

Thinking About Animals

Introduction

Ask children what some of their favourite foods are. Ask children to describe how these foods are grown/produced. You could bring in some examples or use the white board to show images (e.g. tomatoes on a vine, potatoes dug up from the earth, oranges on trees, animals in sheds, fish in nets, etc.). Ask children where the following come from: beef, ham, pork, mutton, lamb, chicken.

Activity 1: Mime Game

Part 1

Ask the children to think of one thing which makes them happy. Choose a few children and ask them to come to the front and mime whatever it is they thought of. Ask the others to guess what it is. Repeat the exercise, this time asking the children to think of something which makes them sad.

Part 2

Ask pairs to think of something which might make an animal happy. Ask one or two of the pairs to come to the front and mime what they thought of, and ask the rest of the class to guess what it is. Repeat the exercise, this time asking the pairs to think of something which might make an animal sad.

Activity 2: What Do Animals Need?

Part 1

Divide the children into five groups. Each one should be allotted a different animal: chicken, pig, cow, sheep, fish. Give each group the **Thinking About Animals** worksheet.

What does the animal need in order to live a healthy and happy life? Give the children five minutes to discuss which of the needs listed applies to their animal and tick their choices. Ask the children to feed back and elaborate. For example, if the animal needs soil, what for?

Part 2

Show one of the following images on the white board or use a picture/poster:

- chickens in battery cages
- pigs in crates
- cows in pens
- sheep being transported
- fish on a fish farm

Ask the children whether the animals in the picture are getting what they need? Why/why not?



Background

No matter what your school's primary reason for taking part in Meat Free Monday – be it to reduce your environmental impact, encourage healthy eating or cut the school spending – most people find it reassuring to know that taking part is also a compassionate step that helps prevent cruelty and suffering.

Over 60 billion animals are farmed and killed for meat each year. The majority of them are raised in intensive factory farms, in cramped, overcrowded cages, sheds and pens. This lesson asks children to think about animals' needs, abilities, emotions and behaviour and explore how they are treated through intensive farming.

Learning Objectives

Children should learn the following:

- To recognise that animals have the same basic needs as humans and experience similar sorts of emotions
- To be aware of the ways in which animals are treated on factory farms today
- To contribute ideas, discuss issues and listen to others' views

Accompanying Materials

Thinking About Animals (student worksheet)

Extension Ideas

- Show the children the 22-minute film *Let's Ask the Animals*, which explores the similarities between humans, pigs, chickens, cows and sheep in a fun and engaging way. Using video footage of animals, the film shows that animals learn from experience, use their senses and need companionship and exercise – just as humans do. It also shows scientists from leading veterinary schools working with animals and revealing fascinating facts about animal behaviour. You can view the film at vimeo.com/7592165 or order a copy from the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour.
- Have the children design Meat Free Monday posters incorporating different reasons for having a weekly meat free day.

Activity 3: True or False?

Divide the children into small groups so they can discuss each statement as a team before writing down their answers on a piece of paper or small whiteboard. (This activity could also be done using prepared activity sheets with "true" and "false" printed on them.) Read the following statements and ask children to decide whether they're true or false:

1. **Mother hens cluck to their unborn chicks, and the chicks chirp back to their mothers from inside their shells. True**

It is thought that the mother and chick chirp back and forth to each other to help the chick identify the mother and establish communication between them.

2. **Geese mate for life and grieve over their lost partners for a long time. If one mate is killed, the other may mourn the loss forever and never take another partner. True**

3. **Pigs are naturally dirty animals. False**

Pigs are naturally clean animals, but they do not have sweat glands, so they take to the mud to stay cool and ward off flies. On factory farms, pigs are forced to stand in their own manure.

4. **Cows naturally produce milk at all times during their lives. False**

Cows produce milk for about 10 months after having a calf and are then made pregnant again so they will give birth to another calf. Cows produce milk for the same reason that humans do: to nourish their young. On dairy farms their calves are taken away from them shortly after birth, and humans drink the cows' milk instead.

5. **In nature, mother pigs build nests out of twigs and give birth in them. True**

Pigs kept on factory farms live in concrete enclosures and are unable to dig holes in the dirt as they naturally would.

6. **Sheep all look very similar, so members of a flock cannot recognise each other. False**

Every sheep has a different face, and flockmates can recognise each other – even from photographs and even after they've been separated for years.

7. **When given a round object such as a melon, groups of turkeys and chickens will play with it and chase it in much the same way that we might play with a football. True**

Many animals love to play as we do, and as with people, some animals are more athletic than others.

8. **Chickens communicate with each other by using just two different sounds. False**

Chickens communicate using at least 24 distinct sounds, including separate alarm calls that identify different kinds of predators, such as a dog on the ground or a hawk in the sky.

Go through the answers and ask the children if they were surprised by any of the facts. You can extend this part of the lesson by asking the children if they know any interesting facts about animals' abilities, feelings and lifestyles. They might have learned some of the facts while watching documentaries about animals. The children could use these facts to create true-or-false questions for other children.

Activity 4: Pass the Orange

Ask the children how someone is described if they don't eat meat (vegetarian). Ask the children how someone is described if they don't eat meat or any animal products (vegan). Ask the children to suggest terms to describe people who are reducing the amount of meat they eat (meat reducer, flexitarian, semi-vegetarian). Why do some people choose to be vegetarian/vegan/flexitarian? What can we eat instead of animals?

Have children form a circle and pass an orange (or other fruit) around. Each child should complete the following sentence when he or she holds the fruit:

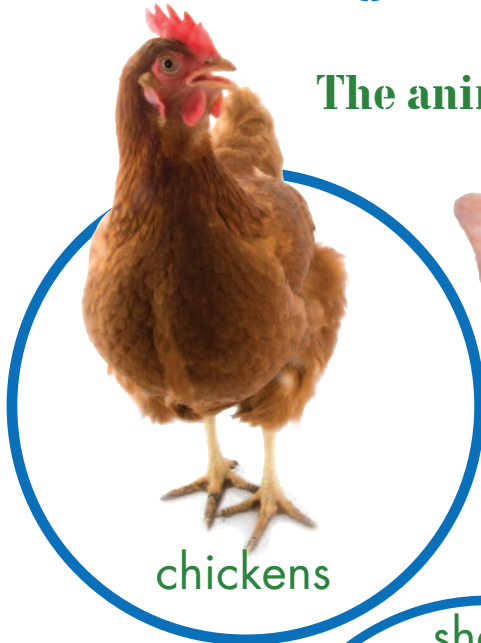
One meat free food I love is ...

Use the MFM
Impact Calculator
at
[meatfreemondays.com/
calculator](http://meatfreemondays.com/calculator) to find out
how many animals you
could save by doing
Meat Free Monday
or more.



Thinking About Animals

The animals we are thinking about are:



chickens



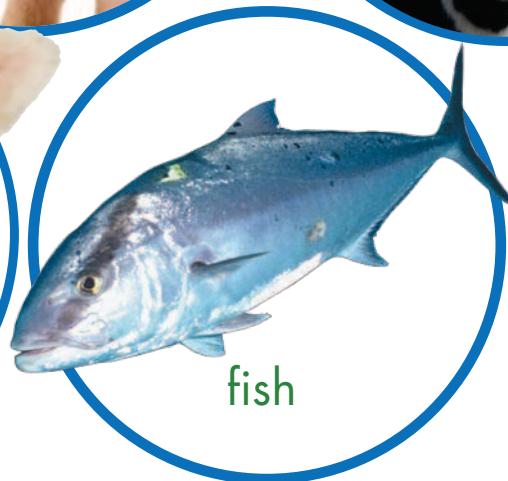
pigs



cows



sheep



fish

In order to live healthy and happy lives, these animals need:

clean water to drink

fresh air

exercise

family

food

soil

plenty of space

a comfortable nest

a perch

sunshine

friends

toys

clean water to swim in

warmth