

# Meow!

Intermediate  
Level

Vol.4  
[spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca)

BCSPCA Teacher Guide to Integrating Animals into the Classroom

**COMIC STRIP  
CREATIONS**

**TEACHER  
SPOTLIGHTS**

**INSPIRATIONAL  
STUDENTS!**





# HOW TO INTEGRATE ANIMALS INTO THE NEW CURRICULUM

**K**ids tend to have a natural interest in animals, which makes them an excellent topic for inquiry learning. The BC SPCA has created units covering various subject areas to inspire projects and teach lessons.

**Science:** Learn about the effect outdoor cats have on bird populations and other wild animals (*Pet Overpopulation*)

**Math:** Measure the space required for chickens living in cages versus free range (*Home on the Free-Range Farm*)

Estimate the cost of caring for a pet for a year and create a budget (*So You Think You Want a Pet*)

**Social Justice:** Inequality between farm animals and pets (*Social Justice*)

Plan a project to change the practice of testing on animals (*You Can Make a Difference*)

**Social Studies:** Use critical thinking skills to match adopters with shelter animals (*So You Think You Want a Pet*)

Why do shelters have more cats than dogs? (*Pet Overpopulation*)

**Social/Emotional:** Practice empathy; find out what we have in common with animals (*Kindness Counts*)

Read body language of dogs in order to stay safe around them (*Bite Free*)

These are just some of the topics that BC SPCA lessons use to integrate animals into all subject areas. **A complete list of resources for the classroom is included on the back cover.**

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## Shelter cat story

The story on the following page is told from a shelter cat's perspective. This is a great way to introduce empathy at any age level. On the back of the worksheet, students can fill in the thoughts of the cat in the cartoon strip and even create their own.

The questions on the back of the worksheet are designed to help students generate ideas for these essential questions: Why are there more cats in shelters than dogs? What can I do to help reduce the numbers of cats in shelters?

After discussing their answers, extend your students' thinking by asking, "What influences attitudes and behaviours towards cats?" Our *Catistics* lessons have more background information on this topic.

**Extension:** Have your students do a project on what they learned to educate others about the cat overpopulation problem. Our *You Can Make a Difference* lessons will give students ideas of different types of projects they can do.

### Answers to inquiry project

1. It is socially acceptable for cats to roam outdoors. Few cities have bylaws forbidding free-roaming cats. Cats are perceived as independent and can find their way home.

2. Keep cats indoors. ID pets. Commit to keeping a pet for his entire life. Work on behaviour issues. Provide an outdoor cat enclosure.

3. Can't find pet-friendly housing. Behaviour issues: peeing outside the litter box, scratching the furniture. Not enough time or money. Allergies. Unwanted gift.

4. Both cats and dogs can go into heat at six months.

5. An unexpected litter of puppies or kittens. Indoor cat is in heat, escapes and mates. Not aware that kittens should be spayed before they are six months old.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Read the story below and think about how the cat is feeling throughout the story. Underline the things that are done in the shelter that help cats adjust to this new place.

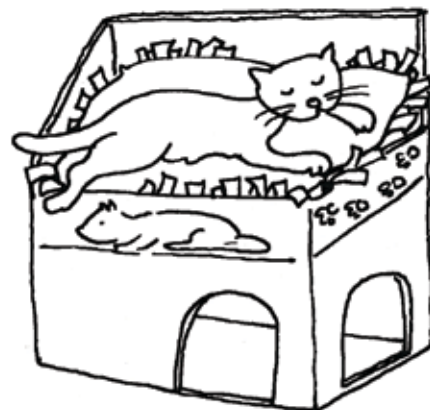
I'd been through a lot before I arrived at the BC SPCA shelter. It all started when Julie left the back door open and I escaped. Pretty soon, I'd been hissed at by a raccoon, chased by a dog, soaked by the rain and nearly squashed flat by a car! I was terrified when I first came into the shelter. Everything was strange and new. But the staff were so kind to me. A gentle woman named Sarah spoke softly to me as she cleaned me up and checked for any injuries before bringing me to the cat kennels.

I couldn't believe my eyes – so many fellow felines were peeking at me from their own cages. I scanned my new lodgings. I had not one, not two, but three separate compartments, which I could wander through using the **portals** between them. The staff had thoughtfully left my litter tray far from my blankets (nobody likes to sleep beside their toilet!) and I had my own **Hide, Perch and Go box** to use in different ways, depending on my mood. I curled up in my blankets and fell fast asleep.

The next morning, I awoke to a stirring in the shelter. Everyone was wide awake and eager for breakfast. As Sarah fed us and cleaned our cages, I realized that things were running on a schedule like clockwork. That made me feel safer and not quite so nervous. Later, a volunteer let me out to stretch my legs and play with him. That helped me feel less scared and lonely.

Over the next few days, cats came and went. Some were adopted to loving homes and others were strays like me, picked up by their relieved families. Some of the cats who came in looked just as scared as I had felt. Once, I saw Sarah bring in a bunch of kittens. I heard her say that they were an accidental litter from cats who were not spayed and neutered. I hoped they would all find homes!

Finally, the day came when I spotted a familiar face. Julie's eyes lit up when she saw me. I was so happy to see her and even happier to go home. The shelter staff were kind and caring but no cat wants to spend much time in a shelter! Julie got me microchipped in case I go missing again, although if I see another open door I might think twice about leaving. There's no place like home after all!



## VOCABULARY

**Hide, Perch and Go box** – A box designed for use in shelter cages so that cats have a place to hide and perch. This helps to reduce stress in cats. When the cat gets adopted, the box converts to a cat carrier and goes home with the cat. This way the cat has something with

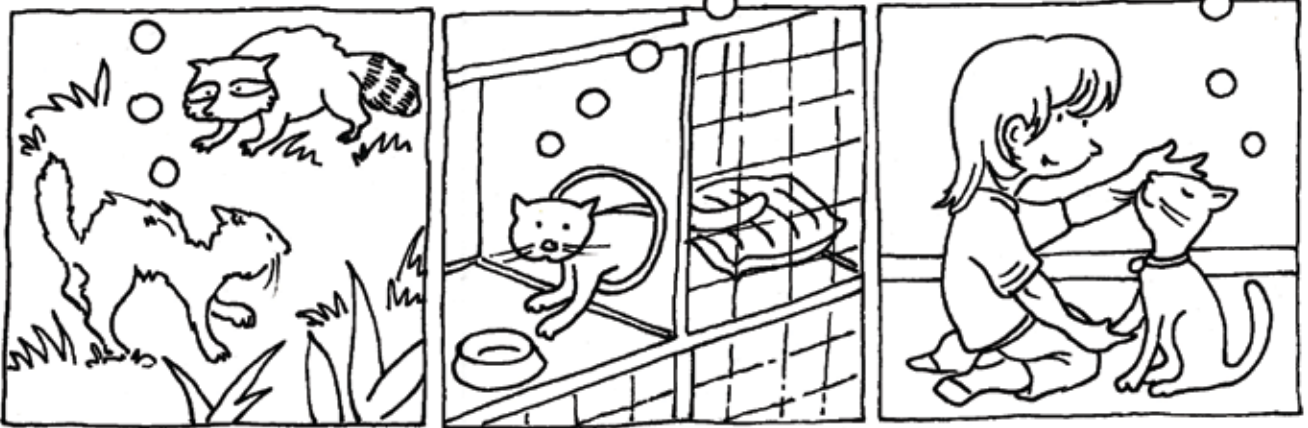
her scent on it to help her settle into her new home.

**Portals** – Holes cut into the inside walls of the cages so that cats have separate areas to eat, sleep and go to the bathroom.

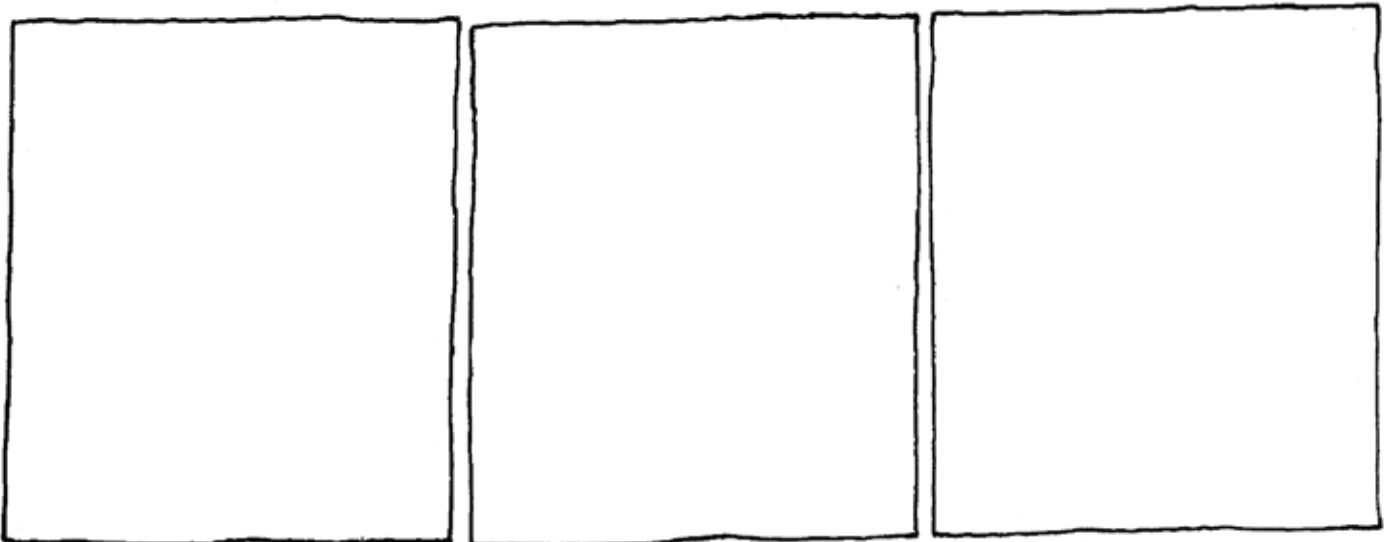
Fill in the thought bubbles in the comic strip below to describe how the cat is feeling.



ILLUSTRATIONS: SCOT RITCHIE



Now it is your turn to draw. Try creating a comic strip for a different shelter cat or other animal.



**INQUIRY PROJECT**

With a partner, come up with as many answers as you can to the following questions. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. These will help you answer the essential questions, “Why are there so many more cats in the shelter than dogs?” and “What can I do to help reduce the numbers of cats in shelters?”

1. Why do people allow cats to roam free outdoors but not dogs?
2. What can pet guardians (owners) do to prevent their cat from ending up in the shelter?
3. Why do cats end up at the shelter? List at least five reasons.
4. At what age can cats start having kittens? Dogs?
5. What do you think an accidental litter means?

# Teacher Spotlights

Hundreds of teachers across the province use BC SPCA materials in their classrooms. Here's how Elaine and Katie integrate these materials into their lessons – and inspire their students.

Elaine Jaltema regularly integrates her love of animals into her lessons – shown here with Butterscotch, her gerbil.



Elaine Jaltema teaches Grade 5/6 at Chaffey Burke Elementary in Burnaby. She invited the BC SPCA to do a presentation on different animal issues and ways to take action – a combination of our *Social Justice* and *You Can Make a Difference* programs. Elaine believes it is important to teach her students about animals because doing so develops empathy and a sense of social justice.

After the presentation, Elaine's students were engaged and committed to educating others about the issues presented. They shared information with their families, which resulted in immediate change, and are using their purchasing power to make a difference by buying free-range eggs and looking for products that are not tested on animals. They also presented the information they learned to the entire school through a PowerPoint presentation at an assembly.



## STUDENT PROJECTS

In addition to educating family members and peers, Elaine's students took action by writing letters to people in different levels of government and CEOs of companies. They expressed their concerns about keeping farm animals in small spaces, selling dogs and cats in pet stores, product-testing on animals and the importation and sale of exotic pets.



### Help us spread the word

In order to connect with as many educators as possible, we are looking for a teacher contact in every school in B.C. This teacher would share our information on new lessons, presentations or upcoming events that are relevant to his/her colleagues.

If you would like to be our connection to your school, please email Paula Neuman at [pneuman@sPCA.bc.ca](mailto:pneuman@sPCA.bc.ca) with the subject line "**Teacher Ambassador**" and we'll add you to our list. Thank you!



Katie Bernaquez was inspired by the BC SPCA class visit and adopted Marlo, a mixed breed puppy, to add to her family.



Katie Bernaquez is a Grade 5/6 teacher at Departure Bay Elementary in Nanaimo. For the past two years, she has invited the BC SPCA into her classroom to do our *Social Justice* and *Home on the Free-Range Farm* presentations. Katie believes that teaching kids about animals and animal issues also teaches empathy; when kids understand that their choices have an impact on the greater community, it helps them realize that they are part of a bigger world.

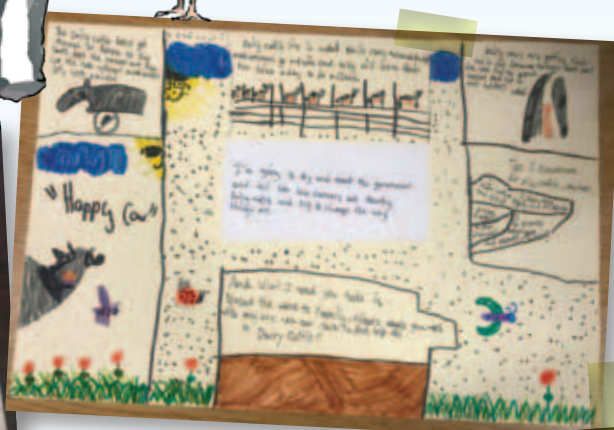
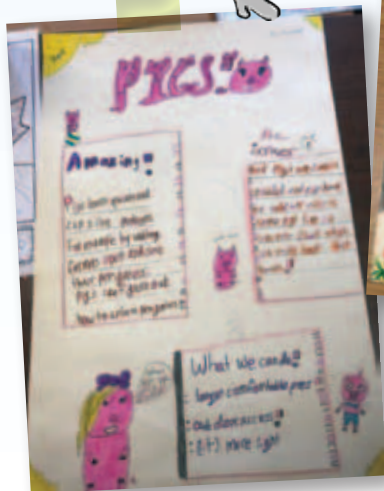
Katie says the BC SPCA's presentations have taught her students about leadership and compassion, engaging them in the subject matter and motivating them to take action. "Both of the presentations sparked conversation," she says. "After the presentations I have had many students want to get involved and help animals. We actually had several students start a school club at our school." She adds, "I would definitely recommend the program to other teachers. The students were super engaged."



## STUDENT PROJECTS

After the *Home on the Free-Range Farm* presentation, Katie's class decided to take action for farm animals.

They created these educational posters after learning about the typical living conditions of animals raised for food, and more humane alternatives.



# Other student projects

Students in Mme Mullin's Grade 6 class at École Phoenix Middle School in Campbell River formed a school club to help animals all year round. They held a bake sale, collected supplies like blankets, towels and toys for the shelter, and then they raised more money by selling handmade holiday products at their Christmas Entrepreneur Fair.



As part of a social responsibility lesson, Michelle Lockhart's Grade 4/5 students at Glenwood Elementary made no-sew cat blankets. Thanks to the project, cats at the Maple Ridge SPCA will be able to rest comfortably at the shelter and then take the blankets home along with their Hide, Perch and Go boxes when they are adopted.



Tim and Ty are students from Melissa Lackey's class at Sir James Douglas Elementary. As

their project for the BC SPCA *You Can Make a Difference* workshop, they created a website, "How Pollution is Affecting Animals in our Environment." They were already aware of environmental issues before the workshop, but really came to understand the impact these issues have on wildlife, and wanted to educate others.



What teachers are saying about our presentations

"Well paced for the age group, great use of images, skilled presenter, calm dog. Students remembered key points from the presentation the next day."

- Kathy Inglis,  
South Park School  
(*Bite Free*)

"Informative, relevant. Amazing job."

- Catherine Dickie,  
Coal Tyee Elementary  
(*So You Think You Want a Pet*)

"The content of the presentation and the ability to deliver it succinctly was engaging for students. I will be using all of the lessons."

- Justine Graydon,  
Ladysmith Intermediate  
(*Home on the Free-Range Farm*)

"The presentation was highly visual and incorporated student involvement. It was a great presentation. Very engaging and educational."

- Sarah Smith,  
Fairview Elementary  
(*You Can Make a Difference*)

"I liked that it was interactive, challenged stereotypes and made connections between animal welfare and human welfare."

- Mela Vallentgoed,  
Island Connect Ed  
(*Social Justice*)



## BC SPCA Programs and Resources

For more ways to incorporate animals into the classroom, check out our additional resources listed below at [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher).

### CURRICULUM UNITS FOR K-12

**Kindness Counts** (Gr. K-2) – Focuses on empathy for animals and people.

**So You Think You Want a Pet** (Gr. 3-5) – Focuses on pet care, guardian responsibility and choosing the right pet.

**You Can Make a Difference** (Gr. 4-7) – Connects youth to animal issues in their community. Ideas for projects in which students can learn skills in responsible advocacy are included.

**Home on the Free-Range Farm** (Gr. 4-7) – Introduces students to farming practices, promotes critical thinking about where their food comes from and encourages respect for animals.

**Social Justice: Including Animals in the Conversation** (Gr. 6+) – Uses animal issues to discuss social justice issues and eases students into more sensitive social justice topics such as racism, inequality and stereotyping.

**Bite Free** (Gr. K-5) – Teaches children how to behave safely around dogs and helps those afraid of dogs.

**Pet Overpopulation: A Community Problem We Can “Fix”** (Gr. 4-6) – Uses pet overpopulation as the topic for lessons in science, social studies, math and language arts.

*Presentations are available for these units in select locations in B.C. Visit [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) for details.*

### Stay Informed

Sign up for *e-Teacher*, our monthly newsletter for educators, to stay informed and get new ideas on bringing animal themes into your classroom. Receive book reviews, tips for class/school club projects, current event updates and reviews of each upcoming *Bark!* issue.



### Additional Teacher Resources

**e-Teacher** – A free email newsletter for educators (10 issues/year).

**Classroom animal guidelines** – A guide to choosing and keeping a classroom pet.

**Violence Link** – Background resources on the link between animal abuse and family violence.

**Cluck! The Life of an Egg-laying Chicken (video)** – Tour an egg-laying chicken barn where you learn about the natural behaviours of hens and the different types of housing systems (preview available at [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) or for purchase at [spca.bc.ca/shop](http://spca.bc.ca/shop)).

**Bite Free (video)** – A 9-minute video on dog bite safety (preview available at [spca.bc.ca/teacher](http://spca.bc.ca/teacher) or for purchase at [spca.bc.ca/shop](http://spca.bc.ca/shop)).

**Book reviews** – We have a list of recommended picture books, novels and non-fiction books, all of which have been reviewed and vetted for humane content.

**Bark!** – BC SPCA Kids Club magazine for ages 7-13.

**AnimalSense** – Adult-directed magazine featuring articles about the BC SPCA and animal issues.

### Student Resources: [spca.bc.ca/youth](http://spca.bc.ca/youth)



**School Club Manual** – Ideas and activities to help students take action for animals.

**Pet care guides** – Care sheets on companion animals.

**BC SPCA summer camps** – Week-long day camps in communities across B.C.

**School holiday workshops** – Animal-themed activities at select BC SPCA shelters for students ages 7-11.

**BC SPCA Kids Club** – A \$15 annual membership for kids ages 13 and under, which includes *Bark!* (4 issues/year), e-Kids newsletter (12 issues/year) and a welcome package.

# BCSPCA



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