



Animal Awareness and Support

The Animal Awareness and Support Patch Program invites Girl Scouts from Daisies through Ambassadors to explore animal behavior, responsible care, and the financial realities that impact local shelters and rescues. By examining how these pieces connect, girls gain a well-rounded understanding of animal welfare.

Throughout the program, Girl Scouts will learn how animals interact with people and each other, explore animals' needs, and examine the challenges they face in their communities.

By the end, they won't just understand the issues — they'll be empowered to take meaningful action and make a difference for animals where they live.

This program was created in partnership with Troop #1372 and the Cheyenne Animal Shelter—Thank You!

Step 1: Learn about animal interactions

Step 2: Learn about animal needs

Step 3: Learn about the issues

Step 4: Learn about resources available in your community

Step 5: Make a difference in your community

1

Interacting with Animals

Daisies - Juniors (Select at least one)

- Safety around dogs is important. Use the “Safety Around Dogs” handout to learn how dogs communicate with us, how to greet an unfamiliar dog, and what to do if an unfamiliar dog approaches you without an owner. Practice with a stuffed dog.
- Work with an expert to learn how to pet a dog or cat properly and how to hold a puppy or kitten. Why is it important to hold a puppy or kitten properly? Practice with a stuffed animal and then share what you learned with a friend or family member.

Cadettes - Ambassadors (Select at least one)

- Learn the basics of canine communication. Use the “Safety Around Dogs” handout to learn how dogs communicate with us, how to greet an unfamiliar dog, and what to do if an unfamiliar dog approaches you without a guardian. Practice with a stuffed dog.
- Ask an expert about the finer points of pet body language by researching stress, calming signals, and the ladder of communication. How do dogs or cats show us their happiness, discomfort, frustration, overstimulation, etc.? Talk about the difference in behavior when interacting with an unfamiliar animal compared to interacting with your own. How does body language play a role?



2

Animal Needs

Daisies – Brownies (Select at least one)

- Learn about what companion animals need. This can include food, water, shelter, grooming, training, toys, love, exercise, and veterinary care. How much does it cost to care for your pet?
- Create a biography for an animal companion (where they came from, what they eat, what they play with, what kind of care they need, etc.).
- Help your parents take care of your pets for a week.

Juniors – Cadettes (Select at least one)

- How much does it actually cost to own a pet? The cost of adopting a pet is only the beginning of the money you will spend on caring for the animal. Expenses might include adoption fee, leash, collar, ID tag, microchip, training classes, food and water bowls, flea control, brush, grooming, medicine, toys, food, spay/neutering, yearly vaccinations, yearly check-up, boarding, dog bed, crate for training, and more. What are the one-time costs and what are the recurring costs? To find prices, visit a local pet supply store, call a veterinarian, or search online.
- Research how shelters help match pets with families. You can research online or go into your local shelter and interview a staff member about adoption. Are the same animals right for every family?
- Talk with your local shelter to see what it takes to care of the pets in the shelter. Ask questions like: How many animals do you help a year? How much food do you give out per year? Do they have a pet food pantry? How long do the animals usually stay? What kind of enrichment activities do you provide? How many staff and volunteers do you have? What is the most difficult part of caring for so many animals? Get creative and report back to your troop with your findings.

Seniors – Ambassadors (Select at least one)

What ingredients are necessary in formulated diets? Research proteins, fillers, fatty acids, and vitamins in kibble and wet food diets for certain pets. Do cats and dogs need wet food? Research an exotic animal's diet, if interested. What special diets are made for pets with allergies or diet restrictions.

Research chronic health conditions in pets. What are FELV and FIV in cats and what causes it? What is heartworm in dogs and what causes it? Are many shelters able to treat FELV, FIV, and heartworm? Why? What kind of care is needed for chronic conditions?

What separates a domesticated, undomesticated, under socialized, feral, and wild animal? Learn about socialization periods. Why is socialization important on an individual, community, and species level.



3

Potential Issues

Daisies – Brownies (Select at least one)

Why is it important to have identification for your pet? Compare and contrast having a collar with an I.D. tag and microchip. What is most beneficial in reuniting a lost pet with their family.

Learn what to do if your pet gets lost. Pretend your pet, or a made-up pet, is lost. Follow the steps that your local animal shelter uses and make a pretend sign to post about your animal to help others reunite the lost pet with your family.

Visit your local shelter to learn about some of the reasons animals arrive at the shelter. How do shelters reconnect owners and lost pets? Are the animals always from the same city as the shelter?

Learn about safe and unsafe conditions for our pets and what can be done to keep these animals safe while in our care. How hot can it get in a car? Why is it important to have an indoor space for animals in the winter?





Juniors – Cadettes (Select at least one)

Why is it important to have identification for your furry friend? Learn about the different types of identification: I.D. tags and microchips. Discuss the pros and cons of each type of identification. Which one is most beneficial in reuniting a lost pet with its family?

Learn about safe and unsafe conditions for our furry friends and what can be done to keep these animals safe while in our care. How hot can it get in a car? Why is it important to have an indoor space for animals in the winter? Based on your research, what are some facts and recommendations pet guardians should know? Share this information with at least two other people.

Learn about spaying and neutering and the benefits to shelters when their communities have access to spaying and neutering services. Does your local shelter have a spay/neuter program? How do you think this helps people, pets, and shelters? Educate at least one other person about what you learned and how they can help.

Learn about adoption rates in different parts of the country. Why do shelters in some regions adopt more animals than other areas of the country? What can be done to help shelters that have lower adoption rates and more animals in their care? How do shelters collaborate to help more animals?



Seniors – Ambassadors (Select at least one)

What is a community cat? Check to see if your local shelter has a community cat program. What is trap-neuter-return and what kind of cats is it used for? Why is it important to put spayed/neutered cats back in the community, even when there is a large local cat population? Research the “vacuum effect” in relation to outdoor cat populations.

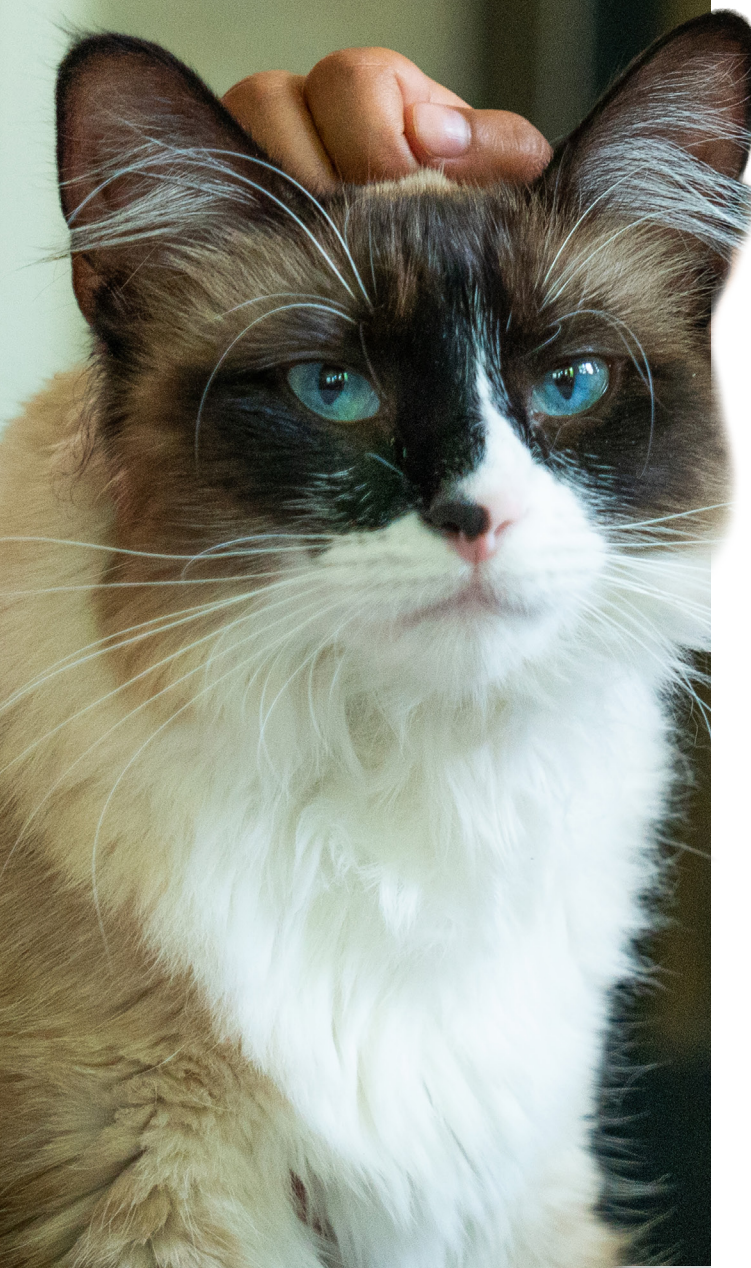
To understand why it is important to spay and neuter community cats, research cat reproduction. How many kittens are in a litter? How many litters can they have per year? How soon can they become pregnant? How long do outdoor cats usually live? To find the number of kittens one cat can have in her lifetime:

_____ litter size x _____ litters per year x (_____ avg lifespan - _____ avg reproductive starting age) = _____ kittens

Research what barriers there are to people accessing vet care. Does every community have low-cost services, shelters, or even veterinarians? Think about how far and costly vet care can be. How expensive is pet insurance and what does it usually cover?

4

Resources Available in Your Area



Daisies – Brownies (Select at least one)

- Gather a general understanding of what services are available in the area through animal shelters. Do shelters just offer sheltering and adoptions? What other resources do they offer to the community?
- Proper care for a companion animal can be costly. What are some resources available to help those struggling to care for their pet, so they don't have to surrender the animal to the shelter? Which of these resources does your local animal shelter have?
- Learn about how animals are adopted at your local shelter and pretend to adopt a pet at your own adoption center following the same steps your local shelter would take.
- Visit your local shelter to see how it works. What type of animals do they care for? How do they go about finding homes for these pets? What needs do they have? What programs do they offer to help those struggling to care for their pets?

Juniors – Cadettes (Select at least one)

- Visit a shelter to see how it works. While you are there, interview a member of the shelter staff to learn what their job entails. What needs does the shelter have? Where do the pets come from? How does the shelter go about finding new homes for pets? What challenges do they face?
- Proper care for a companion animal can be costly. Talk to your local shelter to see what resources are available to help those struggling to care for their pet so that they don't have to surrender the animal to that shelter. Share your findings with your troop. Explore these preventative resources and create a list of options to cover needs such as emergency veterinary care, routine veterinary care, food and daily needs, and medication. Further, learn about the advantages of properly training your pets.
- Does your local shelter have a volunteer program? What do volunteers at your local shelter do? How do community members get involved in helping your local shelter? What is the benefit of having a volunteer program?

Senior – Ambassador (Select at least one)

- While we often think of animal shelters and resources for dogs, cats, and other common companion animals, there are instances where people adopt an exotic pet. Research into what exotic pets are legal/illegal to have in Montana and Wyoming. What resources are there for people who either have an animal they shouldn't have, or are unable to best care for their exotic pet?
- Learn about the work of the Wyoming Coalition for Animal Protection (WyCAP), Beartooth Humane Alliance, or Humane Society of Western Montana. What are some of the key issues they address? How might their work help reduce the number of homeless animals?



5

Making a Difference



Daisies – Brownies (Select at least one)

- Hold a toy drive or invite others to help you make toys for your local shelter. Why do you think the shelter gives toys to the animals in their care? Why does the shelter need so many toys? What toys are the best for each kind of animal at the shelter? Find out more about what kinds of toys are needed at your local animal shelter. For example <https://arlgp.org/donation-drive-toolkit/>
- Do something special to raise awareness for Adopt A Cat Month (June), Adopt a Dog Month (October), or Be Kind to Animals Week (first week of May).
- Get a first-hand look at the work shelters do by volunteering! Spend a couple of hours with your troop or family and help take care of the pets at your local shelter. Tell your friends and family about your experience and talk about the benefits of volunteering.



Juniors – Ambassadors (Select at least one)

Compile a list of local resources that can be shared with others to help keep companion animals with their families. Resources could include upcoming pet adoption or education events, resources for free/low-cost animal care, and more. Create a fun way to share what you have discovered.

Many communities don't know everything that their local shelter does! Create a video (TikTok, Instagram, etc.) that talks about what your local shelter does some of the resources they offer to their community shelters, and how community members can utilize these services. Share your video with members of your community as well as on social media. If this references a specific shelter, get their permission before posting on social media.

Talk with your local shelter to see what supplies they need. Work with your troop to hold a supply drive. Invite your friends and family to participate. At the end of the drive, drop the supplies off at the shelter. Be sure to explain the importance of pet food drives and create a flyer you can hand out explaining some of what you have learned.

Get a first-hand look at the work shelters do by volunteering! Spend a couple of hours with your troop or family and help take care of the pets at your local shelter. Tell your friends and family about your experience and talk about the benefits of volunteering.

Education is important! Create a media piece (flyer, pamphlet, video, etc.) on responsible pet ownership. Why is it important to vaccinate your pets? Why microchip? Why spay/neuter?

Safety Around Dogs

Meeting a New Dog With an Owner

Step 1: Ask the owner for permission to pet their dog. If the owner allows, then follow the next steps. If not, leave the animal alone.

Step 2: Ask the dog by letting them come to you. Let them sniff you and decide whether or not they want you to pet them. DO NOT stick your hand in their face. Pay attention to the dog's body language and any signs of discomfort. If the dog is showing happy or relaxed body language, move on to the next step. If they are not, disengage and end the interaction.

Step 3: If the dog allows, pet the dog for three gentle pets on the back or side. Don't reach over the dog. Stop petting. If the dog wants to continue the interaction, they may lean in to you. If they move away, do not pursue as the interaction is over. After the interaction, thank the owner and walk away.

Meeting a New Dog Without an Owner

If the dog approaches you...

Be a Tree: Stop where you are, do not run. Fold your arms in front of you and stay still. Be as boring as possible and wait for an adult to help you. Try not to make eye contact and stay quiet. Once the dog leaves, calmly walk away. Even if a dog appears friendly, it is best to leave it alone.

If the dog jumps on you or attacks...

Be a Rock: Stop where you are. Get down on the ground. Clasp your hands behind your head to protect your neck and stay still. Be boring!

As a general rule, avoid interacting with any unfamiliar dog who does not have an owner with them, regardless of how friendly they may seem.

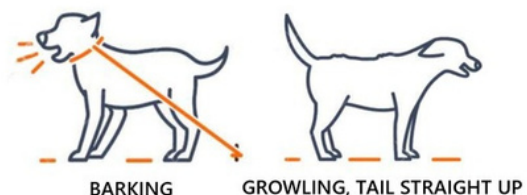
FEAR



HAPPY



ANGER



Practice Scenarios

Scenario #1

Cat: Is sitting on the couch.

Child: Approaches the cat.

Cat: Has ears pinned to the back of the head and gives a hiss.

Child: Tries to pick the cat up.

Cat: Scratches the child.

What was the right or wrong thing for the child to do? How do you think the cat felt and why?

The best thing to do is respect how animals feel and leave them alone if you make them scared. The child should have stopped approaching the cat.

Scenario #2

Cat: Is sitting on the couch.

Child: Approaches the cat.

Cat: Leans toward the child and rubs against her hand, then walks away.

Child: Doesn't follow the cat.

What was the right or wrong thing for the child to do? How do you think the cat felt and why?

The cat enjoyed greeting the child but didn't want to be a pet anymore. The child was right in letting the cat leave.

Scenario #3

Dog: Is playing with a toy.

Child: Reaches for the dog's toy.

Dog: Growls and shows her teeth.

Child: Backs away and leaves the room

What was the right or wrong thing for the child to do? How do you think the dog felt and why?

The child was right in stopping when the dog got angry, but they shouldn't have reached for the dog's toy when the dog was playing alone in the first place.

Scenario #4

Dog: Is eating dinner.

Child: Pets dog on the back.

Dog: Stops eating and stares at the child out of the corner of his eye.

Child: Keeps petting the dog.

Dog: Barks loudly at the child.

What was the right or wrong thing for the child to do? How do you think the dog felt and why?

The child shouldn't be touching the dog while he is eating. The child also should have stopped when the dog showed uncomfortable body language.

