Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to issue 31 of Minis at Home newsletter. Each newsletter features a special theme and offers pertinent information, a craft, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your pARTicipation is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family.

This week’s theme = Pets!

Pets are a wonderful addition to any family. A pet is usually a domesticated (not wild) animal that lives with people for companionship and enjoyment. Do you have a pet in your life? More than one? When we talk about pets, we often think about cats and dogs, but there are many other types of animals that people call pets. Ferrets, rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice and rats are popular mammals. Many pets are soft and cuddly, but not all! Fish are birds are are popular, too. Some people have reptiles like lizards, snakes, and turtles as pets. Hermit crabs are also favorites. Would you like to cuddle with your hermit crab or pat your snake? Hmm…probably not!

Some people have pets that are too big for their houses (or too noisy!), so they keep them in stables, pastures or pens. Horses, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens usually live near your house but not in it.
Animals are not only great for companionship, but they may also be very important in helping their owners with their daily lives. Some people are **blind**, so they may have specially trained "seeing eye dogs" that help them get around. Some pets are "therapy animals" and help people who are afraid or anxious feel better. Patting animals and just being around them often makes people happier and healthier.

Animals require a lot of work, though, and having a pet goes far beyond cuddling or entertainment. Caring for your pet is important, and it can be one of your first lessons in being responsible for another living creature. If you have a pet at home, is it your job to help care for it? Here are some things you must do to be a responsible pet owner:

- All pets need clean water, so change their drinking (or swimming!) water often.

- Pets need special food with the right **vitamins** and **nutrients** for them. If you feed pets certain foods (like snacks from your dinner plate), they might get really sick. And never give chocolate to a dog!

- Pets need clean and comfortable living areas: clean beds or cushions for dogs and cats, clean water for a fish tank, clean cages for bunnies or birds, and clean hay for animals that live in a barn. Some pets also need toys to play with.

- Pets can get lonely, so they need to have interaction with others. Dogs and cats need human companionship. Other pets like birds or fish, for example, will be happier if they live with another of the same species.
All pets need exercise, even fish! Dogs must be walked, cats must be played with, fish must have enough space in which to swim, and rodents must have plenty to do in their cages, such as running through tunnels or exercising on a treadmill.

Pets need safe and secure places to live so they cannot sneak out of the house or get lost. You must be able to provide a good home for them.

When deciding to get a pet, it is VERY important to make sure your family is ready, willing and able to commit to caring for it. Many animals end up lost or in animal shelters because their owners did not or could not care for them. An animal shelter is a place where pets can live until they are either found by their owners or adopted by a new family. Shelters are important because they provide food, care and love to animals in need.

Pets need regular check-ups just like you do. They go to a veterinarian, a doctor trained to take care of animals.

Whether they be furry, scaly, fishy, slimy, or flighty, we are lucky to have pets in our lives.

Pet Fast Facts:

The word "pet" comes from the word “petty," which means small.

People have kept pets for thousands of years.

More than half of people who live in the US own a pet.

Fish are the most popular kind of pet!

Dogs were probably the first type of pet.

Cats were worshipped by the Ancient Egyptians, who also kept lions and monkeys as pets.
Activity: Craft

Paper Bag Pet Friends

Materials:
- Paper lunch bags
- White, brown, black and pink construction paper
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Googly eyes (optional)

Procedure:

Using any color combination of construction paper, draw and cut out your pet's facial features and markings: Grownups can draw or trace the shapes and children can practice cutting them out.

Examples of shapes you might cut out:
- long ovals for dog ears
- triangles for cat ears (and smaller, pink ones for inner ears)
- small upside-down u-shapes for pink tongues
- long curved shapes for tails
- spots for dogs or stripes (skinny triangles) for cats
- half-circles for paws
- long rectangle for collar
- circle for pet tag
- thin strips for whiskers
- white circles for eyes and smaller black ones for pupils OR use googly eyes

Glue facial features and ears onto the bag's unopened bottom flap, gluing the dog's tongue just under the edge of the flap. Glue paws and other markings onto the body of the bag. Glue tail onto the back of the paper bag.

When all your gluing is dry, open the bag and flap and carefully put your hand inside. Now you have a pet puppet! Have fun making other types of paper bag pet puppets such as bunnies, birds or hamsters!
Activity: Sing and Play

Pets!
(sung to "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"

Love, love, love your pets
Love them every day,
Give them food, and water too,
And let them run and play!

(from kidsparkz.com)

Bingo (from supersimplesongs.com)

There was a farmer had a dog
And Bingo was his name-o
B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O
And Bingo as his name-o
(Repeat leaving out one letter at time and clapping in its place)

Pets in the Pet Store Rhyming Game (original source unknown)

So many pets at the pet store
Which pet do I like more?
I want the one that rhymes with ______
Yes, may I please have a ______?

(Here are the rhyming pairs to use in the song or you could make up your own!)

log/dog
hat/cat
habit/rabbit
faster/hamster
word/bird
hurgle/turtle
lake/snake
blizzard/lizard
Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together

_Lola Gets a Cat_ by Anna McQuinn
_Some Pets_ by Angela DiTerlizzi
_Not Norman_ by Kelly Bennett
_Caring for Your Pets_ by Ann Owen
_The Perfect Pet_ by Margie Palatini
_How Do Dinosaurs Love Their Dogs?_ by Jane Yolen

See you next week with issue 32 of _Minis at Home_!

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