

# ALTERNATIVES TO CLASSROOM PETS

## LEND A HAND GAME

Have students sit in a circle. Start the game by naming an animal. The student to your right describes one way people can help that animal. (For example, if the animal is a cat, possible answers are: have cats spayed or neutered; keep cats indoors.) The same student then names another animal, and the student to his/her right describes one way people can help that animal. The game continues until all students have a turn.

## ANIMAL TALES

Have students write first-person narrative from the point of view of a wild or companion animal. Students who choose a wild animal should include details about the animal's habitat, diet, and behavior. If the species is endangered, they should explain people's role in the problem, and what the animal might wish we would do differently.

Students who choose a companion animal should include information about the animal's dietary, grooming, shelter, and exercise needs, as well as veterinary requirements. Have students illustrate covers and bind their stories with yarn.

## FROM BIRDS TO BUTTERFLIES.

Help your class set up birdbaths, birdhouses, and feeding stations around your schoolyard. Design a schedule that allows students to take turns filling the bird feeders and changing the water. Since birds might come to rely on your feeders for at least a part of their diet, continue feeding them throughout the year. You can also plant a butterfly garden or hummingbird garden and have children identify and record the various species they observe.

## UNPOPULARITY CONTEST

Ask students to call out types of animals they fear or dislike. Write down their responses, and explain that every animal plays a valuable role in an ecosystem. Have each student research an animal from the list and make a poster emphasizing some positive characteristics of that animal. Display posters in your classroom or school library.

## LIVE STREAM FAVORITE ANIMALS

There are many wonderful wild-animal live cams available to stream for free right from your classroom. Teach your students about different animals, their habitats, and their needs by designating a time to check in on favorite streams. Students will be able to see animals living freely in their own homes without human interference or in a high-quality sanctuary where rescued animals can live the rest of their lives peacefully and in as natural a setting as possible.

## FASCINATING FRIENDS

Have students conduct behavioral studies of their own or a friend or neighbor's companion animal. For example, they can time a cat's or dog's response to an auditory stimulus.

Standing in one room while the animal is in another, students produce an unfamiliar sound (such as by blowing a whistle or rattling a pie tin) and record how much time it takes the animal to investigate. The animal should be rewarded with praise or a small treat upon arrival. Have students repeat this exercise once a day for a week and then construct graphs with the data they've recorded.



## MAKE WISHES COME TRUE

Contact an animal shelter and ask for a wish list of needed items. In addition to food, towels, blankets, cat litter, and toys, shelters often need cleaning and office supplies.

Have your class coordinate a school-wide collection.

Assign students the job of publicizing the collection by creating posters

Set up collection boxes for donated items.

Schedule a time when you and your class can drop off the donations or have someone from the shelter pick them up.



**TEACHERS BRING ANIMALS INTO THE CLASSROOM WITH GOOD INTENTIONS TO TEACH RESPONSIBILITY OR TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT ANIMALS. BUT DOING SO OFTEN PUTS ANIMALS AT RISK OF INJURY OR NEGLECT.**

In schools across the country, rabbits, mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, birds, fish, frogs, turtles, other reptiles, and countless other animals are subjected to substandard care as teaching “tools” or classroom “pets.” The classroom pet often becomes too big a burden and at the end of every school year, animal shelters are inundated with classroom pets no longer needed or wanted in the classroom.

### **ANIMAL WELFARE**

In the classroom, important aspects of an animal’s nature are often ignored. For example, most small mammals are nocturnal, but they are kept in brightly lit classrooms and removed from their cages during the day. Birds are sensitive to drafts and changes in air temperature, but climate control is typically regulated for student comfort levels. Turtles and reptiles are extremely sensitive to noise. And constant poking and handling can be very stressful to an animal.

Classroom pets are often neglected during school breaks and holidays and may suffer from missed meals, unsanitary living conditions, and lack of climate control. If left alone for a weekend, pets can be literally starving or dehydrated come Monday morning. A fire or power outage can be deadly to an animal who is left alone in a building overnight or on weekends.

**FAILING TO ADDRESS AN ANIMAL’S NUTRITIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS. COUPLED WITH INADEQUATE VETERINARY CARE. LEADS TO THE DEATH OF MANY CLASSROOM PETS- A TERRIBLE FATE FOR AN ANIMAL AND A DEVASTATING EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS.**

### **HEALTH RISKS TO CHILDREN**

Keeping animals in the classroom can pose serious health risks to children. For example, children can get salmonella poisoning from handling reptiles. Students with asthma or allergies can be adversely affected by the presence of an animal in the classroom.

## **ANIMAL RIGHTS COALITION**

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# **NO PETS ALLOWED**

**The Case Against Animals in the Classroom**

