

## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### SCENE SETTER ACTIVITY

#### ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the concept of compassion by drawing parallels from the children's own lives and linking this to the world of animals
- To identify the needs of animals
- To compare the needs of different animals

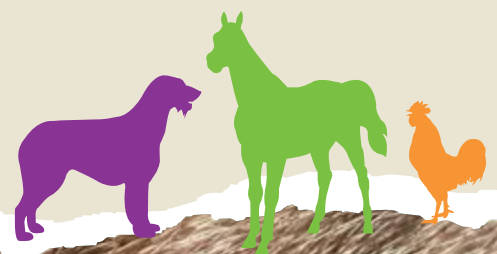
#### RESOURCES

- Introductory video
- Sticky labels or post-it notes
- Interactive PDF slides 'Scene setter' to guide pupils through the activities

Due to the topics covered in the Compassionate Class programme, it is important to consider how different children may react. For more information on creating a safe teaching and learning environment, see guidance on pages five to seven of the Teacher Overview downloadable at: [rspca.org.uk/ccresources](https://rspca.org.uk/ccresources).

For compassion to be understood by children who may struggle with understanding the feelings of others you may need to help them think about a situation when they needed compassion from another person. This lesson starts by looking at our own needs, and then linking these to other people and animals.

These activities could be delivered in the same lesson or spread over a few sessions, depending on the needs of your students. We have not specified timings to allow for flexibility for different settings.





# Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

## STIMULUS

Short film about compassion towards animals



Play the film on **slide two**. Write the word 'Compassion' on the board. You can work on this after the next exercise.

Personal experiences of compassion. Discuss the picture on **slide three**. Think about when you've felt alone or been hurt and people haven't been nice. Remember it may be potentially upsetting for some children.

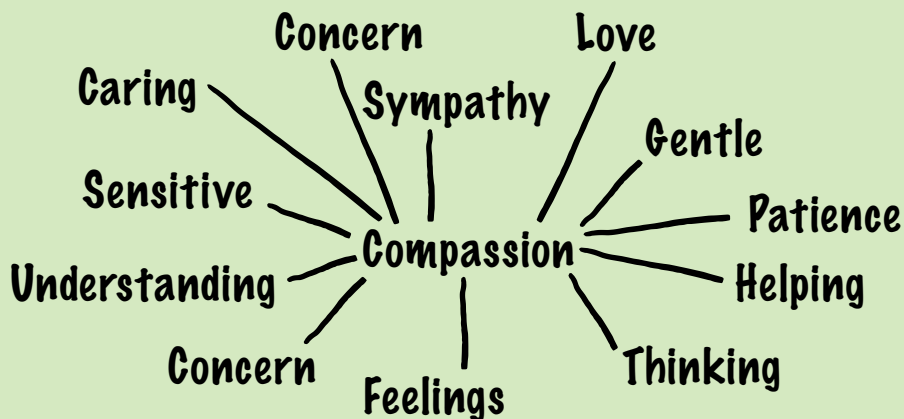
When you've explored this enough to suit the capacity of the class, try and find out what they would have wanted, how they might have felt differently if people had been nice. What would they do if they saw a child in the same situation?

## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### STIMULUS

Ask children to think about the word 'compassion' and come up with as many other words you can think of that help explain the meaning of compassion. Talk about what you saw in the film to prompt the kind of words you want from them. If necessary, watch the film again and pause it at pertinent moments to see if they can identify the places where a word can be generated.

You may end up with something like this:



The complexity of the words will be totally class dependent. You will re-visit this at the end of the session to see if the class can add any different words or ideas. This will help you assess levels of comprehension and consolidation.



## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### BUILDING A DEFINITION

From what you have generated, can you come up with your own class's definition of what compassion means?

Being compassionate means not mistreating other people and animals, and helping them if they are suffering or hurt. Compassionate people look out for others to make sure their lives are as happy and healthy as possible.

It's now a good time to transfer this learning to animals.

Explain that there are some things that animals need to live healthy, happy lives and as humans we must learn in order to be compassionate. Use the following examples to illustrate this:

- One of a dog's needs is to get enough regular exercise, so having a pet dog means you will need to take them out for a walk once or twice per day
- Leaving litter can be harmful to wild animals, so we should get rid of our rubbish properly and recycle where we can

Encourage more able children to think of some other examples that apply to different animals.





## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### TASK

#### What do animals need?

All the Compassionate Class activities help children to learn and explore what animals need to stay healthy and happy. These are different for each animal but are grouped into five key needs as below.

The next section introduces these animal needs. For each need, ask pupils what they think each of them might mean for different types of animals. Encourage them to look at the words they made on the board. After a brief group discussion, show them the examples on the following slides. Elaborate for other animals as you feel appropriate.

If you are working with lower ability or younger groups, you could read through the definitions as a group and ask children to think about whether the welfare needs apply to them as humans.

Each slide has a picture of a child having these needs met and then an example of an animal too.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

This discussion can be extended to different types of animals (rabbits, dogs, cats etc.) and different categories (pet, farm, zoo etc.) depending on the learning level of your class. Use the internet to find pictures of these needs being met. Build up a collage so it can be displayed in the classroom under each welfare need.



## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### TASK

**What do animals need?** (continued)

#### Slides 4 – 7: Environment

Animals need a place where they can rest and sleep safely with plenty of space to move around, and access to an exercise space. Just like humans, animals need the right diet. This is a great place to explore their experience of providing these needs in their own homes or to talk about where they have seen others doing the same.

#### Slides 8 – 9: Food and water

Animals need access to fresh clean water and the right type and amount of food to keep them fit and healthy.

Discuss what types of food and drink all the categories and types need. This is often a surprise to many as dogs are often fed 'treats' that might not be very good for them!

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Many of the children will have dogs. Do they know which foods are poisonous to dogs? Use the internet to discover these substances. Make a wall display showing good foods to feed us and our pets and a contrasting side to show unhealthy and/or dangerous foods.

#### Slides 10 – 11: Natural behaviour

Animals should be able to perform normal behaviour. Whether they like to run, jump, dig, fly or slither, they should have the space and environment to do just that! Don't forget to discuss reptiles! Look at farm animals, zoo animals, pets and working animals. Even when animals are working for humans they need 'down time' to be themselves.

# Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

## TASK

**What do animals need?** (continued)

### Slides 12 – 13: Company

How would the class feel if they didn't have friends to chat to or play with? Other animals like to live alone, other wild animals live independently in the wild. Discuss the type of animals that like to live alone and wouldn't want to be placed with another 'friend', e.g. bears, sloths, snakes.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Use the internet to explore animals that like to live in social groups and animals that live in isolation. Again, think of all the different categories of animals.

### Slides 14 – 15: Protection from harm

Animals should be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease. Pets and farm animals need regular check-ups from a vet. Wild animals need us to protect their habitats and to leave them alone as much as possible.

When did they last see the doctor/dentist. Have they had to take their pet to the vet? What would they do if they saw an animal in the wild that was injured?

# Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

## DISCUSSION

Use some of the questions below to explore the definition of compassion and the needs of animals.

If you're working with lower ability or younger groups, you can use an **online interactive game** to compare the needs of humans and different animals.

## PROMPT QUESTIONS

- How can we be compassionate to animals?
- Why is it important to be compassionate towards animals?
- Can you know what it is like to be an animal? This could become a 'let's pretend' game.
- In what ways are animals different to humans and how are they the same?
- What do humans need to be happy and healthy? Are these the same for everyone?
- What do animals need to be happy and healthy? Are all animal needs the same?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Make a list of all the needs humans have: food, bed, shelter, friends etc. Then have a paper pile or run of photos on the screen of animals from all categories. For each need, go through the animals and see if they need the same or a different version of what we need.





**COMPASSIONATE  
CLASS**

# Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

## DISCUSSION

Pets and farm animals depend totally on their owners to have their needs met. Wild animals can meet their needs by themselves and need us to not disturb them in any way.

- Is it right to train animals to do things they wouldn't naturally do?

Think about circus animals in addition to therapy, service and rescue animals. There are no right or wrong answers here, it's a discussion point if the class can function at this level of language.

To consolidate the children's learning around the needs of animals, play the Animal Guessing Game, outlined on the next page.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

This is a good opportunity for role play using doctors' kits and soft toys. It will enhance communication, aid memory, encourage social communication and consolidate some of the learning in this lesson.



# COMPASSIONATE CLASS

## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### ANIMAL GUESSING GAME

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Visit the **RSPCA's advice and welfare pages** for more information on the needs of different types of animal. You may want to ask your class to spend some time researching before completing this activity, especially if you are working with lower ability or younger children
2. Challenge children to choose any animal and write it down on a sticky label or post-it. Without letting each other see, they should stick the label on another person's back or forehead
3. Children then move around the space to discover which secret animal they are by asking questions about their needs, e.g. do I need to live on my own or with companions? What do I need to eat? Do I need humans to help meet my needs?
4. Summarise by discussing whether all animals have the same needs and comparing some of the questions and answers they used to discover their animal

### SESSION SUMMARY

Go back to the spider graph you created on the word 'compassion'. Can the children add any words to it now they've explored the topic? Are there any questions generated from the session that you could explore further? Were there any ethical or emotional issues that need addressing?



# COMPASSIONATE CLASS

## Could you be the RSPCA's most Compassionate Class?

### EXTENSION RESOURCES

If you'd like to take the learning from this scene setter session further before your class moves on to their first Discovery activity, you could try the extensions below.

- The **RSPCA education website** has some fun interactive quizzes and challenges that will help children learn about the needs of animals. Children could pick an animal and create a poster to communicate the needs of this specific animal with other classes
- Independently or in small groups, pupils could design something that represents the importance of showing compassion towards animals. This could be:
  - A painting or sculpture to display in school
  - A blog post for the school website
  - A performance for other classes/in assembly

### WHAT NEXT?

Now you have completed the scene setter activity, next up is to choose two Discovery activities which can be downloaded from the Compassionate Class homepage: [rspca.org.uk/ccresources](https://rspca.org.uk/ccresources). You can then choose an Advocacy activity that will provide your pupils with an entry for the Compassionate Class competition.

# Advocacy Activities

**WHY NOT TRY THE ACTIVITY BELOW THAT HELPS EXPLORE THE CONCEPT OF COMPASSION:**

## PHILOSOPHICAL HUMANS

**What informs our views, misconceptions and ethical codes around animal welfare? This activity will encourage children to put themselves in the 'shoes' of other creatures to encourage compassion and empathy.**

These will need varying levels of differentiation but are a good basis for the kinds of imaginative activities that will extend conversation from this session. Have children work in small groups to consider one of the questions below:

### Would you rather...?

- Be a dog or a cat?
- Care for an injured crocodile or catch mosquitoes?
- Have wings or a tail?
- Would you rather live underwater or in the treetops?

### Do you agree or disagree that...?

- A peacock knows it is beautiful
- All animals play
- Animals can talk
- All animals dream
- People are animals

Using their ideas, children create a representation of their response to the question through artwork, journal writing, scrapbooking, a film, animation, drama or story. You could start with the simpler questions as a class and build up.

**How do your answers to these questions help you understand that animals have thoughts, feelings and needs?**





# Advocacy Activities

## PHILOSOPHICAL HUMANS... CONTINUED

### Would it be good or bad if...?

- Ants ate litter?
- People hatched from eggs?
- Monkeys went to school?
- Giants kept people as pets?

**How do your answers to these questions help you understand the responsibilities that humans have to protect animals from harm and keep them happy and healthy?**

## IF ONLY THEY COULD TALK...

Imagine you can interview a lion in a zoo and a lion in the wild. What would they both say about their lives? How do they spend their time and what do they eat?

This again, could form part of a role play session or be part of an assembly - a journalist interviewing a farm or zoo animal.

