

How One Treats Dogs

H.O.T. DOGS Curriculum



**NATIVE AMERICAN
HUMANE SOCIETY**



Who is NAHS?

Our Mission: To restore, protect, and honor the human-animal connection within Native communities.

Our Vision: To decolonize animal welfare on Tribal Nations by providing Tribal governments and communities with trauma-informed resources.

Why We Exist:

As Native Americans, we have shared special relationships with dogs for millennia, celebrating them in our stories, songs, and traditions. We believe that people and animals deserve to live together in health and safety.

But today, there are few animal health or welfare systems on Indian reservations. The federal government provides access to veterinary care through multiple federal agencies, but none of the primary agencies tasked with managing the federal trust responsibility for Tribes fund regular veterinary services for dogs. This federal system failure often impacts our four-legged relatives in ways that can impact all of us.

Lots of Tribal communities struggle with managing free-roaming dogs because they do not have the resources to do so. Many Tribal families similarly struggle with taking care of their own dogs—four-legged relatives who are beloved family members—because they don't have access to local veterinary care and other pet resources many other folks in the United States have the luxury of taking for granted.

Lack of access to basic local animal services can create public health risks that can affect every aspect of family life— from physical, mental and spiritual well-being to family finances.

Injustice is traumatic. But it also presents us with the chance to make transformative change—not just for us but for our next generations. What should the self-determination of compassion for companion animals look like in your community?

Addressing animal welfare goes beyond caring for animals; it's a pathway to strengthening Tribal Nations, tackling complex issues, and fostering a healthier future for all Native people.

H.O.T. DOGS CURRICULUM

The Native American Humane Society (NAHS) is innovating the first Humane Education Program created specifically for Native American youth and their families. If you live on a Tribal Nation, this is for you.

The foundation of the NAHS H.O.T. Dogs curriculum strongly embraces kindness, respect, compassion, and empathy for all living creatures.

Our Native communities are comprised of people who care and think deeply — about our families, our Tribes, and each other- including the companion animals with whom most of us share our daily lives. We created this H.O.T. Dogs curriculum to provide an instructional framework for you and your children. We hope it helps you activate expressions of compassion and responsibility for Tribal pets that your community desires.

Within these pages you will find a friendly, structured, and culturally grounded map for bringing people of all ages together to explore what is needed to protect the safe and sacred space dogs and humans share for each other's wellbeing. H.O.T. Dogs encourages conversations and thoughtful activities that examine how and why that well-being can be threatened and what you can do to protect the health, safety and happiness of your dogs and yourself.

Where to begin?

This curriculum is designed for everyone. It is offered in a sequence that corresponds to student-delivery but can be explored in any way that supports your specific situation. Adult community members interested in creating change may find it most helpful to begin with **Unit 5: Community Action and Involvement**. This unit centers relationship and shared purpose from the very first gathering, bringing trusted community members together to listen to one another and shape a shared direction.

A Foundation for Related Initiatives

H.O.T. Dogs can be a perfect companion to organizing community plans and actions to help implement new initiatives. Veterinary care partnerships and grant opportunities frequently ask communities to demonstrate the kind of collective groundwork that H.O.T. Dogs helps foster, i.e. a documented community meeting, clear identification of shared priorities, perhaps evidence of engagement across generations and departments. Unit 5 doesn't just prepare a community to meet those expectations — it creates a genuine, lived process of coming together that any future partner will recognize as real community leadership and involvement.

Where Change Begins

Change grows from relationship — between people who care, and in this case, between those people and the animals who share their lives. It is nurtured by a willingness to listen and work together. Shared values and empathy create powerful shifts. To begin, you only need a few caring members of the community.

Gathering a small group of committed community members to begin Unit 5 is *not* a small first step; it is the step everything else builds from. From there, your community's own priorities and voices

shape what comes next. It opens an invitation to organize the compassion and knowledge already present in your community into lasting improvement.

Note from the Author

The H.O.T. Dogs curriculum is only one piece of the puzzle. Using it in a way that makes the most sense for you and your community is the larger and most important puzzle. But I know you can do it!

I am available to walk alongside you, your Tribal Coordinator, and/or community care team.

I can meet with you virtually to: train the trainer; provide ongoing support; offer guidance; help with organizing, planning, and managing group dynamics; identify resources; customize specific concepts and materials; and *help you with turning a room full of good ideas into clear next steps!*

Let's Talk About Getting Started

I would love to answer any questions and would welcome the chance to work directly with your community to bring this curriculum to life. Please reach out to me!

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About the Author

Dawn Jewell is a career Pre K–12 educator, curriculum writer and art teacher with a lifelong love of learning, dogs and children that is paired with a deep belief in empathy and compassion for all living beings. Dawn and NAHS worked together for two years to cook up H.O.T. Dogs for you. It is the first humane education curriculum made just for Native American kids and their communities. Dawn is a trusted ally in Indian Country who worked with NAHS and Tribes to pilot H.O.T. Dogs. She stands ready to help you use this curriculum to integrate its lessons into your own plans.

Curriculum

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H.O.T. Dogs Curriculum (How One Treats Dogs)

Overall Objective: The H.O.T. Dogs curriculum is designed to educate families and children of elementary age (K-5) on American Indian reservations about dog safety/injury reduction, responsible pet ownership, empathy, and knowledge of basic veterinary care. It also aims to introduce Veterinary Science as a career pathway which will create opportunities for Native American families and over time and potentially ease the absence of veterinary access for reservation animals.

The curriculum is split into two age/grade groups:

- **Grades K-2:** Includes introductory, hands-on activities involving simple concepts and use of easy-to-understand resource materials and visuals.
- **Grades 3-5:** Engages in more in-depth exploration of concepts, more detailed discussions, and emphasis on community engagement.

Introduction: From the Beginning, Dogs and People

The Special Relationship Between Humans and Dogs

The historical relationship between humans and dogs is *very old*, and Native Americans have had a special bond with dogs for a *very long time*.

The relationship between Native Americans and dogs represents one of the most important and long-lasting examples of human-animal relationship and cooperation. It has created both practical partnerships and deep spiritual connections that continue today. The relationship between humans and dogs on our planet is estimated to go back 30,000 years! Families who have always lived in this place that is now known as the United States— families who are Native American and Indigenous— have enjoyed a special bond with dogs for a very long time—there is recorded evidence of this dating back at least 12,000 years.

When Europeans arrived with their own dog breeds, these dogs often interbred with Native American dogs, which changed the genetic makeup of dogs throughout the Americas.

When Did Dogs Become Our Best Friends?

Dogs and people have lived and worked together for many thousands of years. Wild wolves were originally drawn to groups of humans because of the food waste humans create. The wolves ate what people left behind. Some wolves became unafraid of human interaction. Those wolves became the first dogs. Over time, they started living with humans, and their descendants learned how to help our people in many ways.

How Do Dogs Help Us?

Family Members: Many Native American families love their dogs so much, just like the other members of their family. Dogs often live with humans inside their homes, and some tribes even have special ceremonies to honor their dogs.

Hunting Helpers: Dogs are great hunting helpers! They help track animals, and some even help chase and retrieve the animals being hunted.

Herding Helpers: Dogs watch over and protect flocks of sheep and other large animals that people raise, including sheep and cattle. Dogs help shepherds and ranchers move their herds from one place to another.

Transportation and Strength: Dogs often help humans carry things. In cold, snowy places like Alaska, dogs pull sleds, helping people travel long distances over snowy lands. Over time, horses took over transportation duties that dogs had previously performed.

Guardians of the Home: Native American dogs helped protect their homes, keeping people and property safe. Dogs warn of approaching strangers or dangerous animals.

Caretakers of People: Specially trained dogs called “service animals” can help guide people who cannot see, alert people who cannot hear, and soothe people who are scared or anxious or sad.

Solvers of Crimes: Some Police use four-legged canine partners called K-9 units to use their amazing sense of smell to help find missing people and clues needed to solve crimes.

Dogs who have helping relationships with people can be both friends and heroes!

Dogs in Native American Stories and Beliefs

Dogs are important in many Native stories that tell us who we are. They are sometimes seen as helpers or guides, showing people the way. In some tribes, dogs are part of creation stories, playing a part in the adventure of the world’s beginning!

Cultural Context:

The following topics can be discussed and used to create a context for the curriculum as well as student engagement and excitement. There are many fascinating old stories that include dogs. A few are listed below. You can consult your tribal elders or “knowledge keepers” for verification and expansion of these stories. There may be others that will inspire and help reinforce the importance of human-dog connection.

Dogs in Tribal History and Stories:

People and dogs have lived and worked together for thousands of years. Wild wolves evolved into the first dogs. Over time, these wolves started living with humans, and they helped people in many ways, like alerting people to approaching danger and helping them hunt.

Do you know any stories about the role of dogs in your tribe?

Here are some commonly held stories from a handful of North American tribes.

Seneca Nation:

Dogs are central characters in a few of the traditional stories. One of the central beliefs is that the loving and kind treatment of a dog brings a person positive spiritual power, while mistreatment brings misfortune.

In *Dogs Save Their Master*, a Seneca hunter stays out too late in the dense woodlands and realizes that he is being chased by an evil-spirited forest creature. He has two loyal dogs with him. The dogs tell the hunter to run to the village longhouse for safety and sacrifice their lives in battling the monster in order to save him. He survives only because of the dog's selfless loyalty and bravery.

The Woman and the Dog in the Moon tells a wonderful story that explains the phases of the moon and the idea of eternity. A celestial Seneca woman sits in the moon next to a bright fire and a large kettle of cooking food. She sits while endlessly embroidering a beautiful garment with porcupine quills. By her side sits a very large and watchful dog. Every time the woman stands up and turns her back on the dog while she stirs the kettle of food, the mischievous dog unravels all the quillwork she has completed. This cycle repeats again, and again. It is said that if the woman ever finishes her work without the dog undoing it, the world will instantly come to an end.

Northern Arapaho:

Northern Arapaho tradition holds dogs as both important companions and partners in the work of daily survival. Dogs helped with many physical jobs. They often pulled the travois sleds during camp moves.

In *The Scabby Dog and the Deserted Children*, a camp must move quickly to escape a danger, and in the chaos, two young children are accidentally left behind. They are tied up and unable to escape a monstrous bear that has been pursuing the tribe. An old, mangy, "scabby" dog that had also been abandoned by the camp takes pity on the children. The dog shows its loyalty and intelligence by using its teeth to chew through the ropes, setting the children free. It then acts as their guardian, guiding them safely across the Plains to reunite with their people. The story also shows the importance of not judging a man or animal by their appearance.

Kashia and the Pomo Tribes:

Coyote, who is a relative of the dog, is often portrayed as Trickster, the mischievous clown who challenges and teaches people. To the Pomo people, Coyote is "Kunula," a powerful being who is an ancestor god.

In traditional Pomo stories, Coyote first created the ocean because he was thirsty. Coyote then created the four winds so the world would have seasons. He asked buzzard to place the sun in the sky and then created the stars and the moon. But even after all that, Coyote was not yet done. He created all the animals and then people too. To us he gave one simple instruction: Take time to play but also behave! He is a powerful creator, yet he also serves as an anti-hero because of his impulsive ego and nature, whose reckless actions, greed, and arrogance act as cautionary moral tales for humans.

Navajo:

The **Diné** possess a rich culture centered on Hózhó—a concept representing balance, harmony, beauty, and goodness in all things. Dogs are seen as sacred beings and spiritual protectors. In stories, dogs are seen as the guardians of the underworld, who have the profound duty of guiding the

souls of the departed safely to the afterlife. They are thought to be “earth listeners” and “doorway protectors,” possessing sensory powers greater than humans and thus able to perceive things invisible to the human eye or ear. In addition, they are traditionally considered independent outdoor guardians who physically and spiritually protect their people. They have served for many years as livestock herders that protect the animals from predators like coyotes, cougars and bears. Because dogs are thought to belong to the Holy People (Thunder Gods), there are strict rules against mistreating, abusing or unnecessarily killing a dog. It is believed that if you do you will suffer a cursed life and a miserable death,

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa:

Ojibwe have a long association with dogs as spiritual companions given to humans as loyal gifts from the Creator to help them navigate a harsh world. They have served as companions, protectors and hunting and tracking helpers, and have roles in traditional stories. In *Bridging the Chasm*, dogs chose humans during creation. In the story, The Great Spirit caused the Earth to tremble, creating a massive, widening chasm that separated the animal kingdom from humans. While other animals fled into the forests, a single dog stood at the edge of the abyss, unwilling to be separated from the humans it loved. The dog made a desperate leap across the growing canyon. It barely made it, clinging to the opposite cliffside with its front paws until human hands reached down and pulled it up to safety.

Human’s Best Friend

What is the name for “dog” in your tribe’s language? Some examples are

Seneca Nation: yäh (or historically érhar)

Northern Arapaho: hé3

Kashia and Pomo: hayu

Navajo: łééchaq’

Ojibwe: animosh

Cree (Plains/Swampy Cree): atim

Michif (Métis language): chiien

How Do Dogs Help Every Day?

1. **They help us be healthier!** Caring for and having a good relationship with dogs helps to increase our physical activity as we play with them and walk or run with them.
2. Our relationship with dogs helps us to learn empathy, compassion, understanding, and responsibility.
3. Dogs make us happier and feel loved, and more relaxed as they provide companionship and joy.
4. They can help protect us and our homes.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you know about the role of dogs in your tribal history and stories?
2. How do dogs that live in your community help people?
3. How do your dogs help you?

Resources for Teachers:

"The History of Dogs and Native Americans": Discusses the historical significance of dogs to Native American tribes.

Link: <https://www.petplace.com/article/dogs/pet-behavior-training/the-history-of-dogs-and-native-americans>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Child, Brenda J. *Bowwow Powwow*

Martin, Tamara. *Bluebird: Dog of the Navajo Nation*

O'Watch, Heather. *Auntie's Rez Surprise*

Unit 1: Dogs and Their Needs

Objective:

This unit teaches basic facts about dogs, their behaviors, and their needs.

It explores the community-dog relationship and explains how some dogs in the community may be treated differently from household pets.

Lesson 1: Why Do Dogs Sniff Each Other's Butts, Wag Their Tails, Pant and Lick?

Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the basic behaviors of dogs.

K-2:

Discussion:

Tell a version of the broadly shared Native American Story about how, a long time ago, dogs were dancing in the local Tribal structure (i.e. Round house, Long house, Hogan, etc.) when Coyote convinced them to take their tails off to make more room for dancing so that Coyote could join in the fun. The dogs thought that was a good idea, so they hung their tails on the wall. When the roof caught fire, the dogs ran out while Coyote collected their tails in a bag. Outside, Coyote said he would give each dog back a tail, but he made them take the first one they grabbed out of the bag. Today, dogs sniff each other's butts today because they are still looking for their own tails!

- Discuss other commonly observed dog behaviors and list them.
- Have students predict the reason for these behaviors and then discuss abbreviated and age-appropriate descriptions of behavioral causes.

Sniffing Each Other's Butts: Dogs have VERY sensitive noses and use sniffing each other as a form of communication. They can tell whether the dog they're sniffing is a girl or boy, what they have eaten and how they are feeling. Dogs can figure all this out through the chemicals they smell by sniffing each other's butts.

Tail Wagging: The way a dog moves its tail is another way it communicates with people and other dogs. It can show that they are happy, excited, friendly, relaxed, alert, cautious, scared, or curious.

Licking: Dogs clean and groom themselves and each other with their tongues. Licking is their way of greeting, bonding, and showing affection. Just like we use our hands to explore the world around us, dogs use their mouths and tongues to help them understand their environment, and to tell the mood of others. Sometimes they lick us because we taste salty, especially when we are hot or exercise.

3-5:

Discussion:

Review above abbreviated content on dogs' expressive behaviors. The articles linked below go into greater depth on these behaviors, and students may enjoy working in groups to research and expand the explanations and nuances in these expressive actions.

What do we already understand about the way dogs act? Dogs have many widely recognized behaviors that have some fascinating reasons behind them. Discuss as a group what we think these behaviors mean and then look at the behavioral and physical science that explains them.

Resources for Teachers:

“How It Came to Be,” Red Rock Canyon NCA Environmental Education Program. Story of Why Dogs Sniff Each Other’s Butts

Link: <https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/Nevada-Red%20Rock%20Canyon-How%20it%20Came%20to%20Be.pdf>

“Pomo Stories Healthy Ecosystems Feed Healthy Communities,” Inquiry into Pomo stories.

Link <https://cimcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Section-1-Lesson-2-Pomo-Stories.pdf>

“Why Do Dogs Sniff Each Other's Butts,” ACS Chemistry for Life.

Link: <https://www.acs.org/content/dam/acsorg/pressroom/reactions/infographics/why-dogs-sniff-each-other.pdf>

“Why Do Dogs Wag Their Tail?” Scientific American

Link: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-do-dogs-wag-their-tail/>

“Why Does My Dog Lick Me So Much?” The Kennel Club

Link: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health-and-dog-care/health/health-and-care/a-z-of-health-and-care-issues/why-does-my-dog-lick-me-so-much/>

Lesson 2: Who Are the Dogs in Our Community?

Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the different types of dogs in their community, focusing on the distinction between community dogs (those that live in the neighborhood or roam freely) and household pets (those that live inside a home with a family).

How are some dogs different from others?

Community Dogs: These dogs may not have a specific home but are cared for by the community. They may be wild or semi-wild and can have very different behaviors and needs than household pets.

Household Dogs: These are pets that live inside a home, are fed and cared for by a family, and usually have a closer bond with humans. Many are loved and considered to be members of the family.

Both community and household dogs play different roles in various communities, including being companions, protectors, and helpers

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students:

What Is a Community Dog? Community dogs are dogs that live in shared spaces or roam freely without a single person providing care. They may be seen mostly gathered in a small area or roaming larger areas. They are taken care of by multiple households. These dogs can sometimes form groups or packs. Unlike household dogs, community dogs are often not used to trusting or being friends with people. They may have shelter provided by humans to keep them safe from weather and predators, or they might look for safe places in the environment.

What Is a Household Pet? Dogs that live inside homes and have a primary owner or family are called pets. They typically receive regular meals, medical care, and are trained to live and have friendships with people. Household pets usually have more regular and predictable behavior patterns because they are socialized with humans.

The Roles of Dogs: Dogs can be helpers (like herding dogs or guard dogs), companions (like therapy or service dogs), and protectors (guarding homes or people).

Companion Dogs: *Are friends.* They help alleviate loneliness and provide emotional support.

Working Dogs: Assist with jobs like herding livestock or can be “service dogs,” guiding people who are visually impaired or have other medical disabilities.

Guard Dogs: Protect people or property from danger or threats.

Activities for Students:

Questions for Discussion:

Do you or someone you know have a pet dog?

Do you have dogs in your community that do not live in a single household, and are cared for by members of the community?

Do you have any dogs in your community that are “wild,” if so, how are they treated and cared for by the people in your community?

Related Activities:

Create a Dog Map: Have students draw a map of their community, marking where they've seen community dogs or household dogs. Discuss their observations, experiences and what they notice about the behaviors and needs of each.

Role of Dogs in the Community: Students can work in pairs or small groups to discuss and create a list of roles that dogs play in their community. This can be shared and discussed with the group.

K-2:

Activity: Pet Poll and Dog Tracking Map: Take a poll and record on a visual/poster how many children have pets that live in their home. This can include how many/what kinds of pets they have and how long they have had them.

Activity and Discussion: Who are the dogs that live with us, and who are the dogs that live in the wild or roam freely throughout the community?

Children can draw a map of their community and mark places where they see community or wild dogs. Are there shelters or regular places to sleep? Do they sleep as a group? Are there places where they can regularly find food and water? Are there certain people or families in the community who take special care of these dogs? Are there any dogs that are not friendly? Places to avoid encounters with these dogs?

Visual Activity: Picture cards or drawings of community dogs and household dogs, with names & simple descriptions. This can become a collection used to keep track of and care for the dogs.

3-5:

(Discuss/Review/Activate knowledge of above if necessary. Modify for age-appropriate topics. Mapping activity may still be very useful.)

Activity: Community Dog Roles and Care: Students can work in groups to create a chart of the different roles dogs play in the community (e.g., helpers, guardians, companions). They can further identify any observed needs or recognized caregivers.

Discussion: Discuss the importance of community dogs, how they can help, and what makes them different from household pets. Discuss any specific dogs and their relationships. Identify any dogs that cause concern or need help. What are their observations in the local community? Does that vary in different areas of the community?

Research: Introduce basic concepts about how different communities view dog ownership and care.

Resources for Teachers:

"The History of Dogs and Native Americans": Discusses the historical significance of dogs to Native American tribes.

Link: <https://www.petplace.com/article/dogs/pet-behavior-training/the-history-of-dogs-and-native-americans>

"Caring for our Rez Pet Relatives Through Governance": Discusses the complex issues around Rez Dogs in Communities and issues of responsibility and care.

Link: <https://nativegov.org/news/caring-for-our-rez-pet-relatives/>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Stead, Philip C. *Every Dog in the Neighborhood*

Lesson 3: Basic Needs of Dogs

Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the basic needs of dogs: food, water, shelter, care, and basic training. It emphasizes that these needs are true for **both** household dogs and community dogs.

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students:

All Dogs Share Basic Needs.

What Are a Dog's Basic Needs? Dogs, whether they live in a household or as community dogs, share many of the same basic needs:

Food and Water: Dogs need nutritious food to stay healthy. This can vary by size, breed, and age. They also need fresh water daily to stay hydrated.

Shelter: Dogs need a dry, warm, or cool place to sleep. Community dogs often find shelters in outdoor areas, while household dogs sleep in homes or dog houses.

Care: For their best health and longest life, dogs need vaccination against disease, flea and tick prevention, and basic grooming. They may need medical help when they are sick or injured. Household dogs usually get more regular care, but community dogs may need similar help from the community.

Training: Dogs need training to understand behavior boundaries, such as not biting, sitting and staying when asked, and walking on a leash when necessary. Proper training helps ensure dogs behave well around people and that both the people and dogs stay safe.

Community Dogs and Their Needs: Community dogs may not always have access to food or shelter. They rely on the kindness of the community to meet these needs. We can help by offering food, water, and even helping to build simple shelters for these dogs. This is especially important in environments where the weather is either very cold or very hot.

Activities for Students:

Dog Needs Poster: Students create posters showing the basic needs of dogs illustrated with drawings or photographs. These can be displayed around classrooms, schools, or public spaces.

Role Play: Have children act out how they would care for a dog, including feeding, providing water, and giving a dog space to rest. The use of a realistic dog stuffed animal may be helpful.

Resources for Teachers:

“Teaching Children about Pet Safety and Pet Health” resources to teach children how to safely interact with pets and how to properly care for a pet.

Link: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/TeachingChildrenPetSafety.htm>

“In the Spirit of Survival: How Indigenous Protectors Are Saving Rez Dogs,” MIT Reader. Explores the topic of reservation dogs and their integral role in Indigenous identity and welfare.

Link: <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/in-the-spirit-of-survival-how-indigenous-protectors-are-saving-rez-dogs/>

Teacher Notes and Additional Resources:

Visual Activity: Use visuals of community dogs, household dogs, and shelters to enhance understanding. Simple charts and diagrams showing the daily routine and care of a dog (food, water, shelter) are also helpful.

Guest Speaker Opportunity: If possible, invite a local veterinarian, animal welfare or shelter worker, or community member who cares for dogs to talk to the students about how they help dogs in their community. Demonstration with a live dog or realistic stuffed toy may increase understanding.

Conclusion:

In Unit 1, children learn about the different types of dogs in their community, their basic needs, and how these needs may be met in different situations. Suggested activities are just a starting point and may be customized to your student population and culture. By creating engaging activities, offering hands-on learning opportunities, and providing resources to help the students understand the importance of caring for dogs, you are laying a strong foundation for future lessons on dog safety, empathy, and responsible pet ownership.

Unit 2: How to Be Safe Around Dogs

Objective:

This Unit explores and identifies how to recognize when a dog is approachable and when it is not.

It teaches awareness of dog behaviors and how to practice respectful interaction to prevent bites and stress.

Lesson 1: How to Recognize Safe Dogs and Dangerous Dogs

Overview:

In this lesson, students will learn how to safely approach dogs by understanding the difference between safe and dangerous behaviors. Students will also practice recognizing body language signals dogs give, such as how to tell if a dog is friendly or scared.

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students

Dog Communication

Dogs cannot speak like we do, but they have *many* recognizable ways of communicating with us. They tell us how they are feeling and thinking by signaling with their body movements, postures, expressions and sounds. Understanding the way dogs communicate can be useful with your own pet dog, and especially useful if you encounter an unfamiliar dog in someone's home or roaming in your community.

Safe Dogs: These are dogs that are calm, friendly, and open to human interaction. They may wag their tails, approach you slowly, or look relaxed. They enjoy spending time with and interacting with people. They trust humans to act welcoming and friendly.

Dangerous Dogs: These are dogs that may feel threatened or scared by people or other animals or situations. They might growl, show their teeth, or have stiff body language. Some dogs may not be used to people, so they could act aggressively. They may not trust people and avoid them.

Dog Body Language: Is what we call the way they communicate. People use body language to communicate too, but we can also use our voices and words to make sure we are understood. Understanding a dog's body language is very important. For example, a wagging tail doesn't always mean a dog is friendly—sometimes it can mean they are nervous or excited. You should always remember to respect a dog's space and signals because even a known and trusted dog may act differently if it is feeling sick, scared, or stressed.

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students:

Recognizing Safe vs. Dangerous Dogs:

Signs of a Friendly Dog

Dogs that we are familiar with may be part of our household family, belong to friends or relatives, or may be community dogs that we encounter frequently. They may act very excited and happy to greet us. There is already a relationship of trust with these dogs.

A friendly dog often wags its tail, approaches people slowly, and has a relaxed posture. It might even sniff or nuzzle you. A friendly dog is calm and relaxed

Signs that a dog is relaxed

The signs and body language that indicate a dog is relaxed include:

- A soft, “squinty” gaze with the pupil not big/dilated.
- Mouth and lips relaxed, or slightly open. The corners of their lips may also be turned upward into a “smile.”
- Tail held level or hanging down, softly waving in the air or gently thumping on the ground.
- Ears held back, but not flat or tensed near the dog's head.
- A dog's whole body is curved in a C- or an S-shape.
- A dog is standing perpendicular or at a “T” angle in relation to you.
- Accepting food or treats without snapping or biting your hand

“Uncertain” dog body language

Some signals that can mean a dog is not relaxed or is stressed, depending on the situation and the rest of the dog's body language:

- Licking its lips. This can be stress-related if the dog has just experienced a close encounter with a person or another dog. Or it could be a sign of neutral emotions, especially if your dog licks its lips after smelling something interesting.
- Wagging its tail slowly from side to side.

- Putting its head down and closing its eyes.
- Rolling over on its back and exposing its belly.

Signs that a dog is uncomfortable or stressed

Signs of stress in dogs can be difficult to spot if you're not familiar with dog body language. In some cases, a dog may simply seem tired/lazy or uninterested in his surroundings. Some of the most common body language signals of a stressed dog include:

- Yawning can indicate stress or nervousness in a situation.
- Panting when it's not hot and the dog hasn't exercised.
- Ears lying flat against the head.
- Crouching, curling up in a tight ball, or shivering.
- Tail tucked, held straight up, or stiffly wagging while straight upright.
- Seeing the whites of a dog's eyes. This means the dog is feeling anxious or scared. It does not mean the dog is about to bite. It means the dog is on alert. If you can see the white in a dog's eyes, make sure to give the dog some space until it calms down.
- Sneezing
- Lip licking
- Scratching
- Pacing back and forth or in a circle

Signs of an Unsafe Dog

A dog that feels threatened may growl, snap, or show its teeth. They might back away, stare, or have ears that are flat against their head. A fearful dog may also show defensive or aggressive behavior like barking or lunging.

- **Growling, barking, or snarling** generally means STAY AWAY.
- **Very Still “frozen” or rigid** means HIGH ALERT. Sometimes dogs will not bark or growl when they are aggressive. Instead of barking, a dog may appear rigid, stand still, or stand upright when it is agitated. This is because the animal is on alert and watchful for any danger. An agitated dog is just as likely to bite as an aggressive or barking dog. You should never pet a dog when it is in attack mode.
- **Wagging tail** does not always mean HAPPY. Wagging tails are often seen as a sign of happiness or playfulness among pets. There are different types of wagging: *Happy wagging* occurs when a dog's entire body is involved in the motion. It may move its head, torso, or walk in place. When a dog is standing still but its tail is *pointed up in the air and wagging back and forth*, it means the dog may be preparing to bite.
- **Raised fur**, or “hackles” along back and neck

Note to Teachers:

Dogs are wonderful companions, helpers, and family members. However, fearful or aggressive dogs pose a considerable risk to a child's safety. Dogs and children do not *instinctively* know how to behave around

each other. Steps must be taken to teach both dogs and children how to respect and interact with each other safely. Children can behave erratically, move in unpredictable ways and make loud and sudden noises that can startle dogs. Children are often very interested in dogs and may want to touch them *even when dogs are showing signs of fear or aggression*. Children are at greater risk because they are at the same level as dogs due to their height and because they are often interested in similar things (toys and food, for example). Children may behave inappropriately towards dogs by pulling their tails, fur, or ears. Most dog aggression towards children is fear based, though many dogs will also show aspects of possessiveness around food, and territorial aggression as well. Any dog may bite, and biting may be a normal canine response to perceived threatening situations.

K-5 Activities for Students:

Body Language Chart: Create a chart showing images of dogs with different body language and ask students to match the body language to the appropriate behavior (friendly, scared, or aggressive).

Resources for Teachers:

"How To Read Dog Body Language" (American Kennel Club): This resource helps explain how to interpret a dog's body language.

Link: <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/advice/how-to-read-dog-body-language/>

"Dog Bite Prevention" (ASPCA): Offers important guidelines on how to stay safe around dogs, especially unfamiliar ones.

Link: <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-bite-prevention>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Richards, Amber. A Child's Book of Dog Body Language with Pictures: Help Keep Children Safe

Resource sheet in Appendix:

How to Learn Dog Body Language

Lesson 2: What to Do If You Encounter a Roaming Dog That Seems Unsafe

Overview:

This lesson teaches students how to stay safe if they encounter a roaming dog that seems unsafe—scared or aggressive. The focus is on staying calm and using safe practices to avoid getting hurt.

What to Do If you Encounter a dog that Seems Unsafe

- Stay calm and avoid eye contact, or even offering your hand to sniff as these can be seen as a challenge by the dog.
- Stand as still as possible and let the dog sniff you if it chooses. Avoid sudden movements. Never run away from a dog; this can trigger its chase instinct.
- If the dog seems aggressive, *do not* turn your back. Standing at an angle, or sideways to the dog can help.
- Slowly move toward an exit or a safe space, like a car or a building.
- You can also use an object like a backpack or bicycle as a barrier between you and the dog.
- Don't scream or wave your arms, as this might make the dog feel more threatened.

K-2 Activities for Students:

- **Role Play:** Students can practice what they would do in various scenarios with dogs (approaching a friendly dog, encountering a scared dog). Role-play how to stay calm and safe.

3-5 Activities for Students:

- **Safe Interaction Demonstration:** Have students role play and practice slow movements and standing still while an adult or peer acts as the dog.
- **Dog Safety Brochure/zine:** After viewing resources of dogs (both friendly and not-so-friendly), students can design a poster or one-page “zine” on the proper way to react in an unsafe situation.
- **“How to make a “Zine” from a Single Sheet of Paper”** shows how to make a folded 8-page mini book from one sheet of letter-sized paper

Link: <https://austinkleon.com/2020/03/04/how-to-make-a-zine-from-a-single-sheet-of-paper/>

Resources for Teachers:

“Healthy Dogs, Healthy People” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention): Offers advice on staying safe around potentially dangerous dogs.

Link:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/about/dogs.html

“Staying Safe Around Street Dogs” This resource offers helpful advice and strategies for what to be aware of and how to behave around a roaming or “street” dog

Link: <https://www.four-paws.org/our-stories/publications-guides/staying-safe-around-street-dogs>

Unit 3: Respecting and Caring for Community and Pet Dogs: Basic Care and Training

Objective:

This unit teaches children how to be responsible and caring pet owners by understanding basic dog care and basic positive reinforcement training.

Lesson 1: Caring for Community Dogs

Overview:

Unit one taught about the basic needs of all dogs. In this lesson, students learn about caring for community dogs in a safe and responsible way, especially when they do not have a consistent home or owner.

The focus is on providing food, water, and shelter.

If dogs are friendly and receptive, they can benefit from play and bonding activities, as well as basic training, just like a household pet.

Providing Food and Water: Students learn how to safely feed and water dogs, especially those that roam the community.

Shelter: Students discuss that it is important for dogs to have a safe space to sleep and be protected from the weather.

Community Involvement: Everyone can help with the care and well-being of dogs, even if they don't have household pets themselves.

Questions for Discussion:

1. **Activation of previous knowledge or research opportunity:** Are there any spiritual, cultural or ceremonial traditions or stories in your tribal history that speak about the care and importance of dogs? How does this communicate how dogs are valued/honored? Do you think those traditions are recognized and valued by your present-day community?
2. **How are humans and community dogs similar in what they need to be happy and healthy?**
We are similar in many ways. When we treat animals with the care and respect they need, we call this "humane treatment." Create a list or Venn diagram of where variables are similar and different and what needs they fulfill. *We can easily empathize with animals when we understand that we share many needs.*

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students:

Why Shelter Matters: To stay healthy, dogs need a dry, warm place to sleep. Community dogs often must find their own shelter. It's important to consider and provide shelters for dogs that may not have a regular home.

How to Help Dogs in the Community: You can put out fresh water stations and food to help community dogs. Always ask an adult for help when feeding a dog you don't know well.

Considerations when feeding roaming dogs:

Start Small: Begin with a modest portion (e.g., 1–2 cups for medium dogs). If they finish quickly and still act hungry, gradually increase.

Watch Behavior: Are they guarding food, vomiting after eating, or eating too fast? This might mean they're not getting enough — or are stressed and overeating.

Use Feeding Stations: Space the dogs and feeding bowls out to reduce fighting and ensure access for more timid dogs.

Tips:

Feed at consistent times.

Feed in the same locations so that the dogs associate the place with food, safety and relationships with people.

Remove any leftovers after a while to avoid attracting predators.

Optional Information:

See also Unit 3, Lesson 4. about how to identify dogs (physically/behaviorally) that are sick or injured and best practices/protocols for assisting them. A basic first aid station could be created if there are adults willing to help. This might contain saline solution, hydrogen peroxide, slip leads, antiseptic wipes or spray (chlorhexidine or iodine-based), gauze, bandages, medical tape, clean towels/blankets, gloves, thermometer, scissors/tweezers, and a muzzle for handling/helping hurt or scared dogs.

Support for Community Helpers:

Seek or offer basic animal first aid workshops to interested community members.

Invite vet techs or mobile clinics to demonstrate how to bandage, clean wounds, and recognize emergencies.

****The Appendix Includes resource sheets on:***

How to Understand Dog Body Language

How do I know if a dog needs a vet?

How to Approach an Unfamiliar Dog

How to Tell When a Cat or Dog Needs Veterinary Care.

Activities for Students K-2:

Brainstorm a Dog Shelter Plan: Have students draw or design a simple dog shelter that could be built from materials found in the community. What materials are available? What kinds of things do dogs need to be protected from in your area? What do they need to be safe and comfortable? What are some locations that might be good for these shelters?

Food and Water Station Setup: Have students set up a model food and water station with supervision to understand how to safely care for dogs. They can consider need and comforts.

Activities for Students 3-5:

1. **Dog Shelter research:** There are many resources and ideas for different types of temporary or more permanent style shelters for animals that live outside. The materials and design needs will depend on the weather and elements that dogs need protection from in your area. Discuss these and explore or invent ideas for shelters that may work in your community.

Links for shelter ideas/inspiration:

<https://www.petplace.com/article/dogs/pet-care/dog-care/building-a-winter-dog-house-for-stray-dogs>

<https://www.designboom.com/design/recycled-billboards-shelter-stray-dogs-thailand-04-24-2022/>

<https://www.instructables.com/Build-a-Doghouse-With-Palletwood/>

2. **Dog identification and tracking: Students can study their community dogs–** Dogs can be photographed or drawn and observations and notes made on each dog. With adult assistance dogs could be given colored collars, marked with non-toxic paint or dye in order to identify and track habits and health treatment/needs. Discuss ideas for creating such a system.
3. **Community care team:** What tasks might students be able to assist with in the care of roaming dogs? How could the community regularly manage fresh water and feeding stations? What are the challenges that might be faced? Cleaning up after dogs? Is there easy access to fresh water? Is there a food donation resource that might help? Could a team be established of interested students to help with the water and feeding? What tasks might require help from adults? How can families of youth and elders participate and work together?

Resources for Teachers:

"Stray Dogs are a Social Responsibility" (Canine Control and Care): Offers strategies on how communities can care for stray and community dogs.

Link: <https://caninecontrolandcare.org/2025/02/stray-dogs-are-a-social-responsibility/>

"Feeding the Starving Dog" (PetMD by Chewy): Provides practical advice on **safely** feeding dogs that may not have eaten for a long time. This **is very important** to avoid refeeding syndrome which can make the dog very sick.

Link: <https://www.petmd.com/blogs/nutritionnuggets/jcoates/2013/oct/the-right-way-to-feed-dog-that-has-been-starved-30937>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Bix, Daisy, and Joe Hyatt. *Buddy Unchained*

Lesson 2: How to Teach Dogs Basic Commands and Simple Training

Overview:

This lesson focuses on how children can participate in basic dog training, such as teaching simple commands that keep dogs safe and well-behaved.

Discussion ideas:

Why is it a good idea to train your dog?

It helps them understand what you would like them to do and keeps them safe from things that could hurt them. Training dogs helps them learn to make good choices and be a good family member.

How can it help free-roaming dogs to learn basic training too?

It helps keep them safe from places and situations that might be dangerous for them—like chasing cars or getting into trash. It teaches them to come when called, which might help them not fight or stop fighting to prevent injuries. It can help the community be a safer place because they will be more trusting, calmer, friendlier, and less likely to scare people. There is generally less aggressive behavior towards people as they form friendships and trusting bonds. It can teach them not to jump on elders, children, or people with disabilities. Free roaming dogs should only be trained once they have been determined to be consistently friendly, and trust has been built. An adult should always be involved in this process.

Training with Positive Reinforcement: This is when you give your dog a treat, praise or something that they like when they do something you want, so that they want to do it again. This has been proven to be very effective and humane and increases the bond between people and dogs while improving their confidence and listening skills. This can help keep them safe and well-behaved. You should never yell or use punishment if a dog does something wrong or makes a mistake. Doing so makes the dog scared because it does not understand what to do. When teaching a dog, be kind and calm. Like people, dogs learn best when they feel safe and happy and are not too tired or have too much energy. *Be patient! Keep your training sessions short and positive. Repeat them until the dog learns the behavior or skill you want.*

Basic Commands: Teach students simple commands like “touch,” “sit,” “stay,” and “come.”

Touch: Teaches a dog to focus and get used to doing what you are asking for as a reward.

Sit: A dog sitting calmly is easier to control.

Stay: Keeps the dog in one place, which helps in dangerous or busy environments.

Come: Ensures the dog comes back to the person when called.

Example: Asking a dog to “touch” your hand or a target is a great exercise to begin with. When the dog does this, give it a reward right away– a treat or say “YES!” or “GOOD DOG!” in a happy voice. Repeat a few times, then take a rest and repeat later.

Patience and Consistency: The importance of being patient and consistent when training dogs.

Supporting Information for Teachers and Students:

Positive Reinforcement: Dogs respond well to praise and rewards. It’s important to give them positive feedback when they do something good (e.g., sitting or following commands).

Simple Commands:

Sit: A dog sitting calmly is easier to control.

Stay: Keeps the dog in one place, which helps in dangerous or busy environments.

Come: Ensures the dog comes back to the owner when called.

K-2:

1. **Training Practice:** Have students practice basic commands with a friendly dog or a stuffed animal.

3-5:

1. **Training Practice:** Have students practice basic commands with a friendly dog or a stuffed animal.
2. **Create a Training Schedule:** Students can design a training plan for a dog to practice commands at home or in their community. Progress can be tracked and evaluated for success.

Resources for Teachers:

"How to Reward Dogs with Positive Reinforcement Training" (Humane World for Animals): Simple guidelines for training dogs using positive reinforcement.

Link: <https://www.humaneworld.org/en/resources/positive-reinforcement-training>

"The Benefits of Positive Reinforcement Training for Dogs" (Pets Aloud Veterinary): Offers techniques on using positive reinforcement for dog training.

Link: <https://www.petsaloudveterinary.com/the-benefits-of-positive-reinforcement-training-for-dogs/>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Johnston, Tony. *Hey, Dog*

Lesson 3: Caring for Dogs in Difficult Times

Overview:

Sometimes resources are scarce. This lesson teaches students how to support and provide enriching activities and toys for dogs using *free or repurposed materials*.

K-2:

Discussion: Considering what has been discussed, what kinds of things or help might dogs and people need to help them be happy and thrive? How can we help our community dogs with creative solutions?

Activity: Make Your Own Dog Toys – All dogs need to play and interesting activities to be happy. Students can make simple and safe dog toys from old fabric or other household materials.

Safe Homemade Dog Toy Ideas:

Sock Toys: Use old socks, potentially with a knot tied in them, or stuff them with a water bottle for added crinkle.

T-Shirt Toys: Cut up old t-shirts into strips and braid or tie them into knots for a chew toy.

Cardboard Toys: Empty toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls filled with treats and folded shut (or with holes for treats to fall out) can provide entertainment.

Rope Toys: Use strong, natural fiber rope like cotton or hemp and tie knots in it to create a tug toy.

Denim Toys: Cut up old jeans into strips and tie knots for a durable chew toy.

Important Safety Considerations:

Durability: Choose materials that can withstand chewing. Supervise your dog closely to make sure they don't swallow dangerous pieces.

Size: Make sure the toy is appropriately sized for your dog. Small items can be swallowed by the dog.

Material Safety: Avoid using small parts, buttons, or anything that could be easily chewed off and swallowed.

Supervision: Always supervise your dog while they are playing with DIY toys, especially those made from household items.

Recyclable Materials: If using cardboard or other disposable materials, make sure your dog doesn't eat them after shredding.

3-5:

Discussion: What can we do when families don't have a lot of money for dog care? What basic needs are essential? What comforts are most important? How can we use community resources to help? Identify known resources, and/or brainstorm ways to create new local resources and/or research organizations that might offer support or guidance.

Activity: Community Resources Directory – Help students research and create a list of community resources that help support dog care, such as local shelters, health services, pet welfare organizations, animal-loving community members, and pet food banks. Explore ways to engage with potential resources through student outreach, writing persuasive letters for donations of food and services, and creative projects. Brainstorm ways to make the community aware of the resources they find—like sharing a brochure or handout with contacts and information.

Resources for Teachers

“DIY Cognitive Dog Toys for When You Are Stuck at Home,” American Kennel Club

Link: <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/do-it-yourself-cognitive-dog-toys-for-home/>

Unit 4: Veterinary Science and Care

Objective:

Teach children and families what *essential veterinary health care* looks like for both household pets and roaming dogs within tribal communities.

Introduce Veterinary Science—the ways veterinarians help animals and how to become one.

Lesson 1: Why Do Dogs Need to Be Vaccinated?

Overview:

This lesson teaches students about how we can protect dogs from many illnesses through getting them vaccinated.

K–2

Discussion:

- **What does it mean to get a “shot” or vaccination?**

Have you ever gotten one at the doctors to protect you from getting sick? We cannot always tell when we are in danger of catching a virus. Germs can be shared before a person (or dog) even seems sick. Sometimes the germs can live on surfaces for hours to days and we get sick by touching them. Vaccines act like a shield, or a super-power, to keep people and animals from catching sicknesses that are easily spread. It is easy, just like washing your hands before you eat or after you go to the bathroom.

Dogs and people can get some very serious illnesses if they are not vaccinated. There are some sicknesses dogs can get and can even share with humans, so it is important to give them check-ups and vaccines from the veterinarian when we can.

3-5

Discussion:

Whether a dog is a household pet who spends most of its time indoors, or a dog that spends most of its time outdoors/roaming, there are illnesses dogs can get from other dogs, other wild animals, insects or even contaminated soil or water. Just like for people, vaccinations help the immune system of dogs fight off viruses that could cause severe illness and sometimes even death.

- **What kinds of diseases can dogs get without vaccinations?**

Rabies: A fatal viral disease that affects the nervous system. An animal can get rabies by being bitten by another infected animal. Rabies is spread through an animal’s saliva. It can also be spread to humans through bites. There is no cure for an animal with rabies, and treatment for a person who gets it from an animal is long, complicated, and painful. Rabies can be fatal. Simple Rabies vaccinations keep all of us safe. Dogs usually get vaccinated when they are young and then get a booster every 1-3 years.

Distemper: A highly contagious disease causing severe respiratory and neurological problems. It spreads through coughing or sneezing. Distemper can make a dog very sick and even cause

lasting damage to its body— especially its eyes, nervous system and teeth. This is a vaccine that is usually given as a combination vaccine that protects against Canine Distemper Virus, Adenovirus and Parvovirus, and sometimes Parainfluenza Virus. Dogs get vaccinated when they are young, and then a booster usually every 3 years. They only have to get one “shot” to protect them from all these illnesses.

Parvovirus: A very contagious virus that causes severe intestinal and immune system damage, especially in puppies under 6 months old, for which it is especially dangerous. Parvovirus causes dogs severe vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, dark or bloody feces, and fever. “Parvo” for short is also very dangerous because the virus can stay alive on surfaces for a long time— up to two years. You can only kill it on surfaces by using bleach.

Hepatitis (Adenovirus): A liver disease that can be fatal if not treated. It is spread through contaminated urine and causes a dog to have a sore throat, cough, and eventually kidney and liver failure. It can make a dog sick very quickly.

Parainfluenza: Is like the flu for dogs. It causes dry cough, fever, wheezing, difficulty breathing, runny nose, sneezing, pneumonia, reduced appetite, and lethargy, as well as runny and inflamed eyes. Most dogs can recover, but it is highly contagious.

- **Why is it important to vaccinate stray or community dogs?**

In tribal communities there are often roaming dogs who belong to no one, but are taken care of by everyone. These are community dogs. They often interact with dogs, our pets, and people in the community. If an unvaccinated dog gets sick, it can easily spread its illness to other dogs, which can cause outbreaks in the community.

Vaccinated dogs help create a “herd immunity,” this is a term meaning that if enough dogs are protected, it becomes harder for diseases to spread and reach vulnerable animals, including puppies and elderly dogs. Vaccination is simple, can help our dogs to live longer and have happier, healthier lives.

Because some diseases, like rabies and leptospirosis, are zoonotic which means they can be shared from animals to humans, it is so important to protect our animals to protect ourselves. Rabies is a very serious concern, and dog bites are the primary way humans get rabies in our part of the world. Vaccinating stray dogs against rabies dramatically reduces the chances of people getting this deadly disease.

Activity:

- Work in small groups to design a public service announcement: “Why Dogs Need Our Help with Vaccinations!” (Poster, short skit, or video if tech is available)

Resources for Teachers

“Vaccinating Your Pet,” American Humane Society: Discusses essential and non-essential vaccinations for Dogs and what they protect from.

Link: https://www.americanhumane.org/public-education/vaccinating-your-pet/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21258945965&gbraid=0AAAAAD3xDS-1QOYu81WJrrc9P4-JEa73T&gclid=CjwKCAjw1ozEBhAdEiwAn9qbzevzetAEvNeLryCh5bst5Sz2S1OrM68Z1rymWsKDNBEssuf44I7VXBoCPOUQAvD_BwE/

“Core Canine Vaccines That Protect Your Dog From 6 Diseases,” Grand Valley Animal Hospital

Link: <https://grandvalleyvet.com/canine-vaccinations-you-need-to-know-about-core-edition/>

Lesson 2: Why “Fixing” Dogs Fixes Other Problems

Overview:

This lesson educates students on the many benefits of spaying and neutering dogs.

K–2

Discussion:

- What does it mean to “fix” a dog?
- Why might *too many* puppies be a problem?
- How can helping dogs also help people?

“Fixing” a dog is a funny way of talking about them having a procedure at the vets that keeps them from having puppies. The real terms are “spaying” for female dogs and “neutering” for males. The procedure is simple, and vets are experts at it and do it many times a week.

Having puppies is a big deal for both dogs and people! As we have talked about in other discussions, dogs need a lot of care, protection and love. When we help our dogs in this way, it helps them feel calmer, live longer, and be protected from some diseases, including cancer. It also makes them less likely to run away to find a mate.

Activity:

- “Puppy Math” game: Use visuals to show how 1 dog can lead to many puppies quickly. Explain that dogs have “litters” of 5 or 6—sometimes MORE puppies and can give birth a couple times a year. Use visuals to show how that can multiply into MANY puppies very quickly.
- Draw or make posters with dog welfare messages like: “Taking Care of Dogs = Taking Care of Our Community”

3–5

Discussion:

Review above facts on what it means to have a dog or cat “fixed,” teaching scientific terms and outcomes.

Discuss that dogs and cats have “litters” of 1 to sometimes 12 puppies/kittens! It all depends on their breed and health. Dogs can have litters a couple of times per year. This means one dog can help create a population explosion of dogs. While we’ve discussed the many reasons dogs are awesome, too many dogs can cause a lot of problems. Without proper care, nutrition and shelter, dogs can become aggressive because they are hungry, sick, and suffering.

Discuss questions below filling in the informational blanks with age-appropriate facts and considerations.

- Why is it a problem when dogs have too many puppies?
- How does overpopulation affect our community? (Safety, food, disease, etc.)
- What does spaying/neutering really mean, and how does it help?

Activity:

- Create a cause-effect flow chart: “What Happens When Dogs Aren’t Fixed?”
- Illustrate the potential problems of litter size and multiple litters a year *visually* using a diagram or props.
- Interview a local vet or animal control officer (live or via video) to get a current and relevant presentation of the local dog population issues, and their ideas on helping.
- Write persuasive letters or flyers for a community campaign: “Fixing Dogs Fixes Communities,” expressing what they have learned above and the necessity of helping dogs and people through animal population control. Brainstorm lists of resource organizations to contact for assistance and reach out.

Resources for Teachers

“**Spay and Neuter Benefits**,” County of Mendocino, California. Discusses basic spay and neuter information and benefits.

Link: <https://www.mendocinocounty.gov/government/animal-care-services/spay-neuter-benefits#:~:text=Your%20female%20pet%20will%20live,urine%20all%20over%20the%20house.>

“**World Spay Day: Spaying and Neutering Pets on Reservations**,” Partnership with Native Americans.

Link: <https://nativepartnership.org/world-spay-day-spaying-and-neutering-pets-on-reservations/>

“**Good medicine: High volume neuter clinic a ray of hope on American Indian reservation**,” American Veterinary Medical Association

Link: <https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2013-12-15/good-medicine>

Lesson 3: How to Become a Veterinarian or Caregiver for Dogs

Overview:

This lesson introduces students to the field of Veterinary Science and its importance in our communities for keeping animals and people healthy and safe. It introduces academic and career pathways for students who are interested in exploring Veterinary Science in the future.

A Veterinarian, sometimes called a “Vet” is a doctor for animals. Vets keep animals healthy by giving them check-ups, vaccinations to prevent illness, and medicine when they are sick. They also perform surgery and treat wounds. Just like you might see a doctor or healer if you are not feeling well, a veterinarian can help animals feel better and stay healthy. Vets also teach animal owners how to take care of animals, including giving advice on food, exercise, and behavior.

K-2

Discussion:

- What does a vet do every day? Explore existing knowledge of what a veterinarian is and what they do. There are some great books on the subject written for elementary aged children. Please see Appendix for ideas and look for others such as:

I Want to be a Veterinarian: Illustrated book for Children about Animals. by Peter J.

Amazon Link: <https://a.co/d/d1zj07N>

It may be more relevant and engaging to speak with a veterinarian in person or virtually over the internet. NAHS may be able to provide resources.

Activity:

- “Why Vets are Important to People and Animals” drawing + sentence starter: “Vets help animals by...” Make a list as a group, sharing ideas. Students can illustrate their favorite.
- Guest speaker: Invite a vet or animal caregiver to talk about their job and caring for the health of animals. This may be possible by internet if not in person.

3-5

Discussion:

Expand upon basic knowledge above. Assess existing knowledge of Veterinarians and their services to people and animals.

Resources for Teachers

Preview videos of mobile vet units that visit Reservations, if relevant, they may provide a helpful glimpse into these services and what they do and can look like.

Links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1jfxLkAtVA&ab_channel=OregonPublicBroadcasting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcLo6MV_Svc&ab_channel=KPAX-TV

“What Does a Veterinarian Do?,” Purdue College of Veterinary Medicine

Link: <https://vet.purdue.edu/vetahumanz/what-does-a-veterinarian-do/#:~:text=Check%20Dups:%20Just%20like%20you,keep%20the%20animals%20there%20healthy.>

“An Extra Wind: Natives in VetMed,” The American Animal Hospital Association. A new group offers camaraderie and support for Indigenous veterinary students and professionals. With help from the nonprofit Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (CARE), Natives in VetMed are rapidly expanding. Already, members represent 33 tribes from the United States and Canada.

Link: <https://www.aaha.org/trends-magazine/january-2024/natives-in-vet-med/>

What does it take to become a vet or vet tech?

You need to LOVE animals! To be a successful veterinarian, you must study some special topics. As a young student, math and science are *very* important. When you get older, students should focus on biology, chemistry, and physics. Language study, social sciences, and speech are also important, as communication skills are essential in veterinary medicine.

Empathy, leadership, critical thinking, resilience, time management, and teamwork. These are essential when working with both animals and community members.

What are other jobs working with animals?

Some examples are farmer, animal control officer, police officer, shelter worker, social worker, wildlife rehabber, and animal behaviorist or trainer,

Activity:

Research: What animal caregivers exist in, or near, your community. How do they help?

Field trip (real or virtual) to a clinic, animal shelter, or mobile vet unit

OPTIONAL: Deeper Dive: Bringing Animal Care Home to Your Community

If you're passionate about helping animals—and *especially bringing veterinary care to tribal reservations*—here's some extra information to connect to that dream! Your people and animals need you! Did you know that [less than 1% of veterinarians in the United States are American Indian or Alaska Native](#), according to a 2003 commentary in the AVMA Journals. A 2020 analysis of veterinary professionals found that only 0.5% of veterinarians identified as Native American.

K-2

Pathways for Younger Students

- **“Every dog deserves a chance.”** Having an interest in and studying animal science now can help you become a trusted caregiver for pets—whether in homes or communities that need services.
- **“You can bring change.”** Tribal veterinary programs are growing—what you're learning now could help your people and animals get health care that wasn't available before.
- **“Science + compassion = impact on your world.”** A strong academic background paired with empathy, communication, and leadership can change the lives of both animals and people.

3-5

Review above information and consider presenting information on the following: (Age-appropriate modification may be necessary)

Legislative Progress

- **Senate Bill 620 (Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act):** Reintroduced by U.S. Senators including Lisa Murkowski, the bill would authorize the **Indian Health Service (IHS)** to provide veterinary services—including spay/neuter—to tribal communities

This legislation highlights a growing recognition of the need for **integrated veterinary public health in Indian Country**.

What This Means for You

- Studying the right subjects and building experience now sets you up to be one of the leaders who bring veterinary care back to your community.
- You could become a tribal vet, public health veterinarian, shelter veterinarian, or community animal care specialist supported by programs like IHS.
- Collaborating with tribal health services, you could offer vaccination clinics, spay/neuter campaigns, and dog safety education in culturally informed ways.

Resources for Teachers

Native American Tribal Cultures: Implications for Veterinary Medical Education,” Journal of Veterinary Medical Education

Link: <https://utppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3138/jvme.34.2.60>

“Murkowski, Heinrich, Schatz, Peters Introduce Bill to Provide Essential Veterinary Services in Rural, Tribal Communities,” United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Link: <https://www.indian.senate.gov/newsroom/press-release/repUBLICan/murkowski-heinrich-schatz-peters-introduce-bill-to-provide-essential-veterinary-services-in-rural-tribal-communities/>

Literacy Connections:

Books Chosen to Support This Chapter:

Please see bibliography in Appendix for additional information

Barker, Susan. So, You Want to be a Veterinarian? :Exploring the world of Veterinary Medicine for animal-loving kids

Unit 5: Community Action and Involvement

Unit Objective:

Encourage children and families to take an active role in organizing supportive groups that work for dog safety and care within their community.

Emphasize Indigenous values of collective responsibility, respect for all living beings, and connection between animal well-being and human wellness.

Lesson 1: Community and Family-Centered Dog Care Projects

Discussion: How can we get other people/ groups involved in caring for our dogs? This is often the foundation and key to a meaningful and sustainable dog and human safety “program.” A group of people who are interested and can commit to showing up to help is all it takes. As the sayings go: *“there is power in numbers,”* and *“many hands make for lighter work.”* How can we create a community dog care team? Discuss the interconnectedness of our species and the importance of the whole community being engaged in caring for all dogs– both pets in household and roaming dogs. There is strength and ease in community involvement. That the dogs being well cared for will benefit all members of the community, including animals and humans.

Activity Goal: Community Care Program – Organize a community dog care outreach project where children can engage the adults of the community and share what they've learned. Students can identify areas where they need adult supervision and assistance and ask for help.

K–2

Discussion Questions:

Drawing on information covered in previous units; students can discuss and generate ideas for the following questions:

- How can we all work together to make sure dogs are safe and cared for in the community?
- Who are some people we know who care about dogs? (family, neighbors, elders, animal workers)
- What can we do to help?

Activity: Dog Care Creativity Project

- Students design illustrated artwork, poetry, skits, dances, stories or other artworks encouraging kindness to dogs with messages about taking care of our community including dogs. These can be displayed in school halls, community centers, libraries, stores, or clinics.
Optional: Include tribal language / words and beliefs as appropriate to reinforce community connection, pride and relevance.

3–5

Discussion Questions:

Draw on knowledge and discussions from previous units to generate student-generated and led project ideas addressing questions such as:

- How can we involve other people and groups in helping dogs?
- What kinds of helpers might we need? (Vets, families, schools, spiritual leaders, stores, shelters)
- Why is it better when the *whole community* works together?
- How do healthy dogs help create a safer and stronger community for everyone?

Students present their organized project idea to a tribal leader, school staff, or community member for approval/support. They might organize a “Care Team” or a local donation drive to collect bowls and blankets for roaming dogs. They could reach out to elders who have dogs and may need some sort of assistance. Emphasis should be on group creativity and generation of ideas for projects and outreach. This will reinforce a sense of empathy, community, purpose, and pride in working together to make things better for all members of the community. Themes to express commonly held tribal values might be

“We are all related”

“Respect all our relations – four-legged, winged, crawling, swimming, standing”

Emphasize that caring for animals is a form of leadership, wellness, and tradition

Lesson 2: Educating Families

K–2

Discussion Questions:

What are the most important things to teach our community and families about dogs?

Examples: "Don't hurt dogs," "Don't chase them," "Feed them," "Don't leave trash where hungry dogs can eat it," "Why do dogs need to feel safe?" and "How do dogs help people?"

Activity: Family Dog Safety Workshop

Invite families to the school/community center for a short, student-led safety workshop. Plan a community event with student-led stations: Students can create informational materials and give short presentations based on the knowledge they've gained through their study of dogs. Collaborate with local shelters, tribal leaders, or vet staff for support and additional information

Ideas/themes for presentations and materials:

- How to read a dog's body language
- Why vaccinations and fixing matter
- How to greet a dog safely
- Dog care booklets- Create take-home mini booklets with topics like: "How to Be a Dog Helper," with pictures drawn by students
- Create a display wall of childrens photos with drawings or essays on topics like: “Why I Care About Dogs,” and “How we can help dogs.”

K-2

Children practice and demonstrate roleplaying for an audience:

- How to say “hello” to a dog safely

- When to leave a dog alone
- What to do if a dog growls or looks scared

3–5

Discussion Questions:

- How can we teach others in our community to be more respectful and safer around dogs?
- What are some things that may cause dogs to act aggressively? How can we avoid those situations?
- How do we respect both people and animals in our community?

Activity: Create Take-Home Resources:

Create family flyers or books/brochures:

- “Top 5 Ways to Be Kind to Dogs”
- “Safety Rules for Living with Dogs”
- Include tribal or cultural symbols/art when appropriate

Conclusion:

This curriculum aims to teach children and their families how to safely care for their pets and empower them to create animal welfare engagement in their communities, advocate for dog and human safety, and promote the well-being of humans and dogs, both household and roaming. Focused on learning basic care techniques, recognizing dog behaviors, and understanding the importance of empathy and kindness and effective action, it encourages responsible, compassionate pet owners and community members. The bond between humans and dogs is at its best, one of mutual respect, care, and understanding. This bond extends back through the ages in a timeless shared beneficial companionship. Through this exploration, children learn the values of empathy, responsibility, and harmony between all living beings. By honoring the spirit and well-being of dogs, we nurture the compassionate hearts of the future generations of all creatures.

Concluding Extension Activities

- **Create a Class Storybook**
Each child contributes one page or drawing to a book: *“How We Helped the Dogs in Our Community”*
- **Photo Wall: “Me and My Dog” or “Dogs We Care For”**
Showcase photos of children with pets or community dogs to build pride and connection

Create a “Dog Hero” Award

Recognize children, families, or community members who go above and beyond to care for animals

Student certificates of completion for the H.O.T. Dogs Curriculum are available from the Native American Humane Society.

Appendix

Bibliography: Curriculum Support Books

These books may be acquired through local public library systems.

Picture Books:

Barker, Susan. *So, You Want to be a Veterinarian?: Exploring the world of Veterinary Medicine for animal-loving kids*. Independently published, 2025.

ISBN 979-8285155706

K-5. A book full of real-life stories, and educational content, this nonfiction guide helps students imagine their future in animal care—while teaching them everything from biology and anatomy to empathy and perseverance.

Bix, Daisy, and Joe Hyatt. *Buddy Unchained*. Edina, MN: Gryphon Press, 2006.

ISBN 978-0-940719-01-9

K-5. A mixed-breed dog narrates his life story. Buddy's former owner did not feed him enough or provide clean water and frequently left him chained outside. But things changed for the better when the animal was rescued and taken to a shelter, where he was subsequently adopted by a caring family. Describes the importance of empathetic and humane care for dogs and all Earth's creatures.

Chen, Jennie, and Giselle Nevada. *Porter & Midge: Paws for Safety: A Kid's Guide to Safe Dog Interactions*. Raise the Woof Press, 2023.

ISBN: 979-8-9877499-7-5

K-5. A fantastic book to teach kids how to interact safely with dogs. Teaches basic care, safety and training through a rhyming tale.

Child, Brenda J. *Bowwow Powwow*. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018.

ISBN: 978-1-68134-077-7

K-5. Windy Girl imagines a bowwow powwow, where all the dancers are dogs. In these magical scenes, Windy sees veterans in a Grand Entry, and a visiting drum group, and traditional dancers, grass dancers, and jingle-dress dancers—all as beloved dogs. All celebrating in song and dance. All attesting to the wonder of the powwow and the natural kinship between children and dogs. The story is accompanied by a companion retelling in Ojibwe language.

Johnston, Tony. *Hey, Dog*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2019.

ISBN: 978-1-58089-877-5

K-5. A young boy discovers a stray dog who is scared and hurting. He learns how to safely befriend, and help the dog and eventually adopts it. The story teaches great human/animal empathy and relationship. It also models stray/roaming animal respect and safety.

Martin, Tamara. *Bluebird: Dog of the Navajo Nation*. Monday Creek Publishing, 2020.

ISBN: 978-0-578-63240-7

K-5. A dog named Bluebird tells the tale of going from a loving home to homelessness. Through this thoughtful and touching story, the complexities of *Rez Dogs* are considered and ways to help them shared. Great emphasis on the human animal bond and inter-relationship, and humane empathy. Traditional Navajo beliefs are considered alongside modern veterinary practices.

O'Watch, Heather. *Auntie's Rez Surprise*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Second Story Press, 2023.

ISBN: 978-1-77260-344-6

K-5. In this book, Auntie talks to Cree about the importance of dogs in their culture. They are our relatives, she explains, and need to be well taken care of. Cree decides she will name her new puppy "Atim", the Nehiyaw word for dog. Showcases the importance of Elders and how their teachings honor the beliefs and values of Indigenous culture. The retelling of these values through stories, allows the wisdom to be passed on to Indigenous youth. Stresses relationships between all Earth's creatures.

Richards, Amber. *A Child's Book of Dog Body Language with Pictures: Help Keep Children Safe*, 2014.

ISBN: 9781503353633

K-5. A simple, engaging book that teaches children how to read a dog's feelings—and respond in a way that builds trust rather than fear. It also helps them recognize aggressive or potentially dangerous ones to avoid. Informed by science, empathy, canine behavioral study and very well-illustrated.

Stead, Philip C. *Every Dog in the Neighborhood*. New York, NY: Holiday House, 2022.

ISBN: 978-0-8234-4427-4

K-5. This story follows a grandmother and her grandson as they spend time trying to remedy a problem. Louis canvasses the neighborhood to find out how many dogs live there after Grandma says there are too many for him to have one of his own. Grandma has a campaign of her own, concerning a vacant lot. By the end of the story, Louis has counted 20 neighborhood dogs, including the one he adopts, and his grandmother has turned the lot into a dog park. The book is a great example of human-animal empathy and relationship, and models taking a census of animals and activism for getting a community project completed.

Chapter Books:

These are listed as further reading resources.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Dog People: Native Dog Stories*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1995.

ISBN: 1-55591-228-1

Grade 3-6 Tales of Abenaki Indian children and their dogs. Long ago, canines were thought of not just as animals, but as important members of the family, and were given names that epitomized their value and loyalty to their owners. A book of short stories with details of daily life and symbolic explanations, but the bonds between dogs and humans. The homes he describes are welcoming and warm and readers will identify with the people.

———. *Rez Dogs*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2021.

ISBN: 978-0-593-32621-3

A powerful story of a girl who learns more about her Penacook heritage while sheltering in place with her grandparents during the coronavirus pandemic. Malsum, one of the dogs living on the rez, shows up at their door, and the family knows that he'll protect them too.

Told in verse inspired by oral storytelling, this novel about the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the ways in which Indigenous nations and communities cared for one another through plagues of the past, and how they keep caring for one another today. Communicates values of empathy and relationships between humans and animals.

Resource Sheets

Student certificates of completion for the H.O.T. Dogs Curriculum are available from the Native American Humane Society.

How to Understand Dog Body Language

Learning dog body language helps you understand how a dog feels in specific environments and situations. This can help keep you and the dog safe and comfortable

Humane Society “How to Tell if a Dog or Cat Needs Veterinary Care”

A Humane Society thorough checklist for helping a cat or dog who is showing signs of illness or injury.

How to Approach an Unfamiliar Dog

Infographic handouts on learning to read a dog’s body language and dos and don’ts of greeting an unfamiliar dog.

How to Know if a Dog Needs a Vet.

See next page



How do I know if a dog needs a vet?



Is the dog sick or hurt?



A quick checklist for caring for dogs in our homes and communities.

FIRST: Keep yourself safe.

For an unfamiliar, frightened, aggressive, injured, or free-roaming dog, do not touch or approach. Give space and tell a trusted adult.

Tell an adult right away if you see...

- **Trouble breathing** — struggling, gasping, or breathing very hard
- **A lot of bleeding, or bleeding that will not stop**
- **Collapse, fainting, or a seizure**
- **Cannot stand, walk, or use a leg after an injury**
- **Major injury** — a deep wound, large burn, or something stuck in the body
- **Very swollen or hard belly**— especially with pain, weakness, or repeated retching
- **Severe heat illness** — very hot body, heavy panting, weakness, confusion, or collapse
- **Anything that looks wrong or worries you.**

A vet should check the dog if you notice...

- **Not eating or drinking normally**— especially if it lasts or the dog seems weak
- **Repeated vomiting or diarrhea, blood in vomit or stool, or signs of dehydration**
- **Ongoing limping, pain, stiffness, or trouble getting up**
- **Eyes that are red, cloudy, swollen, injured, or have unusual discharge**
- **A wound, bite, swelling, lump, or sore that is not healing**
- **Lots of scratching, hair loss, fleas/ticks, quills or very irritated skin**
- **A big change in behavior** — unusually tired, confused, hiding, or acting very different.





NOTICE KEEP SAFE TELL AN ADULT



1. NOTICE

What did you see?
When did it start?

2. KEEP SAFE

Give the dog space.
Do not give medicine or food unless an adult/vet says to. Many human medicines are. posonous for dogs.

3. TELL

Tell a parent, caregiver, animal health worker, veterinarian, or other trusted adult.

If a dog bites or scratches a person: Move away and tell an adult immediately. Wash the area with soap and running water. An adult should help you get medical advice promptly, especially if the dog is unfamiliar or its vaccination history is unknown.

***Remember: You do not have to diagnose the dog.**

Your job is to **notice, stay safe, and get help.**

PLEASE! For free-roaming dogs, never chase, corner, or try to catch an injured dog.

Respect, Responsibility and Dignity



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