



Teacher Newsletter of The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

ASPCA Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month

Our animal companions often seem to know how we feel. They comfort us when we're sad and stay by our side when times are rough. For this reason, it is unfathomable to most of us that someone could deliberately cause harm to an animal. Although we may not wish to contemplate such suffering, the reality is that animal cruelty crosses all racial and socioeconomic lines and reaches from coast to coast. April is ASPCA Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month. Help raise awareness of this national problem by providing your students with information on recognizing and reporting animal abuse.



Exactly what is considered animal cruelty varies from state to state, but in general cruelty occurs any time an animal is made to suffer or feel needless pain, whether the person did it intentionally or through neglect. When people think of animal abuse, they usually think of intentional cruelty. This type of abuse occurs when a person intends to hurt an animal, often times maliciously, and results in severe physical injury or death. Setting a cat on fire or making dogs fight each other are both examples of intentional cruelty. People who intentionally abuse animals often try to hide what they're doing. It's no surprise that many dog- and cockfights are held in abandoned warehouses or basements.

The second type of cruelty is neglect. This happens when an animal suffers because he is not given the necessities of life such as food, water, shelter or appropriate veterinary care. People who commit criminal neglect may not realize what they are doing is wrong or may not be capable of resolving the situation themselves. For example, "animal hoarders" are people who keep too many pets in their house or apartment. They are neither able to care for all these animals properly nor keep their environment clean. Animal hoarding

is a psychiatric obsessive/compulsive disorder where hoarders think about their animals all the time but cannot bring themselves to solve the problem of their neglect.

Make no mistake, animal cruelty is illegal in every state. However, how it is classified depends on where the crime occurred. At present, forty-two states and the District of Columbia consider intentional cruelty a felony while the remaining treat it as a misdemeanor. The first step in preventing animal abuse is learning what the laws are in your state.

Cruelty towards animals does more than cause other living, feeling beings to experience pain and fear. Violence against animals can be a sign that people are also in danger. Someone who commits acts of intentional animal abuse may have serious psychological problems. Studies have found that many people convicted of violent crimes had a history of animal cruelty. Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, Andrew Cunanan, David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, and Albert "Boston Strangler" DeSalvo were cruel to animals before they started hurting people. Many murderous children and teenagers—like Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold of Columbine High School—also had histories of animal abuse.

Animals in homes with a history of family violence are often also victims of abuse. One study found that animals were abused in 88% of the homes in which a child was abused. Another study found that 83% of families reported for animal abuse also had children who are at high risk of abuse or neglect. A third study found that one-third of abused children abuse animals. Animal mistreatment, bed wetting and fire starting are all signs of potential abuse of a child.

One of the most powerful tools for preventing cruelty to animals is education. It is important to plant the seeds of kindness in children early by bringing humane education into your classroom. With all children, even older teens, keep in mind the importance of modeling appropriate behaviors. If we treat animals cruelly or as unfeeling machines, our students will probably think that this is right. Having animals languishing in the back of a classroom teaches irresponsibility instead of responsibility.

Every child is unique, and you should use careful thought when discussing cruelty with children. In general, children under four years old simply should not be exposed to the topic. Those under two can learn that their actions make others—including animals—happy or sad. Help them learn how to pet a companion animal by guiding their hands on a stuffed animal or by having a pet therapy team visit your classroom. You can ask two- and three-year-olds to express how they would feel if they were treated the way their pets or other animals in their immediate environment are treated.

Children who are between four and six often begin to understand basic moral concepts, such as fairness. These children can learn to be kind to animals because the animals “deserve” it. Limit conversation to the simple fact that animals can be hurt without describing the how, e.g., starvation, physical abuse, etc.

With most six- to ten-year-olds, you can begin to talk about why someone might be mean to an animal, as long as you make sure they always keep in mind that it is wrong to hurt animals. Do not, however, let discussions satisfy the morbid curiosity some children of this age may have. They are forming some of their earliest impressions about the

world beyond their family so it is critical that adults filter what children perceive.

Studies indicate that ten- to fourteen-year-olds are still strongly affected by violence, so dialogue about animal cruelty should be kept free of details. Nonetheless, the issue can be raised directly—if delicately—with most of these children. You can ask them how they would react if they witness peers mistreating animals. By placing the advice in these terms, you can help them overcome peer pressure and follow what they know is right.

Even when children witness cruelty and know it’s wrong, they may not know what to do about it. Explain to your students that if they see someone hurting an animal or know of an animal who looks sick, injured or does not have adequate food, water or shelter, it’s important to get help fast. They should never try to help the animal themselves,

but rather tell a trusted adult. Make sure they know which adults they can trust—parents, teachers, police officers, etc.—and nurture their trust in you. Together, adult and child should report the incident to the local police department or animal shelter. It may be helpful for the child to write down what he or she saw happen, who was involved, the date of the incident and where it took place.



Police officers have many laws to enforce so they may be unaware of animal cruelty laws. When you report suspected cruelty, you may need to remind them that it is illegal. You can look up your local humane law enforcement department and animal abuse laws at <http://www.aspc.org/cruelty>. As citizens, we can all help by supporting animal-friendly legislation. Visit the ASPCA’s Advocacy Center at <http://www.aspc.org/lobby> to learn about laws pending in your area. You can also write your representatives through this site.

For more lessons and activities pertaining to ASPCA Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month visit <http://www.aspc.org/education> and www.animaland.org. If you are interested in more general information on the subject go to <http://www.aspc.org/cruelty>. Contact your local humane society, SPCA or animal shelter about outreach programs, educational materials, camps, etc.

Teacher's Instructions

Activity Sheet 1: Grades K-2

Contrast for students or have students contrast the difference between being kind and cruel to an animal. Make sure they understand that kindness should be extended to all animals not just family pets. Tell them being kind is when you treat an animal like you would like to be treated yourself such as: providing food and water, gently petting, playing games and in the case of wild animals, leaving them be and not teasing or chasing them. Cruelty can be explained as being mean to an animal. Someone is being cruel if he or she pulls an animal's tail or ears, teases animals when they are eating or sleeping, chases or throws rocks at birds, squirrels and other wild animals. You can ask students to provide exam-

ples of each and write them on the board. Next hand out Activity Sheet 1: Kind vs. Cruel and ask them to look at each picture and decide if the animals are being treated kindly or cruelly. We deliberately left kids out of the drawing of the dog tied to a lamp post. If students bring this up, ask them if leaving your dog alone tied to a lamp post is kind or cruel. Now ask students to choose one of the "cruel" pictures and redraw it on a separate piece of paper, showing kids treating the animal with kindness. As a follow-up activity you can have students share their drawings and explain why they made the changes they did.

Standard: (NCTE) English Language Arts 1.

Activity Sheet 2: Grades 3-5

This activity combines empathy building and sentence construction skills. Ask students to read each sentence and color the face that represents the feeling produced by each statement (good J or bad L). If the statement produces a bad feeling, ask students to write what they could do to make it better on the line provided. For example,

sentence 2, "A group of students are throwing rocks at a squirrel in the park," could be changed to: A group of students enjoy watching or feeding peanuts to a squirrel in the park. Ask students to share their responses with the class and be sure to correct any statements that reinforce mistreatment of animals.

Standard: (NCTE) English Language Arts 3.

Activity Sheet 3: Grades 3-8

Children like adults may feel helpless after witnessing an animal being hurt or mistreated. This activity reinforces the idea that kids can help stop animal cruelty. Handout Activity Sheet 3: What Can You Do to Prevent Animal Cruelty? Write the 10 things kids can do to help prevent cruelty on the board and review the sheet with the class. Place

special emphasis on the first three points: 1) Never try to help an animal yourself. Tell a trusted adult and together call your local police department or animal shelter; 2) Write down what you saw happen, who was involved, the date of incident and where it took place; and 3) Be responsible with your own pets.

Activity Sheet 4: Grades 4-8

In this activity, students learn about real issues concerning animals such as dogfighting and reporting cruelty in age appropriate language. Familiarize yourself with the information beforehand by visiting the animaland.org web site and clicking on the real issues icon. While this section has been written for this age group, you will have to judge whether your students are ready for such topics. Handout Activity Sheet 4: ASPCA Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month Cyberhunt and ask students to visit the site and answer the questions. The answers are: 1. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; 2. They don't think about or realize what they are doing. They know what they are doing but can't stand up to their friends and peer pressure. They hurt animals because they enjoy

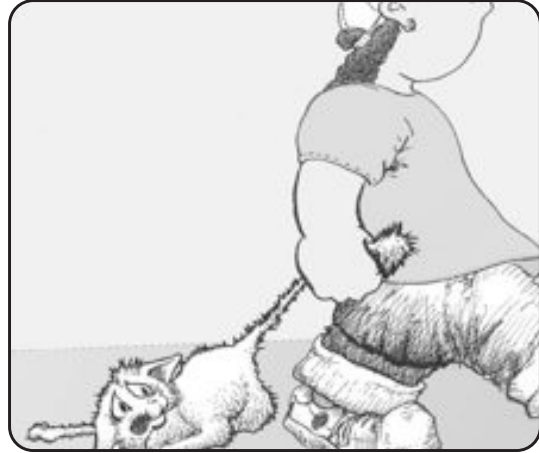
hurting things or because it makes them feel powerful; 3. Inappropriate shelter, keeping dogs on a short chain all the time, using cruel types of discipline, forgetting to give water or food, animal hoarding; 4. Education; 5. Dogfighting is illegal in all 50 states. Forty-four states classify it as a felony and six as a misdemeanor; 6. Two or more roosters are put in a ring and forced to fight until one of the birds dies; 7. The inside of a car can heat up very quickly—even with the window a little open—and your animal can overheat or even die; 8. Get help! Tell an adult. Together, you and the adult can call the police or your local animal shelter; 9. Never try to help the animal yourself.; 10. Animal cruelty is illegal in all 50 states.

Standard: (NCTE) English Language Arts 8.

Activity Sheet 1: Grades K-2

Kind vs. Cruel

Are the kids in these pictures being kind or cruel to animals? Choose a "cruel" picture and draw it again on a separate piece of paper, showing how kids can be kind to the animal.



Activity Sheet 2: Grades 3-5

What Do You Feel?

Do the following statements make you feel good 😊 or bad ☹️? When a statement makes you feel bad ☹️, write how you could make it better on the line provided.

- 1 A family goes to the animal shelter to adopt a dog. 😊 ☹️

- 2 A group of students are throwing rocks at a squirrel in the park. 😊 ☹️

- 3 A cat is running in the middle of the street. 😊 ☹️

- 4 A boy provides fresh water for his bird every day. 😊 ☹️

- 5 A girl uses punishment and yelling to train her new dog. 😊 ☹️

- 6 A man puts out poison to keep wildlife away from his yard. 😊 ☹️

- 7 A horse is grazing in an open field. 😊 ☹️

- 8 A dog is tied to a pole in a yard with no food or water. 😊 ☹️

- 9 A boy takes a frog from a pond and brings it home. 😊 ☹️

- 10 A family brings their cat and dog to the veterinarian for a check-up. 😊 ☹️

Activity Sheet 3: Grades 3-8

What Can You Do to Prevent Animal Cruel-

Have you ever seen someone hurting an animal and felt like you couldn't do anything to stop it? Well, read on—there are important ways that you can speak up.



Get Help! If you see someone hurting an animal, or know of an animal who looks sick, injured or does not have adequate food, water or shelter, it's important to get help fast. Never try to help the animal yourself. Instead, tell an adult. Together, you and the adult can call the police or your local animal shelter. It's important to inform the police because animal cruelty is illegal in all 50 states.



Write Everything Down. Be prepared to provide information on the cruelty that you witnessed. Write down what you saw happen, who was involved, the date of the incident and where it took place.



Be Responsible. Make sure your animal friends wear collars with ID tags just in case they get lost. Don't let them roam free. Keep cats indoors. Dogs should always be on a leash and supervised when they're outside. Take your pets to a veterinarian at least once a year for a checkup.

Be a Leader. Be kind to animals and others will follow your example. Let your family, friends, classmates and adults know that hurting animals is not cool.



Volunteer Your Time. You're never too young to volunteer time helping animals. Contact your local animal shelter or humane society for junior volunteer programs. For a list of shelters in your area search our national directory at http://www.asPCA.org/script_forms/shelter.html.

Spread the word. Share facts and information about prevention of animal cruelty and responsible pet care with your friends, family, teachers, neighbors and classmates. For materials you can download visit us at www.animaland.org or www.asPCA.org.



Invite a Guest Speaker. Ask your teacher to have someone from your local animal shelter or humane society come and speak to your school and classmates. These awesome animal lovers teach kids all kinds of things such as pet care, dog bite prevention, how to pet a dog and how to stop cruelty.

Take Action Now. Join the ASPCA Advocacy Brigade and fight for laws that protect animals. You can join online at <http://www.asPCA.org/lobby>.

Start a Club. With the help of one of your teachers, organize an animal lovers' club at your school. There are many fun community service projects you can do that help animals.

Check It Out. You can see the ASPCA's own animal cops in action on Animal Precinct, a show on Animal Planet. Visit www.asPCA.org and click on Animal Precinct to view previews of shows.



Activity Sheet 4: Grades 4-8

ASPCA PREVENTION OF ANIMAL CRUELTY MONTH

Cyberhunt

April is ASPCA Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month. To learn more about animal cruelty and how to help prevent it, visit www.animaland.org, click on the real issues icon and answer the following questions.

1 What does "ASPCA" stand for? *(Hint: You can find the answer on this sheet.)*

2 List the three main reasons people abuse animals?

3 What are two examples of unintentional cruelty?

4 Most people who abuse animals can be helped with something basic. What?

5 How many states consider dogfighting illegal? Of these, how many classify it as a felony and how many a misdemeanor?

6 Why is cockfighting a cruel sport?

7 Why should you never leave your dog, cat or any other animal alone in a car in hot weather?

8 What is the first thing you should do if you witness animal cruelty?

9 What should you not do if you witness animal cruelty?

10 Why is it very important to report animal cruelty to the police ?

Sign Up for ASPCA **AnimalLessons™** Online

The ASPCA **AnimalLessons™** teacher newsletter is available via email subscription. Each issue contains a feature article about animals accompanied by four reproducible, classroom-ready handouts for grades K-8. This change will not only save money which we can then devote to other educational projects that save animals, but it will allow us to reach you in a more timely fashion. To enroll go to www.animalessons.org.

The ASPCA **AnimalLessons™** web page will also have other valuable features. You will be able to view current and past issues of the newsletter and print out articles and activity sheets in .pdf format. Animal shelters can use this feature to print out multiple copies to hand out to schools in their community. As always, a space is provided on the back of the newsletter to add your logo and contact information.

This edition of ASPCA **AnimalLessons™** is distributed by your local animal-welfare organization:

ASPCA AnimalLessons™ is published by The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. All rights reserved.

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Notwithstanding the foregoing, permission is hereby given to individual classroom teachers to reproduce the activity pages for classroom use; however, reproduction of these pages for an entire school, district or school system or for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

To obtain information about the ASPCA, contact ASPCA Humane Education Department, 424 East 92nd Street, New York, NY 10128; (212) 876-7700, ext. 4410. Contributors to this newsletter include Steve Dercole, Jennifer Dragotta, Miriam Ramos, William Samuels, Ph.D., Jacque Schultz and Stephen Zawistowski, Ph.D.

© 2004 The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Visit the ASPCA's web sites at aspc.org, animalessons.org or animaland.org

ASPCA

**The American Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**
424 East 92nd Street
New York, NY 10128-6804

