



## Lesson Plan: Companion Animals and Society

YEAR LEVELS:

P	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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**Outcomes:** Students know about the problems associated with companion animal overpopulation and how the Animal Welfare League Qld is contributing to the solutions.  
Students know about how responsible care of companion animals can help reduce their overpopulation and the subsequent effects.

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Resources:** 'Kitten Pyramid' poster  
PowerPoint presentation - 'AWL: Helping Companion Animals in our Community'  
Laptop Computer & Data Projector  
Extension cord & double adaptor

### Teaching Notes

#### Reasons why Companion Animals come to the AWL Sanctuary

##### They are Stray

If a dog or cat runs away from home, or accidentally gets out of their yard/house, they can easily get lost. Dogs and cats found wandering the streets without an owner are picked up by the Council Animal Control Officers and taken to the City Pound. Animals found on the streets are 'Stray'. If the dogs or cats are identified with a tag, registration or microchip, then the owners can be easily contacted and they can hopefully come and get their animal and take it back home. If they are not identified though, the dog or cat must spend three days in the pound in hope that their owners come looking for them. If no one comes looking for them, then the dog or cat is then given to the AWL and we then decide if we can try and find it a new home.

##### They Get Surrendered

Sometimes no longer is able to look after or wants their dog or cat. The owner is then able to give their animal to the AWL so we can try and find it a new home. When an owner gives us their animal it is 'Surrendered'. People surrender their dogs and cats for many different reasons. The most common reasons are because the dog/cat is behaving badly (barking, biting, making a mess), the people are moving house and can't take their animal with them, the owners are getting a divorce and no one wants the family pet, they owners are going on holidays and can't get anyone to look after their animal. These are all very sad reasons and some of them very irresponsible. Some people though, have no choice but to surrender their dog or cat, and these owners can be very upset and sad when they are forced to.

##### They are Injured or Abandoned

Some animals are the victim of cruelty or neglect and come to the AWL very sick or injured. Some animals are found on the road or street because they have been hit by a car and left to die. Sometimes litters of puppies and kittens are left all alone on the side of the road, in rubbish bins or in the bush because people don't want them and don't care what happens to them. If they are lucky though, a kind person will find them and bring them to the AWL where we can try and nurse them back to health and find them good homes to live in.

# Teaching Notes Cont...

## Pet Overpopulation - The Sad Effects

- Over 200,000 healthy cats and dogs are being killed in Australia each year because they have no homes to go to.
- In 2006, the AWL Qld euthanased 19% of dogs and 42% of cats received; the RSPCA Qld euthanased 43% of dogs and 67% of cats received!
- Between 2002 and 2006, AWL received 21,871 cats - 9463 were euthanased. During the same period the RSPCA Qld received 65,583 cats - 44,173 were euthanased.

## Caring Responsibly for Companion Animals: The Four Steps

### *Desex*

**Elaboration:** There are too many puppies and kittens being born and not enough homes for them to go to. This is why we need to take our pets to the vet to be desexed. Desexing is an operation done by a vet, which means that your dog or cat can't have puppies or kittens anymore. This is a good thing because there are already so many dogs and cats looking for homes, we don't need any more being born. In this picture you can see where this kitten has just had her operation and she has stitches where the vet operated. The operation only takes a few minutes and it is all over very quickly. It doesn't hurt the puppies and kittens because the vet gives them a special needle that sends them to sleep for a little while whilst the operation is happening. When they wake up it's all over and they just have this little scar. We should take our puppy to the vet to be desexed by the time it is 6 months old and our kitten by the time it is 5 months old. This is because puppies can start breeding at 6 months and kittens at 5 months.

### *Identify*

**Elaboration:** If our dog or cat gets lost or goes missing, we want to make sure that it will be returned to us. There are three ways we can do this. First, we put a collar with a tag on it on our animal friend. On this tag is our animal's name, the address of where it lives and the phone number of its owner. Second, if our friend is a dog, we make sure he is registered with the council. If he is registered he will have a little tag like this one. Lastly, we must microchip our dogs and cats. This here is a microchip, and it is a tiny little computer chip that has all the information about where that dog or cat lives. A vet uses a special needle to put this microchip under the animal's skin at the back of its neck. This is the best way to identify our dogs and cats because a microchip will stay there for the animal's whole life.

### *Train*

**Elaboration:** It is very important to teach our dogs good manners, so they know how to behave around people and other animals. This is called training. We need to teach them to walk on a lead, to "come", "sit" and "stay". We also need to teach them to behave themselves around our friends (like not jumping up or being aggressive when they come to the front door) and around other animals (like being friendly to other dogs and not chasing cats or wildlife).

### *Keep Safe*

**Elaboration:** The safest place for our dogs and cats is in our homes. There are many outside dangers for dogs and cats. For dogs, if they escape from the yard they could get hit by a car, lost, get into a dog fight, bitten by a tick or a snake, taken to the pound or even stolen. For cats, they could also get hit by a car, lost, get attacked by a dog or another cat, get trapped, stolen or even hurt by a person who doesn't like cats.

If we have a dog we need a secure, fenced backyard for them to play safely in. If we have a cat we should keep them totally indoors. These are the best ways to keep our best friends safe from harm.

Learning Activity	Approx. Duration	Teaching Procedure	Resources
1. Who is the AWL?	10 min	<p><i>Prior to lesson: ask teacher that, if possible, students are seated in a circle.</i></p> <p>Education officer introduces themselves and the mascot animal they have brought with them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Has anyone here ever been to the Animal Welfare League?'</i></li> <li>• <i>'Does anyone know what we do at the AWL Qld?'</i></li> </ul> <p>At the AWL we take care of all the dogs and cats that don't have homes to go to. Animals just like .....(insert name of mascot animal here).</p> <p>Education Officer brings up the PowerPoint presentation "AWL: Helping Companion Animals in Our Community" and goes through the first two slides (who are we?; what do we do?).</p>	<p><i>AWL Mascot animal</i></p> <p><i>PowerPoint presentation</i></p>
2. The Problem with Pet Overpopulation	10 min	<p>Education Officer asks students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Why do you think there are so many homeless animals at the AWL?'</i></li> </ul> <p>Officer listens to students responses, then shows them the next two slides (why so many homeless animals? Where do they come from?) Officer explains the different ways in which the homeless animals come to be (<i>see teacher notes</i>); Officer then shows next slide (the problem with pet overpopulation) Education Officer explains that Pet Overpopulation is a big problem in Australia, because there are just not enough homes for all the unwanted dogs and cats being born.</p> <p>Education Officer asks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Does anyone know what sometimes happens to unwanted dogs and cats?'</i></li> </ul> <p>Education Officer explains that thousands of dogs each year are killed (or euthanased) because there is no one to look after them! (<i>see teacher notes</i>) This is very sad.</p> <p>Education Officer explains that even at the AWL, some animals have to be euthanased, but once we decide to rehome an animal, it stays with us until we find it a home - we don't place a time limit on it finding a good home. Many animal shelters and pounds in Australia DO, however.</p>	<p><i>PowerPoint presentation</i></p>
3. Ending Pet Overpopulation	15 min	<p>Education officer shows the next slide (How can we fix it?) and tells students that the AWL is helping to fix Pet Overpopulation by rehoming as many animals as it can, and by also educating animal owners and the community how to care responsibly for their cats and dogs.</p> <p>The AWL wants animal owners to make sure they take four important steps to being responsible carers - desex, identify, train and keep their cats and dogs safe.</p> <p>Education officer goes through the rest of the slides, elaborating briefly on each of the four steps. (<i>see teacher notes</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>When discussing the Desexing, Education Officer demonstrates how important this is by showing students the poster of the 'Kitten Pyramid' and explains how quickly undesexed cats can breed. (see teacher notes)</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>PowerPoint presentation</i></p> <p><i>'Kitten Pyramid' poster</i></p>
4. Question Time	5 min	<p>Education officer asks if anyone has any questions.</p>	

