

ACTIVITIES LIST - Beginner

Please complete **three** different activities for each year in this division. You may choose from this list or gain approval from the Project Leader for any other ideas.

- Each species can often come in different colors. What color is your pet? What other colors can your pet's species be?
- All species now kept as pets, once only lived in the wild. Research where your pet's species came from – what country or type of environment is it wild in?
- In learning about your pet's native home, in what ways are you able to meet its needs in captivity? *Example: A canary needs to see the changes of natural daylight throughout the year. A canary whose cage is not covered with a dark cloth when you turn on the lights will not be as healthy or live as long as a canary who is allowed to sleep and wake with the sun. Example: All creatures need exercise, and in captivity they need exercise wheels or supervised time outside of their enclosures. What things can your pet do that is like being in the wild?*
- Learning what is normal behavior for your pet requires getting to know them. Keep a record of your observations of your pet for a week. Did you see or learn anything new?
- Being a pet owner can be fun. Sometimes your pet can inspire you. Draw a picture or write a story about your pet.
- No matter what kind of pet we have, or how many, there's always something else that looks fun to have. What other kind of pet would you like? What would be fun about it, and what kind of special care would it need?
- Use your pet for a demonstration in 4-H or school, or visit a nursing home.
- One part of understanding your pet's species is understanding its different body parts. *Example: Birds can hear, but their ear openings are covered by feathers. The quills that cover a hedgehog's body is controlled by one single muscle, which can constrict the hedgehog into a tight ball. Is it true that ferrets don't have spines? No! Ferrets have a skeleton similar to any mammal. Study your pet's body parts.*
- As pet owners, we are responsible for our pet's safety. *Example: An open door or window from which a pet could escape, electrical cords that a guinea pig could chew, or an easy chair that a ferret could get under and be hurt when someone sits down. What are the hazards in your home?*
- What is instinct and what is learned behavior? Instinct is behavior that an animal is born with, like grooming its fur or feathers or how to build a nest. Learned behavior is something taught by a human (*example: a ferret using a litterbox or a bird taught to say words*) or learned as an adaptation to its environment (*example: drinking from a water bottle or running on an exercise wheel*). What are some behaviors of both taught and adapted behavior that your pet does?
- Interspecies relationships – which different species can be supervised together and which cannot? List reasons. *Example: Ferrets in playing can injure or even kill most other species; guinea pigs and hedgehogs will not hurt another animal and may just ignore them.*
- An animal can be a carnivore (eats meat), an insectivore (eats mostly insects), a herbivore (eats plants), or an omnivore (eats meat and plants). Humans are omnivores. In which category is your pet? What is your pet's diet, and what kind of treats do you offer?
- Comparison shop for your pet's food or litter, looking for the best price or quality. Look at three or more sources.
- Enrichment is anything you can do to improve your pet's life, like a treat or activity or new toy. What can you do to give your pet some enrichment? How does it respond?
- Every pet needs a warm safe home. It mustn't be in sunny window or drafts, and it should have clean safe litter and a hiding place. How could you make your pet's home more comfortable and why?

- All pets require some type of routine care. *Example: Cleaning the cage, clipping toenails, for bathing opportunities, or other aspects such as providing different shells for hermit crabs to move into or leaving alone snakes in molt.* What special care does your pet require to stay healthy? How often do you do these tasks?
- Your pet's voice is sounds that are called vocalizations. Describe two or more sounds your pet makes and what do you think they mean?
- Why did my pet bite me? Animals may bite for different reasons. *Example: A pet may be scared that it will be dropped or it may not want your hand inside its home.* What happened when your pet bit you and what should you have done instead?
- Animal adaptations – each species has specific physical traits for survival in the wild. *Example: Bird beaks are made for the food they eat, some lizards can change color, and hedgehog quills can protect their soft body.* What is a special part of your pet's body and how is it used?
- All animals have ways to protect themselves in the wild; these are called defense mechanisms. Ways of defense is either a way of running away from danger or fighting. *Example: Some small lizards and geckos can let their tail fall off and distract the enemy while they run away.* How would your pet protect itself?