tells people that the animal is microchipped on their collar, in addition to their other tags.
      * Don’t worry – inserting the microchip in your companion animal is a painless procedure. You and your companion animal will not even notice it once it’s been inserted.
  + Now it’s time to review what you DON’T do to companion animals
  + DON’T hit or hurt an animal.
    - It is extremely important to be kind to animals. They, like humans, are living beings that have feelings. Animals can feel pain and can suffer serious injuries if you hit or hurt them.
    - It is also important not to hit or hurt animals, because it is not nice and there are laws that say we have to be kind to animals.
  + DON’T approach an animal that you do not know.
    - If you see a companion animal on the street or in a park, always ask the person with them if it’s okay to pet the animal before approaching it; also, make sure it is okay with your parents/guardians.
      * Remember, not all people will let you pet their dogs or cats. If they say no, just say thank you and walk away.
      * Don’t approach a dog that is not on a leash. Also, don’t approach a dog that is barking, growling, or showing its teeth.
    - Approach all companion animals gently.
      * Walk up to it slowly where it can see you.
      * Don’t wave your hands in its face.
      * If it’s a dog, you want to let them smell your hand before touching them. Slowly approach the dog’s nose with a closed fist (but do not touch their nose). Let the dog smell your hand.
      * Nicely pet the animal somewhere they can see your hand, such as their head or neck. Do not pet their face.
    - Never pull a companion animal’s tail, play with its paws, or wrestle with a companion animal.
    - If a dog happens to chase you, remember that you need to stay calm. Don’t run away. Stand still like a tree and don’t scream.
    - Service animals: if you see a dog that has a special vest or jacket on that says “Service Animal” or “Seeing-eye dog,” do not approach the dog. They are working, and while they are on the job, they cannot play or be pet, usually. However, if you see them without their vest or jacket, you can then ask their person if you can pet them.
  + DON’T leave a companion animal in a parked car when you are not there.
    - If you do have to leave your animal in the car for a few minutes unattended, make sure to leave the window open a little bit for them.
    - If you see a companion animal locked in a car check to see if a window is rolled down to let it have fresh air. Even if the window is rolled down, and it is very hot or very cold out, try to see how long the animal is left in the car. If it seems that it has been locked in the car for a while you should tell an adult. An adult can call a police officer who can take the animal out of the car and into safety.
  + DON’T get a companion animal if you are not ready to give it a loving home and provide it with everything it needs.
  + DON’T abandon your companion animal (leave it somewhere and never come back to get it).

**FINDING THE RIGHT PET FOR YOUR FAMILY**

* Now that your know the Dos and Don’ts of caring for and interacting with a companion animal, and you think you can handle the responsibilities of having a companion animal, you will need to discuss with your parents/guardians if your family is ready for a companion animal and prepared to take one home. You may be wondering, where is the best place to find your new best friend? (*ALL GRADES*)
  + The best place to find a forever furry friend is an animal shelter. There are lots of animals waiting to be adopted in animal shelters. Ask children if they know what an animal shelter is.
  + Petfinder.com: with your parents’/guardians’ permission and supervision, you can go online to Petfinder.com to search for adoptable companion animals. (*GRADES 3-6*)
  + If you want a certain type of animal and cannot find one in a shelter or breed specific rescue than make sure you and your parents/guardians research and visit a reputable breeder. (*GRADES 3-6*)

**OTHER KINDS OF ANIMALS (*TIME PERMITTING*)**

* Companion Animals v. Wild Animals v. Farm Animals (*GRADES 3-6*)
  + We already discussed companion animals, but there are several other types of animals. Two other big categories of animals are wild animals and farm animals.
  + Wild Animals (i.e. raccoons, squirrels, bears, coyotes, skunks, tigers)
    - What responsibilities do we have to wild animals?
      * Not to destroy their natural habitat
      * Reporting injured wild animals
        + Tell your parents/guardians and call the local Humane Society or a local veterinarian.
      * Being careful about how we dispose of garbage
        + For example, you should remove the lids of tin cans before disposing so that raccoons don’t get their hands caught in them.
    - You should not keep wild animals as pets.
  + Farm Animals (i.e. horses, cows, sheep, pigs, goats, chickens, turkeys)
    - Have children name different farm animals and make farm animal noises
    - Farm animals can include both those that work/train on a farm (i.e. horses) and those that are raised for food (i.e. cows and chickens).
    - What responsibilities do we have to farm animals?
      * They, too, need proper shelter, food, water and veterinarian care.

**QUESTIONS**

* Does anyone have any questions?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

* HEART Promoting Humane Education - <https://teachhumane.org/>
* Humane Society of the United States, Resources for Parents and Educators - <http://www.humanesociety.org/parents_educators/>
* National Humane Education Society, Humane Education - <https://nhes.org/education-2/>
* United Federation of Teachers, Humane Education Resource Guide for Elementary School Teachers in New York State - <http://www.uft.org/files/attachments/humane-ed-resource-guide.pdf>