

## ACTIVITIES LIST - Intermediate

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.

- Some pets are closely related to species not kept as pets. *Example: There are more than 20 species of hamsters in the world, but only four species (Syrian, Russian Dwarf, Chinese, & Roborovski's Dwarf) are kept in captivity.* Is your pet one of several species? Explore the similarities and differences.
- Each species comes from a certain environment in the wild. What are some ways that your pet's home meets the needs from the wild?
- Observation is required to understand your pet's normal behavior. Keep a record of observations for three weeks – it can be three weeks together or at different times of the year. Did you see or learn anything new?
- Pets can inspire us, as well as teach and entertain us. Draw a picture of your pet, or write a poem or short story about your pet.
- Some pets can have a short life-span, and we want to remember them. Decorate a scrapbook page featuring your pet.
- Use your pet for a demonstration in 4-H or school, or visit a nursing home.
- Study the anatomy or physiology of your pet's species (can be internal systems like skeletal, nervous, or digestive).
- Any animal can get sick or get parasites. Study the diseases and ailments that can affect your pet.
- Interview a breeder of any pet species.
- What is proper terminology for you pet's species? What other species might also use those terms? *Example: Male ferrets are hobs and the females are jills; birds are cocks and hens.*
- There are a lot of fascinating exotic pets available. *Example: A hedgehog needs a quiet home to sleep during the day, a large parrot will require a lifelong commitment, or ferrets who require ferret companionship in addition to human playtime.* What kind of animal would you wish for? How could you have fun with it? How would it require different care?
- Animals can be carnivores, insectivores, herbivores, or omnivores. Is your pet getting a proper diet? What ingredients in your pet's feed indicate correct nutrition?
- Explore different treats for your pets. Without offering too much, what is your pet's favorite? How do you know?
- Compare prices & quality (health, tameness, conformation) of obtaining a pet from pet shops, breeders, and rescue organizations. Which will you choose for your next pet?
- Attend an exhibition show for species like ferrets or guinea pigs or a sales/info expo like the reptile show held annually at the State Fairgrounds. What did you learn?
- Enrichment is anything you can do to enhance your pet's life – a new treat, activity, or toy. Explore different ways to add enrichment to your pet's life. How does it respond?
- Behavioral enrichment stimulates your pet's thinking. It could be a training activity or a way that makes them "work" for a treat, like a treat ball for a ferret or bird. Explore behavioral enrichment and the responses.
- Most species have different types of vocalization. They may make warning or frightened sounds, happy or hungry sounds. What influences do you have? *Example: A guinea pig whistles in excitement for treats, a bird may mimic your words.* Can you mimic any of your pet's sounds, and what is its reaction? If your pet makes specific vocalizations during a daily routine, does changing the routine have an effect, and if so, what is it?

- Talk to your friends and relatives about your species and other species you may have learned about. What are some myths they may believe about those animals? *Example: Some may think hedgehogs roll when curled in a ball or snakes are slimy.*
- Analyze different litter brands or types for your pet (wood shavings, paper-based, etc.) for cost, effectiveness, and other traits like excess dust or recyclability.
- Most pets can be trained behaviors, although some individuals and some species are more receptive than others. Some behaviors are useful, like multiple rats or ferrets coming on command for a treat after out-of-cage playtime, which can assist in returning everyone promptly. Other behaviors are fun, like teaching a bird to talk or rat to wave a paw in the air. What useful or fun behaviors can you train? Document your steps in training and successes or failures.
- Someday you may want to let your pet produce babies. Research about reproduction – gestation length, ideal breeding age, possible health concerns, special care of offspring – and make any plans on paper.
- Animals that some people consider low-maintenance, others may consider that species as high-maintenance. List two species that you consider low-maintenance and two as high-maintenance. List your reasons for each.
- Animals may bite for different reasons – fear, hormonal, discomfort due to illness, or territorial aggression. Has your pet ever tried to bite, and if so, why do you think that is? List a circumstance that could result in each kind of biting (by your species or another), and how could you prevent it?
- There are a range of adaptations amongst species. *Example: Birds will molt their feathers, sugar gliders have the extra skin to allow gliding down from heights, and hedgehogs will hibernate when too cold.* Some are seasonally triggered. What adaptations does your pet practice and why? Compare your pet's species to another.
- By now you will have established a routine as a pet owner. What are your daily and monthly routines concerning your pet?