

Instructor Introduction

What An Animal Needs (Grades K-2)

Students will identify the basic needs of all animals and compare those needs to our own. Students will learn about specific companion animal needs by species and understand that human guardians (pet owners) are responsible for meeting those needs for the lifetime of the animal.

Excerpts from the MSPCA's Statements of Belief:

"The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that responsible pet owners protect the welfare of animals kept as pets, while at the same time ensuring that their pets do not impact negatively on other animals, the public, or the environment."

The MSPCA defines a responsible pet owner as one who:

1. Provides for the physical, behavioral, and psychological needs of a pet for its lifetime. These needs include, but are not limited to: preventative and curative medical care, adequate and sanitary housing, a nutritionally balanced diet, appropriate grooming, sufficient training to ensure the pet's safety and a comfortable lifestyle, companionship and attention, and adequate exercise;
2. Obeys the laws relating to animal care and control;
3. Is mindful of and does not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem; and
4. Will provide a humane and appropriate alternative for a pet if for any reason he or she can no longer keep the animal.

The following bullets list the important elements behind this lesson plan. For more information on any pet care questions, please contact an MSPCA Education Coordinator.

- all animals (including humans) have the same basic needs: food, water, shelter
- companion animals (pets) have additional physical and psychological needs similar to humans:
 - exercise and play
 - socialization, love, and attention
 - regular grooming
 - veterinary care
- guardians (pet owners) have a responsibility to provide care to their pets; pets are incapable of meeting their own needs
- when acquiring a pet, a commitment should be made for the life of the animal; animal life expectancies vary greatly by species
- when parents buy pets for children, the initial excitement will inevitably wear off, and it is the responsibility of the parent to assume care of the animal when this happens
- pet guardianship is a major commitment in which lifestyle, time availability, housing, family members, children's ages, allergies, general health, and finances should all be considered