**Facts to Know**

**Group size:** three to four children per adult volunteer  
**Time frame:** group meeting 30 to 60 minutes  
**Recommended ages:** 5- to 7-year-olds (kindergarten through second grade)

**Materials:**
- Blank sheets of paper
- Fabric scissors
- Pencils
- Glue
- Old magazines with pictures of animals and things needed to care for them
- Pet first aid kit supplies (see activity detail)
- Fleece material (approximately ½ yard per member)

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**Purpose**

Youth describe the care and equipment needed to own and take care of a pet.

**Background Knowledge**

Young children usually are fascinated by live animals and excited to care for them. Sometimes youth do not realize the responsibility involved in caring for a pet. All pets need clean and fresh water, food, shelter and clean space.

Some pets need more everyday care and equipment than others. For example, most cats need a home, fresh food and water every day, a litter box and a special bed or cushion. Some cats, especially those who stay indoors all the time, need a scratching post and toys to keep them active and healthy.

Birds can be excellent pets for people, too. Birds usually require less care than a cat or dog. Birds need fresh food and water daily, a cage, perch, water and feed dishes. At night, the cage should be covered with a cloth to keep the bird from getting chilled.

Fish also can be great pets. They take very little space or time. Everyday care is simple. Fish require daily feeding, frequent tank cleaning and fresh water. Tanks without filters need to be cleaned daily. Tanks with filters can go for several weeks without cleaning. One drawback to keeping fish as pets is that fish never can be handled.

Hamsters are another great pet. They enjoy petting and are kept tame by frequent handling. Hamsters need fresh food and water daily, and will keep themselves very clean if the cage is cleaned every other day.
**Learning Activities**

**Do: Getting Started**

**Pets Communicate (10 minutes)**

Many pets communicate using body language. Play a couple of games using body language to help members understand how animals use nonverbal cues to communicate.

1. Ask members to keep silent, talking only with their body while they complete the task you ask of them. Members may use their body to tell each other where to go, what to do or who stands where.
   a. Ask members to line up in order of height.
   b. Play duck, duck, goose without speaking. Members can make up hand signals to represent ducks or a goose.
   c. Arrange the members in a single-file line so they are all facing the same direction. Give the last child in line a particular action to mime. For example, tell him or her to pretend to eat spaghetti. Direct the person in front of him or her to turn and face him or her as he or she mimics the action. When the second-to-last person knows the action, he or she should turn to the front and tap the shoulder of the next person in line. Then he or she should mime the same action. Continue to the front of the line and see if the first person can guess the original action.

*(Improv Games for Children, 2013)*

**Do: Digging Deeper**

**Pet Collage (20 minutes)**

All pets need food, water, shelter and clean space. Some animals need more or less of each thing. To care for a pet and provide these things is a responsibility. Some pets may need more care than others. Dogs need daily exercise, cats need toys for play, rabbits need something to chew and fish need clean water. The time required to care for a pet every day is different for every type of animal.

1. Ask each member to select a pet he or she would like to take care of. They do not have to own that animal. Help them think about what kind of pet they may want to have.

2. Invite each child to find a magazine picture of that kind of animal. If they can’t find a magazine picture, they may draw one or use a photograph.

3. Have members find pictures that show the food, water, shelter and equipment needed for care of that animal. If they do not find pictures they are looking for, they can draw them.

4. Ask them to make an animal collage by gluing their pictures to blank sheets of paper.

5. Ask each child to share her/his animal collage with the group when finished.
A pet first-aid kit is the first step in being prepared should an animal emergency happen. While many premade kits may be purchased for pets, building your own kit or adding to a premade one may be the best way to have a kit customized for your pet’s lifestyle and needs. The following first-aid items are recommended for starting your own kit.

Items to Include in your pet's first-aid kit:

- **Scissors** – for cutting out things matted in fur or freeing your pet from entanglements
- **Sterile eye wash** – make sure it is eye wash, not contact lens solution
- **Tweezers** – to remove splinters or other foreign materials from wounds
- **Tick remover tool** – for those in a tick-infested area; many tools are available to remove ticks easily and reduce additional damage or infection during removal
- **Ear wash** – speak to your vet about which one is best for your pet
- **Toenail trimmer and styptic pencil** – for torn toenails (Cornstarch also works for torn nails but not for skin wounds.)
- **QuikClot or similar product** – to stop bleeding (wounds)
- **Tape** – preferably the one-inch white medical tape; it’s easy to tear off and holds well
- **Roll gauze** – used for bandaging, to help stop bleeding and padding for splints
- **Vet wrap** – conforming bandage wrap used over roll gauze that comes in many colors and two sizes (2- and 4-inch). Pick one that best fits your pet. It clings to itself and is semiwatertight. Do not wrap this too tightly. Unwrap it from the roll, then use it for the bandage with very light tension. It can be purchased at many feed stores (horse section) and some veterinary clinics.
- **Bandage scissors** – have a blunted blade to slip between skin and bandage material easily and not cut the patient’s skin
- **Antiseptic wash or wipes** – look for nonstinging preparations such as chlorhexidine or betadine (Rubbing alcohol is not good for open sores or wounds.)
- **Antibiotic ointment** – over-the-counter “general purpose” antibiotic ointment for light use with minor skin wounds. Not for eye use. Use caution when rubbing it on animals that may ingest it by licking. The antibiotics are absorbed via the skin; remaining ointment may collect debris or slow healing in some cases. Use with discretion.
- **Vet-prescribed pain relief (NSAID)** – speak to your vet about obtaining as-needed first-aid kit pain relief. Do not use human prescriptions or over-the-counter pain medications for pets. Some medications, such as Tylenol, are poisonous and may be fatal to pets.
- **Latex or plastic exam gloves** – for your protection and your pet’s protection; use when the situation is messy
- **A muzzle** – or materials to make a muzzle (Even well-trained animals may bite when injured or afraid.)
- **Thermometer** – know the normals for your pet’s vital signs and how to use the thermometer
- **Water-based lubricating jelly** – for use with rectal thermometers
- **Ice and hot packs** – cool skin after a burn or keep an animal warm if hypothermic. Always use a cloth between the pack and skin and check frequently for redness or irritation.
- **Extra towels, wash cloths and a blanket** – use for washing, keeping warm/cool and, if necessary, as a way to transport the injured pet (sling).
- **Diphenhydramine** (aka Benadryl) – for stings and allergic reactions; speak with your vet first about proper dosing
- **Syringe or large eye dropper** – to flush wounds or administer fluids by mouth
- **List of phone numbers** – your regular vet, the emergency vet, animal control and animal poison control numbers. Another tip: Program these numbers into your cell phone.
- **Inventory list** – to identify each item in the first-aid kit and its purpose and help remember which items to replace as they are used
- **Sturdy box** – ideally plastic or metal; to hold all of your supplies; should be easy to carry and pack with you

(How to Build...Pet, 2013)
Reflect: Bringing Closure

Make a Fleece-tie Blanket for Homeless Pets (45 minutes)

Does your club want to use its craft skills to help homeless animals? Any local animal shelter would welcome cozy fleece blankets for the cats, kittens, dogs and puppies to curl up on while they await loving homes. The following fleece blanket craft project is a great way to help animals.

First, decide how many blankets your club will make, then visit a craft store to purchase the fleece fabric. Use the following instructions to make the blankets:

1. Cut two rectangles that are 17 to 18 inches wide by 28 to 29 inches long. (cut rectangles to 14 inches long for smaller pets)
2. Lay one rectangle on top of the other so they completely overlap. Cutting through both layers, cut a 3-inch square out of each corner, and discard them.
3. Cut slits 3 inches long by approximately ¾ inch wide along all four sides. Make the cuts as even as possible. This will look like fringe. Tie individual fringes together, top-layer fringe to bottom-layer fringe, using double knots.

When finished, members donate the blankets to a local animal shelter and record the service project in their North Dakota Cloverbud 4-H Record Book.

Apply: Going Beyond

1. Make homemade dog biscuits. Recipe: 1 cup all-purpose flour, ¼ cup wheat germ, ¼ cup brewers yeast, 1 teaspoons salt, 1 ½ tablespoons canola oil, ½ cup low-sodium chicken stock, plus more for brushing. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment. Combine flour, wheat germ, brewers yeast and salt in a large bowl. Place canola oil in a large bowl. Add flour mixture to oil in three additions, alternating with the stock; mix until combined. Knead dough on a lightly floured surface for two minutes (dough will be sticky). Roll out dough to ¼-inch thickness. Cut out rounds using shaped cutters. Bake for 20 minutes, rotating sheets and lightly brushing with extra chicken stock halfway through. Turn oven off and let stand in oven for 40 minutes. (Homemade Dog Biscuits, 2013)
2. Make a cat toy. Cut wool felt in the shape of two feathers, snipping the edges to create fringe. Iron a fold down the middle of each feather with a hot iron. Tie the feather ends together with a length of satin cord and finish with a jingle bell. Tie a small knot in each end of the satin cord to stop fraying. (Feather Cat Toy, 2013)
3. Make a pet place mat. Measure a pet’s food dish and cut a piece of animal-print paper a few inches larger than the bowl. Then cut a plain piece of cardstock slightly larger than the piece of animal-print paper. Glue the animal-print paper to the center of the plain cardstock to create a border. Laminate at a local copy center or use a home laminator. (Pet Place Mat, 2013)