

A Dog's Day

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BACKGROUND

It is helpful for first and second-graders, who are just mastering the concept of rules and laws, to learn that the legislature makes laws for a reason.

PROCEDURE

Using the Socratic method of learning, separately identify each of the dog tags and explain the disease of rabies and the concept of licensing.

PROPS NEEDED

Bring in a dog collar with the rabies tag and dog license attached. Stuffed animals also make good props.

THE LAW

State statute requires that all dog owners obtain a rabies vaccine from a licensed veterinarian and that they also register their dogs with the city or town clerk's office. When a dog owner registers his or her dog(s) with the city or town, the owner is required to show the dog's rabies certificate. For each dog licensed, each tag has a separate identification number. Dogs are required to wear their rabies vaccination tag and their dog licensing tag on their collar whenever they are outside the home. This law serves a number of purposes, but primarily, it protects the public and their dogs from the risk of contracting rabies. It also helps the town dog officer with the identification of a lost dog.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How many of you have dogs? How many of you have more than one dog? How many of your grandparents have dogs? How many of your friends have dogs? How many of your neighbors have dogs? (Everyone in class should have hands raised.)

While showing the children the dog collar, ask, "What does a dog wear on its collar?"

Point out that the dog's rabies tag has a separate identification number. This number corresponds to the veterinarian's file on the dog. While showing the children the rabies tag, ask, "Where does a dog owner go to get the rabies tag? What can happen to a dog if it gets rabies? Who could you tell if you think you see a dog with rabies? What can happen to a person if he or she gets bitten by a dog with rabies? How can you avoid being bitten by a dog? What adults should you tell if you are bitten or think you may have touched an animal with rabies? What can the doctor give you to prevent you from getting seriously ill if you have been bitten by a rabid animal?"

Point out that the dog's license tag, which is different from the dog's rabies tag, also has a separate identification. This number corresponds to the town's file on the dog. While showing the children the dog license, ask, "Where does a dog owner go to get a dog license? What does the dog owner have to show in order to receive a license? Why does the town or city clerk require every dog owner to obtain a license for all their dogs and to show him or her the rabies certificate before giving out a dog license? Why would the legislature make a law that requires dog owners to obtain a rabies certificate before issuing a dog license? Who is such a law designed to protect? How does it help the dogs? How does it help people? What would happen if dog owners were not required to obtain a rabies certificate or license their dog?"

Who could you contact if you lost your dog or if your grandparents, your friends or neighbors lost their dog? Who could the city or town animal control officer or your local humane society contact if they found a lost dog who was wearing its tags? How could the city or town clerk help identify the dog? How could the veterinarian's office help?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

License - permission, granted by a governmental body, allowing a person to engage in an act that would otherwise be illegal, a trespass or a tort. The certificate or document authorizes permission.

Rabies - a viral disease of the central nervous system. It is transmitted when the saliva of a rabid animal comes into contact with an open wound. It can be transmitted to humans by the bite or scratch of a wild animal or pet infected with the disease. Symptoms include thick saliva, spasms when attempting to drink water, a painful bite site and behavior may be restless and abnormal. If not treated promptly, it may result in paralysis or death. Treatment includes cleaning the wound and giving the rabies immune globulin if necessary. If the animal had its rabies vaccine, and the animal's behavior over the ten days following a bite does not show the symptoms of rabies, treatment, other than cleaning the wound, may not be necessary.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES WHICH EXPAND THIS LESSON PLAN

Currently there is pending legislation which would allow towns to require cats to obtain licenses, but no town has enacted it. If you were a city legislator or town selectman, would you recommend that cats be licensed? Why or why not? Discuss the pros and cons. What other animals should be licensed?

What other types of activities does the state require licensing for (e.g., hunting, fishing, driving a car)? Why might the state want to regulate these activities?

