



The Time is Meow

Animal welfare in the National Curriculum

Why it matters

Children are the pet owners of tomorrow and it's essential they leave school with a basic understanding of how to respect and care for animals. This can be achieved by including animal welfare as a mainstream topic in the National Curriculum. Such teaching would have additional benefits to a child's emotional development, enabling greater discussion and understanding about caring for others, empathy and responsibility.

Cats Protection's commitment to animal welfare education

Across the UK, Cats Protection volunteers provide talks to children in schools, youth organisations and community groups to help them learn how to care for cats. Our dedicated website at education.cats.org.uk is packed full of resources for teachers and fun, educational activities for children.

What the government can do

1. Include animal welfare in the National Curriculum for all children.
2. Commission research into the links between animal welfare education and preventing problems of animal cruelty and neglect, and reducing anti-social behaviour in adults.
3. Assess the case for including animal welfare in the National Curriculum as part of the 2020 review of the Department for Education strategy 2015-2020.



"Our talks outline the five welfare needs and through stories, props and discussion, promote responsible pet ownership. The children love finding out how the basic welfare needs apply to both humans and animals. The regular feedback from talks shows that the audience enjoy the talks and that the messages are followed up in discussions about animal welfare and responsible pet ownership."

- Jenny, Cats Protection volunteer



Turn over to read more



The benefits

Helping children understand responsible pet ownership would improve some of the biggest animal welfare issues impacting on society. This includes the increasing number of abandoned and unwanted cats, as well as cases of cruelty.

Research on the effectiveness of animal welfare programmes shows wide-ranging benefits to the personal development of young people, including:

- increasing animal welfare knowledge^(1,3-7) and improving attitudes towards animals^(2,7,9)
- improving pro-social behaviours and empathy^(2,8,9). In children as young as three, discussing animals enabled them to develop their capacity for empathy, increasing their ability to relate the needs of animals to the needs of people⁽¹⁰⁾
- in older children (9-11 years), teachers reported a significant increase in pro-social behaviours such as friendliness and showing empathy and compassion for the feelings of others⁽⁹⁾



For further information about our advocacy work visit www.cats.org.uk/timeismeow or email advocacy@cats.org.uk

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7 Orihuela, A, Aguirre, V, & Lakestani, N (2015). Society and Animals, 23(4), 363–378.

8 Samuels, WE (2018). International Journal of Educational Research, 91(January), 49–64.

9 Samuels, WE, Meers, LL, & Normando, S (2016). Anthrozoos, 29(4), 597–610.

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