Happy Animal Environments

Craft Activity

In this activity, you will create a shoebox diorama that show animals living happily and healthily in their appropriate environment, surrounded by what they require to have their needs met.

1. **Brainstorm**

Choose an animal for your project. Think about what the animal needs to be happy and healthy. If you are not sure, first think about your own needs such as, healthful food, exercise, social interactions, fun, and love. These are often similar to the needs of an animal.

It is important to be aware of the similarities shared between people and animals, but to also be aware of the differences. For example, keeping clean is a similar need for chickens and humans, but chickens take dust baths to clean their feathers, while people take showers to clean their skin.

All animal species have some common needs, including healthful food, clean water, fresh air, space to move, and opportunities to form appropriate social bonds, play, and groom themselves. But there are also distinct differences in needs between different animal species.

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**Companion Animals**

For companion animals, consider ways to keep a human home pet-friendly and safe. Think about ways to protect dogs or cats from getting into places that could harm them, such as keeping the trash can under the kitchen sink.

For “small friend” companion animals -- such as birds, rabbits, or hamsters, who may live in enclosures within homes remember to make those enclosures safe and stimulating, meeting the animals’ needs. Research how much time these animals need to be outside of their enclosures to maintain their mental and physical well-being. Learn about ways to give these animals time outside of their enclosures that are safe and comfortable.

And of course, because all companion animals live with and rely on humans, think about what people can give to their companion animals to make their lives happy including, love and kindness!

**Farm Animals**

Although farm animals do not generally live in human homes, they still rely on people to have many of their needs met because they have been domesticated.

To learn more about farm animals watch videos of farm animals who live on sanctuaries, where they are well cared for and able to live out their lives and express their natural behaviors. This will help you to create a living environment where farm animals are happy and healthy.

After you create your “happy animal environment” for farm animals, also think about how we can show love and compassion for all farm animals in our everyday food choices.

**Wildlife**

Think about how the natural world provides for the needs of wildlife.

Take some time to consider how people have caused habitat destruction which can make it difficult for wild animals’ to fulfill their needs.

In your diorama create a healthy habitat that provides everything your chosen animal needs to thrive. Also, think about how people can be good neighbors to wildlife in their communities. When necessary people can provide wild animals with what they are missing, such as proper shelter by making bat homes and toad abodes.
2 Building Dioramas

To create a diorama, you'll need a small shoebox or other cardboard box. Decorate the inside of the box with recycled construction paper, paints, markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils.

- The walls of the diorama should be decorated to look like the animal's environment, whether it's a home for a dog, a barn and pasture for a horse, or a pond for a duck.

- The inside of the diorama can be decorated with all sorts of creative additions. You can use clay to craft animals, gather fallen twigs from outside to represent trees, or even use repurposed materials such as a bottle cap for a cat's water bowl.

The photos below show the construction of a diorama by a student to provide as an example, but we encourage you to flex your creative muscles to design your own amazing artwork!

3 Present Work

Once you complete your dioramas, share your work with your family.

Bonus:

Write a short paragraph about what your animal needs to be happy and healthy. Describe how you highlighted some of those needs in your diorama.