



Virtual Class Pet Program

Why should your classroom “adopt” a rescued animal resident from Charlie’s Acres as their class pet?

While spending time with animals undoubtedly a valuable learning experience for all ages and has benefits such as learning care and responsibility, relieving stress, and developing empathy, it is important to consider the animal’s experience. A bright and busy classroom is a good environment for children but is overwhelming to most animals. Despite the best of intentions, class pets may become neglected and ultimately unwanted as the school year ends.

By symbolically adopting a rescued animal resident of Charlie’s Acres as your class pet, you create a safe opportunity for kids to learn about animals that is inclusive regardless of the school’s budget and location, or any allergies of students.

While students are enrolled in virtual learning, a virtual class pet is still accessible and can be a fun bonding experience.

What exactly is the virtual class pet program?

When you “adopt” a class pet from Charlie’s Acres you will receive:

- A certificate of adoption
 - Option of physical copy to hang in classroom or virtual to send to all students.
- Information about your class pet’s background, how they came to Charlie’s Acres, and what their life is like now.



- Photos of your class pet.
- Four 30 minute video calls with an animal caregiver and your class pet. These can be scheduled throughout the year, semester, or shorter unit, depending on your class' needs. These calls will focus on humane education lessons that help students put themselves in an animal's "shoes" and consider their feelings.

Why Humane Education?

Did you know that many states have curriculum requirements for humane and character education? This education involves teaching children to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, and responsibility for self and others.

Teaching kindness to animals is a natural component of these efforts. Developing empathy towards animals can be a key step in developing empathy for and rejecting violence against all beings, including humans. With bullying and youth violence rampant in schools today, it is essential to teach compassion and encourage kindness in your students.

Additional Learning Opportunities

Our education program also provides lesson plans for various grade levels which are STEM focused and are based on science curriculum requirements. Find these companion lessons here.

1. First Video Call – Animals are amazing.

In this call, you'll learn all about your new class pet as both a species and an individual. You'll learn where they came from, why they needed to be rescued, and what their life is like now. You'll also learn all about this species and the amazing abilities that they have.

Discussion Questions:

Q: There are some amazing things that animals can do, that humans can't. If you could have any animal's superpowers, what would you pick and why?

Q: Can you think of any ways in which humans and this animal are alike?

2. Second Video Call – What is natural and important to animals?

In this call, we'll talk about how we take care of the animals on different levels. In addition to keeping our animal residents healthy, we also want to keep them happy! What is involved in that and how can you make your animals at home happy? What is important to animals?

Begin with enrichment activity and discuss why enrichment is so important in animal care. What else do we take into consideration? Not overwhelming them with too many toys, making sure they have friends and are getting along, making sure they can use natural behaviors like foraging, swimming, rooting, rolling in mud, grazing, climbing etc.

Discussion Questions:



Q: What are some feelings you have that animals share?

Q: What do animals do that show that they care about their families?

3. Third Video Call – Treat animals how you would like to be treated.

In this call we'll talk about interacting respectfully with animals. We'll discuss how to approach an animal, how to read their body language, how to know when it's time to give them their space, and how to be responsible for their happiness and considerate of their feelings. We'll focus on putting yourself in an animal's shoes and considering what they want.

Discussion Questions:

Q: How would you feel if you were being treated this way?

Q: What would you do if you saw someone hitting a cat for peeing on the carpet?

Q: What would you do if you saw many people hurry past a bird with a broken wing, who has fallen onto the busy sidewalk?

Q: What would you do if while walking home, your best friend finds a turtle in the wild and takes them home?

Q: What would you do if you were at a birthday party with a petting zoo and the animals were being picked up and handled roughly and seemed to be afraid?

Q: Is there any time that you saw someone was not treating an animal how they would want to be treated? What did you do? What would you do next time?

4. Fourth Video Call – How you can help animals.

We'll give a special treat to your class pet, update you on how they're doing, and introduce you to a few of our other animal residents. We'll also talk about language and why the way we talk about animals matters.

What is some language we hear that promotes violence towards animals?

"Kill two birds with one stone". Who has said or heard this phrase before? I'm sure none of you meant this literally and would ever consider killing two birds with a stone. What can we say instead? "Feed two birds with one scone". This phrase keeps its meaning but is much kinder.

"Beating a dead horse" can become "Feeding a fed horse" without changing the meaning.

What about when talking about animals? Do we refer to our dogs and cats at home as "it" or as "he/she/they"? Why is this distinction important?

When you learn about nouns, you might have heard that nouns include people, places, and things. But we can expand this to people, places, things, and animals! When we talk about animals like they are individuals who matter and have their own wants and needs, we encourage other people to view them that way. Just like YOU are not one thing, animals are complex too. We are ALL animals!



Discussion Questions:

Q: Can you think of some ways to be a better friend to the animals in your life?

Q: What are some other choices you can make that can save animals?

Q: Can you think of a way to help an animal who shares the world with us?

