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Introduction

Creatures, Caring and Community is a program that encourages students to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of animals. Students will realise animals’ needs are similar to ours in many ways. They will gain an understanding of the implications of pet ownership and the responsibilities required in caring for an animal. The students will gain a greater understanding of the role of the RSPCA in the community and how it cares for all creatures great and small. They will investigate how the community is involved and what people can do to support the RSPCA.

Program Aims

- To examine the specific needs of different animals.
- To discuss our responsibilities required in caring for animals.
- To understand the needs of humans, compared to the needs of animals — to be able to identify similarities and differences.
- To examine the RSPCA’s role in our society as a community organisation.
- To find out how the RSPCA assists animals.
- To investigate the different ways the community is involved in supporting the RSPCA.
- To engage in hands on learning.

Key questions

- What are the main needs of animals and how are these needs similar to ours?
- What are the main responsibilities required in caring for animals?
- What role does the RSPCA play in our community?
- How does the RSPCA help lost, stray, sick, unwanted and neglected animals?
- How is the community involved in supporting the RSPCA?
Links to Victorian Curriculum

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 sets out what every student should learn during their first eleven years of schooling. The curriculum is the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/ accessed Feb 2017).

The RSPCA Creatures, Caring and Community program aims to address many areas of the Victorian Curriculum. Elements of the suggested pre-visit activities, the RSPCA education session and post-visit activities are incorporated into the Learning Areas and Capabilities of level 3-4.

Learning Areas

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

- Questions and Possibilities
- Reasoning

ENGLISH

- Reading and viewing
- Speaking and listening
- Writing

SCIENCE

- Science understanding: Biological sciences

Capabilities

ETHICAL CAPABILITY

- Understanding concepts
- Decision making and actions

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY

- Self-awareness and management: Recognition and expression of emotions
- Social awareness and management: Relationships and diversity
About RSPCA Victoria

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria) is a non-government, community based charity that works to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection.

Vision
Ending cruelty to all animals.

Purpose
With the community, achieve outstanding animal welfare outcomes through education, advocacy, animal care and protection.

Five freedoms for animals
The RSPCA considers that the welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state and that good animal welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being.

The RSPCA believes that an animal’s welfare should be considered in terms of the following five freedoms:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.
5. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment that avoid mental suffering.

- You and your class can discover more about RSPCA Victoria by visiting out website.

www.rspcavic.org
The Needs of Animals

Animals need food, water, shelter, exercise, companionship and veterinary care to live a healthy and happy life. All pets depend on their owners to provide these needs. Having been bred selectively for hundreds of years, they have not retained all of the instincts and behaviours that allowed their ancestors to survive in the wild. By containing them in hutches, cages, aviaries, backyards, aquariums and paddocks we take away many abilities they may have, to fend for themselves.

Food

Food provides animals with energy. If they don’t have enough energy they can’t move freely, fight disease or think clearly. In time, their bodies no longer perform basic functions like breathing and pumping blood.

If animals are being fed processed food such as dry food or pellets it is important to follow the recommended daily amounts provided on the packet labels. Children may need the assistance of adults to help them, especially if they choose to feed their animals twice a day and have to halve the quantities.

There are many overweight animals whose bodies work hard to stay alive. Deposits of fat make it hard for an obese animal’s blood to flow efficiently. As a result, the supply of oxygen to the animal’s muscles and organs is reduced and the body no longer function well. The animal’s life may be spent in pain and discomfort and their life expectancy is shortened.

It is very important students understand the importance of providing just the right amount of food; not too much, not too little.

Water

Animals need fresh water all the time. Water allows the chemical processes that keep an animal alive to take place. It helps them control their body temperature, especially on hot days. Water must be fresh and clean. When water has been sitting around for a while it can gather harmful germs and parasites. Remember to refresh animals’ water bowls at least twice a day. Never allow water bowls to remain empty.

Shelter

Just like people, animals need places where they can shelter from wind, rain and sun. Some animals need protection from predators ie. guinea pigs need shelter from cats and dogs. Kennels, hutches, houses and bird cages provide shelter for our pets while barns, stables and sheds protect farm animals. If an animal’s shelter is also its home, it must be as comfortable as possible. Bedding should be soft, warm and dry and cleaned regularly. Shelters need to be large enough for the animal to move around freely.
**Exercise**

Exercise keeps animals healthy and alert. Blood flow is increased during exercise, clearing arteries and veins and transporting oxygen and nutrients to the cells quickly. Metabolic rates are increased, allowing faster and more efficient digestion of food. Exercise keeps muscles strong and senses heightened. Energy stored as fat is used up, preventing an animal from becoming overweight.

Periods of exercise are very stimulating for animals. New sights, sounds, smells and tastes are discovered; unknown paths, trees and tunnels are explored; new animals encountered. We can help our pets to get exercise by providing toys and play.

**Friends**

Most animals need the company of others to feel safe and secure. Budgies, canaries, cattle, chooks, dogs, guinea pigs, horses, rabbits and sheep prefer to live in groups. For millions of years animals herded or flocked together to protect themselves from predators.

It is not always practical to have groups of animals living in our homes. The good news is many animals substitute people or other animals for creatures of their own species and forge special bonds with them. When animals become bored and lonely, they may engage in destructive or boisterous behaviour, damaging property, disturbing neighbours and occasionally harming themselves.

It is important to choose the right friend for your pet. This means selecting a compatible species and introducing them carefully and slowly to avoid confrontation. RSPCA adoption staff can assist with this process to help make sure it runs smoothly. If animals are not desexed unwanted litters may result.

**Vet care**

Animals get sick and injured, just like us. They should receive veterinary attention at least once a year for a check-up and vaccination or as soon as symptoms of illness or injury are noticed. Even rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, mice, chickens and birds need to visit a vet. If an animal shows signs of ill health it is important it receives veterinary care immediately.

An indication that an animal may be ill includes:

- loss of appetite;
- sluggish behaviour;
- rapid weight loss;
- repeated vomiting; and/or
- discharge from ears or eyes.

Vets can also advise on how to rid animals of fleas and worms.
Identification

Identification allows animals to be returned to their owners if they are lost. Cats and dogs need name tags attached to their collars. One side of a tag contains the animal’s name and the other side contains a telephone number and/or address. Victorian law states all cats and dogs must be registered with local councils. When the animals are registered their owners are provided with a registration tag for the animals’ collar. These serve as an additional form of identification.

Animals can lose their collar and tags, and in doing so, lose their identification. To overcome this, owners can have a microchip — about the size of a grain of rice — inserted under the animal’s skin. If a lost animal is brought to a vet or an animal shelter it is checked for a microchip. A scanner is passed over the animal and if a microchip is present, the scanner beeps and displays an identification number. This number is entered into a national database to determine the name and contact details of the pet’s owner. Microchipping is an excellent method of pet identification.

Additional information about the needs of pets can be found in the Animal Care section of our website.
A visit to the RSPCA Education Centre

Creatures, Caring and Community is a program conducted at the RSPCA’s Education Centre in Burwood East. As you enter our gallery, members of the Education team and their friendly education animals will meet you. This is an opportunity to stop and observe the animals in the gallery, the RSPCA information modules and the animals outside in the adjacent paddocks.

Depending on the size of the group, children will either stay as a class or be divided into smaller groups for the following activities.

In the Theatre (2 x 20 minute sessions)
Students watch a brief PowerPoint presentation delivered by an Education Officer in the theatre. The presentation gives an overview of the RSPCA’s role in our community. Animal case studies are used to highlight the needs of animals, the work of the RSPCA, and responsibilities required in caring for animals. The role of the community in supporting the RSPCA, including various ways students can help are also included in the presentation.

iPad Activity (30-40 mins)
Students explore RSPCA rescue stories through the use of a brainstorming app for iPad called Popplet. Students work in groups to discuss and document what they See, Think, Wonder and Feel about each case. The RSPCA educator then explains details about the animal rescue and outcomes.

In the Barn (approx 30 mins)
Exploring the working barn is a highlight of the visit. The barn allows for an ‘up close and personal’ experience with a range of animals and hear their rescue stories. Students meet the barn animal attendants and learn about their job. They are given an opportunity to observe the animals’ enclosures, learn how to correctly handle and pat the animals they encounter and participate in a feeding activity. As the students meet different animals, they learn about where the animals have come from and the RSPCA’s role in caring for these animals. Discussion also focuses on the responsibilities of community members in caring for animals and the specific needs of different animals.
**When we come to you**

An Education Officer and in some cases an Education animal will visit your school and spend time with you and your students. Students watch a PowerPoint presentation which gives an overview of the RSPCA’s role in our community and the ways in which the community supports the RSPCA. Students explore RSPCA rescue stories through the use of a brainstorming app for iPad called *Popplet*. Students work in groups to discuss and document what they See, Think, Wonder and Feel about each case. The RSPCA educator then explains details about the animal rescue and outcomes.
Extension Activities

The Arts

• Make models of various animals, their specific environment and needs. This could be presented as a diorama or a mural/painting and undertaken in small groups.

• Create a collage of RSPCA-related images (images could be taken from the internet or magazines).

English

• Look at a variety of songs, books, poems and rhymes about animals.

• Watch a popular animal movie such as *Charlotte’s Web*, *Oddball* or *Babe*.

• Spend some time looking around the RSPCA Victoria website www.rspcavic.org

• Animal images activity - look at an animal image (see Activity Master Sheet) and respond using the following sentence starters: I see …; I think … ; I wonder … ; I feel … Discuss responses as a class focusing on animal feelings, the needs of animals and the role of the RSPCA.

• Spend some time looking at the RSPCA Victoria website - www.rspcavic.org. This is an excellent site for animal welfare research.

• Research an animal welfare issue/campaign and then write a persuasive text arguing for a particular position, eg. compulsory desexing, banning battery cages, banning sow stalls.

• Create a poster advertisement promoting an animal welfare issue/campaign or an upcoming RSPCA community event.

• Imagine you are interviewing an animal at the RSPCA. Write interview questions and what you think they would say (if they could talk!).

• Write a story about ‘a day in the life of an animal at the RSPCA.’

• Write down, draw, role-play or discuss all the things you do to look after your pet - link these with the needs of animals and the *Five Freedoms*.

• Write acrostic animal and RSPCA poems.

• Do a PowerPoint presentation or similar about the visit to the RSPCA and what the RSPCA does (small group or individual).

• Focus on the commitment required in owning a pet by designing a questionnaire that people or families should answer before deciding if they should adopt a pet, eg. *what sort of exercise will you be able to provide your pet and how often?, who will look after your pet when you are on holidays?*

• **Getting to know RSPCA activity.** Give each student a copy of the Activity Master Sheet. Students walk around the room asking other students questions in order to find people they can match up with a specific item on their list. When they have found someone who fits a description, students write their name under the item. Students need to find a different student for each item.
• RSPCA Word search (see Activity Master Sheet).

• Spelling activity. Unscramble the spelling word that relates to the RSPCA (see Activity Master Sheet). The answers are rescue, stray, cruelty, clinic, shelter, inspector, exercise, community, adopt, animal.

• Construct a KWL chart as a class, small group or individuals
  K - what we know about the RSPCA;
  W - what we would like to know;
  L - what we learnt about the RSPCA.
  The last section (what we learnt) can be completed after the RSPCA visit.

Mathematics
• Order animals found at the RSPCA according to their size or weight.
• Create a pictograph of pet ownership at your school/class.
• Look at the RSPCA shelter statistics which can be found in the RSPCA Victoria Annual Report.
• Create a bar graph displaying the number of dogs admitted to the different RSPCA shelters.
• Create a bar graph displaying the number of cats admitted to the different RSPCA shelters.
• Describe what changes have occurred between two nominated time periods.

Science
• Write an information report about a specific animal that one might find at the RSPCA (include a labelled diagram and information on the animal’s needs and how to care for the animal. More information can be found here).
• Find the differences between the pictures activity. Identify the differences between two almost identical pictures (see Activity Master Sheet).

Thinking
• Discuss animal scenarios as a way to assist students in considering the feelings of animals, eg a dog tied up on a chain with no sign of food, water and shelter; a small calf separated from its mother; a tiger pacing in a zoo enclosure (link these to the Five Freedoms).
• Write a list of words starting with each letter of the alphabet that relate to the RSPCA (see Activity Master Sheet).
• Do a PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) on an animal welfare issue, eg. compulsory cat desexing.
• Choose a word (a noun) that relates to the RSPCA and write five questions where the only answer can be that word.
• Answer the question ‘What if there was no RSPCA?’
• Construct a mind map or a concept map relating to the RSPCA (students could refer to different animals at the RSPCA and their specific needs, as well as different aspects of the RSPCA, eg. vet clinic; shelter for lost, stray, abandoned animals; inspectors and animal rescues; community support).

• Use a Venn diagram to show differences and similarities between two different animals found at the RSPCA or about animals and people (students could focus on appearance, specific needs, environment).
Activity Master Sheets

Getting to Know RSPCA (English)
RSPCA Word Search (English)
RSPCA Spelling (English)
Find the Differences (Mathematics)
Animal Images (English)
A to Z (Thinking)

WAG Activity Booklet (part 1)
WAG Activity Booklet (part 2)
Getting to Know RSPCA

Can you find someone in your class who ...

... has adopted a pet from the RSPCA?

... has adopted a pet from an animal shelter? (not the RSPCA)

... knows what RSPCA stands for (they need to say it out loud)?

... has taken a lost animal to an animal shelter or a vet?

... has seen an episode of RSPCA animal rescue?

... has rescued an animal before?

... has visited the RSPCA?

... has been to an RSPCA School Holiday Program?

... has been to the *Million Paws Walk*?
RSPCA Word Search

ADOPT  ANIMAL  BARN
CLINIC  COMMUNITY  CRUEL
DONATE  IDENTIFICATION  INJURED
INSPECTOR  LOST  MICROCHIP
PAW PRINTS  RESCUED  RESPONSIBILITY
RSPCA  SHELTER  STRAY
VET  VOLUNTEER
## RSPCA Spelling

Unscramble the letters to find each RSPCA-related word.

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Find the Differences

Students compare the two pictures (see following page) and find the differences. They can highlight or circle each difference on Picture B.

There are eight differences between Picture A and Picture B.

In picture B …

1. the hutch contains guinea pigs, not rabbits;
2. the cat is sleeping in a box, not a cat basket;
3. one hen has been replaced by a tortoise;
4. the dog by the kennel has spots;
5. the dog is chasing another dog not a cat;
6. there is one less bird in the aviary;
7. the bowl has food in it; and
8. a pony has its head over the fence.
Can you find the differences between Picture A and Picture B?
Animal Images Activity

The following images may be useful as inspiration for creative writing or role play. Please refer Extension Activities on page 11 of this document.
CRUELTY
RSPCA — A to Z

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