

March
2012

Cat Welfare. Student Education Kit

PROMOTING a humane, responsible and informed society where cats are cared for responsibly as pets and treated with kindness as community cats.



www.catwelfare.org
info@catwelfare.org



you are his whole life

1 Introduction

Developing responsibility and empathy. Teaching initiative and pro-activeness. Multiplying passion through active sharing.

This kit details a 4 to 6 week-long project in four stages; the first three are mandatory and the last is optional:

1. Learning about responsible cat ownership through a simulation exercise involving a bag of flour/sugar or an egg.
2. Expanding on these experiences through a talk by a CWS volunteer or student leader.
3. Running an awareness booth in the school to educate the rest of their schoolmates.
4. Reaching out to the community by joining CWS volunteers when they conduct community education and outreach in HDB estates.

The aim of this programme is to develop responsibility and empathy towards a cat

by providing an opportunity for students to experience what it takes to care for an cat over a period of time. Also teaching them initiative and pro-activeness in organising their own awareness programmes as well as multiplying their passion through active sharing of what they have learnt with others.

The successful execution of this kit depends largely on teachers' support as they spend the most time with these students. A briefing session can be held for teachers prior to the execution.

Teachers and students can direct any questions regarding the programme to volunteer@catwelfare.org.



2

Weeks 1-2:

Flour babies: Learning about responsible cat ownership

Students are given a flour kitten (1kg packet of flour or sugar) each. They are to look after it day and night for 2 weeks as if it were a real kitten. They must bring it to school and back home every day and keep a diary of activities with the kitten – where the kitten was brought, what it “ate”, where it slept and what games it played.

This activity allows the student to understand the nature of responsibility involved in looking after a kitten and whether they are capable of giving a kitten the kind of constant care required. Even though they are inanimate, the simple task of having to carry the kitten everywhere will make them realize that it is a consistent commitment that is required and that it cannot be offloaded on someone else.

The diary encourages creativity and helps students learn more about caring for animals from their peers. It would be helpful for school teachers to get on board and introduce a new cat related fact everyday so that the students’ knowledge base expands. A set of 10 facts – one for each school day in the 2 week period – may be found in **Annex A**.

Instructions to students

- You will create your kitten with a white sack and a kilo of flour or sugar.
- You can design your own cat and personalize it with markings or ribbons and such.
- Name the kitten and attach a nametag to it with a collar. \

- Each kitten will be “microchipped” with a number written on it and registered to you. If you lose your kitten, we can trace it back to you with the microchip. If your kitten is stolen, we can trace it back.
- You are now the constant caregiver of the kitten and it must at all times be with you in school and at home.
- On school days the kittens will be brought to school and during classes can be kept together in a kitten holding area.
- Kittens must be brought home every day. Inform your parents and siblings about the kitten and encourage them to make sure it is not hurt.
- If you cannot take care of the kitten for a short period of time, like a swimming lesson, a temporary caregiver must be found in the form of another student or parent.
- Random checks may be conducted by your teachers to ensure compliance.
- You must be extremely protective of your kitten.

Points system

- At the start of the project, everyone will have 20 points. Every time there is any damage to the kitten or you are irresponsible, the points will be deducted.
- The person with the best kept kitten and with the most number of points will win this competition.

At the end of one week, you will submit a short paper (at least 500 words) about how the project went, how you felt about having to constantly care for the kitten and the restrictions imposed, etc.

See **Annex B** for Teacher’s Note.

3 Week 3:

Awareness Talk

At this juncture, a CWS volunteer may be involved to give a talk about responsible pet ownership and care by drawing on the students' experiences from the past 2 weeks.

We will educate them about community cats and responsible care giving, what do to when one encounters an instance of animal abuse and other facets of cat welfare.

In addition, an overview of the Trap-Neuter-Return- Manage programme will be explained so that students obtain a basic understanding of how sterilisation is the most humane method of controlling a community cat population.

The presentation slides and notes are freely available to Teacher and Students if they prefer to give the talk instead.



4 Weeks 4:

Student-run Awareness Booth

At this point, the students can share their knowledge with the rest of the school about owning cats and caring for community cats in Singapore. They can start by setting up an awareness booth at the school and running it during recess times and after school.

CWS will provide poster boards, brochures and flyers like those pictured below for students' use and dissemination. Students can also create their own educational flyers and programmes. They can also run competitions or games within their school community to drive in the message.

Fundraising

Selling CWS merchandise to help CWS raise funds is optional. CWS can provide the requisite merchandise, but we encourage students to also create items that may be sold to raise funds.



5 Weeks 5:

Helping the community – optional

The last step is to help the community around the vicinity of the school, thereby expanding the reach of this education programme. It is optional but highly encouraged that students participate.

There are two options:

Door-to-door education

- This will involve the students doing door to door or shop to shop engagements in a neighbourhood with information on responsible pet ownership or flyers detailing the abuse and appeal for witnesses.
- At the same time, the students will be pivotal in noting down and identifying potential cat-related issues such as identifying roaming pet cats, inappropriate feeding of cats or unsterilised cats.

Assisting needy households with cats

- We have encountered households with elderly living along with animals or have more cats than they can manage. These primarily low income households can benefit from advice and assistance.
- The purpose of this exercise is to help these households by cleaning their homes, rallying for food and cat-food donations and other useful activities. Cleaning tools like gloves, masks and brushes will be provided.

Cat welfare is a multi-faceted issue and a multi-faceted approach must be taken. A humane society has to begin somewhere, and where better than with the youth of today. If they can be taught responsible pet ownership and how to care for their pets and community cats, we would be a step closer to a more caring and tolerant society.



Annex A

EIGHT TIPS TO KEEPING YOUR CAT HAPPY, SAFE & HEALTHY!

Provide a cat-safe home

Cats are climbers by nature and in high-rise Singapore the incidence of cats falling out of windows is high. Wire mesh (plastic, metal) sold in Hardware Stores can help prevent painful injuries or death to your beloved cats.

Strings, Threads, yarn are NOT SAFE for cats.

Cat's tongues are covered with little hooks. Contrary to popular believe strings and threads are very dangerous for cats. Once it is hooked on their tongue, they can't help but swallow. It can cause deep cuts to their throat and get tangled in their stomach causing serious internal injuries that can lead to death.

Feed high quality foods

Leftovers, food scraps are not meant for cats/pets. They require a good quality diet that will keep them healthy. There are many good brands available in reputable pet shops. Do check with them on recommended foods. Spending a little more on proper diet/better brand of food will prevent massive vet bills in the future. A healthy cat is a happy cat.

Recommended types of food should be grain-free, free of colourings, sodium, artificial flavourings & by-products. They are many resources on the Internet that will educate the proper diets for healthy pets. Do a little research. When in doubt, ask.

Provide a proper scratch post and save your furniture (declawing is not an option)

Cats scratch, it's instinctive. Provide proper scratch post to help cats in their natural behaviour and save your furniture. Declawing is cruel and handicaps the cat. It is a painful and frustrating procedure. Imagine yourself without your knuckles & fingertips.. .

Sterilize your cat

Eliminate undesirable behaviour such as marking (for males) and catcalling (for females). And prevents unwanted litters from being born.

Do not cut your cat's whiskers

Whiskers are the natural balancing/height gauge/fit gauge guide for your cats. Without them the cats are susceptible to injuries from mis-judgements .

Dangerous Foods/plants that cannot be fed to cats

Onion (in ANY form), Chocolate (in ANY form), Lily flower are some of the extremely poisonous digestible items for cats.

Do not let your cat roam outdoors

Keep them safe indoors. They are contented living indoors with the people they love.

Love them

They are a member of your family; show them the respect and love they deserve. They certainly love you and do remember they have feelings just like us!

Cat Welfare. It's up to me.

Annex B

TEACHER'S NOTES FOR FLOUR BABIES

- Students **have** to keep a diary for the period. Randomly call for the diaries throughout the week so that they constantly update it.
- They will likely be very excited about the project at the onset, but as responsibility begins weighing down or they find other things they want to do, they will find all sorts of excuses to get out of it. Persist with the project because it is this exact situation that we find happens with impulse pet owners who do not fully understand the degree of care a kitten or cat requires and abandons them.
- Do weigh the flour kitten regularly and check for evidence of casual neglect or maltreatment. Dirt and scuff marks, snags in the fabric, leaking flour, etc are evidence that the student is not following the project – deduct 2 points each time you see such evidence.
- The student's main responsibility is to look after their kitten 24 hours a day for a week, or to arrange a cat sitter if for some reason they couldn't be there themselves. But they are also encouraged to think about what other needs the kitten might have, such as eating and cleaning litter boxes.
- Deduct points as liberally as you feel is necessary – 20 points is very easy to lose and students need to think of the 20 points as the life of the kitten. Every time they lose points, they should get the impression that they're causing hurt.

Points are deducted when

- Students put the kitten in their school bag – it could suffocate. They must have a special carrier such as a small cloth bag where it is comfortable and have a large opening for the kitten to breathe. 2 points will be deducted each time the kitten is found in their school bag.
- Kittens cannot be kept “caged” in the same place for more than 2 hours. 2 points will be deducted each time they keep the kitten “caged” in a carrier without taking it out to let it “exercise”.
- If someone hurts their kitten, this is abuse. The attacker will be sent to detention and all his/her points will be deducted. The criminal penalties under Singapore law include a fine and jail.
- Students must fill in the feeding and cleaning schedule of the kitten in a diary or logbook. Failure to update regularly will have 4 points deducted.
 - ✓ Kittens must be fed 4-5 times a day
 - ✓ Water bowls must be changed once a day
 - ✓ Litter box must be cleared once a day
 - ✓ 30 mins set aside to write in diary, synonymous to playing with the kitten
- If student lose or burst their flour kitten, all their points will be deducted for having caused its death. Student will then have to prepare a presentation to be given in class about prevention of animal abuse.