

## Girl Scout Badge Workshop with tour (Brownies)

### Pets Badge

Revised 2017

This workshop will take a look at zoo animals in the context of what we do to take care of them. Even though zoo animals are not pets, they need to be fed and cared for just as a pet would. Scouts will learn what all animals in human care need to be happy and healthy.

#### Introduction:

Meet the troop at the Educational Programs gate. Welcome them to the zoo and explain that we have a lot to see and talk about in order for them to complete their badge requirements in the time we have together, so it's very important that everyone follow the rules:

1. Stay together as a group. If we always have to wait for people to catch up, we won't have as much time to spend looking at the animals.
2. If the docent is talking or asking questions, it's important that everyone listen quietly so everyone can hear. If someone asks or answers a question, we should likewise be courteous and listen.
3. Please do not run ahead of the group. Stay next to or behind the docent.
4. Remember, the zoo is home to many animals. Do not yell at them, chase them, or bang on the glass of their exhibits.

#### Format:

##### Hands-on Activities

Begin in the classroom. Ask the girls if they have pets, and what kind. Ask them what all animals, pets or wild, need to live (food, water, shelter, space, air, they may also include love). Explain that even though most zoo animals are still wild animals and not pets, they still need people to provide them with the same things we would provide to pets. Ask the girls "What do you need provide to pets so they can be healthy and happy?" (food, water, shelter/home, exercise, toys, they may have other ideas) Explain that at the zoo, all of those things are provided to our animals, and we'll talk more about the individual animals and their needs on the tour.

##### Requirement 4: "Make a pet feel loved"

Next, explain to the girls that animals need things to help them get exercise and keep them busy/entertained. For pets, we would call those things "toys". Here at the zoo, we call it enrichment. We are going to make an enrichment item for a dog or a cat (they have to choose one). The girls can keep it for their own pet, or give it to someone else who has a pet.

The toy is going to be a sock decorated with sharpie markers, then stuffed with poly stuffing, a bell and catnip (cats) or a scented cotton ball and tennis ball (dogs), then tied at the top. You can mention that many of the zoo animals love different scents, like spices and perfume/cologne.

Step 1: Make sure the tables are covered!

Step 2: Give each girl 1 sock, put out the markers (remind them to share!), and let them decorate. Remind them that we'll be tying it closed at the top, so they shouldn't put words or detailed drawings on that part since we won't be able to see it once it's tied.

Step 3 (for cats): Have the girls put a fist or 2 sized amount of stuffing in. You'll want it to be fairly firm.

Step 4: Add the bell.

Step 5: Add more stuffing.

Step 6: Add the catnip.

Step 7: Add more stuffing.

Step 8: Tie it closed.

Step 3 (for dogs): Have the girls put the tennis ball in, all the way to the toe.

Step 4: Add the scented cotton ball.

Step 5: Tie it closed.

Requirement 3: "Help keep a pet healthy and safe"

For this requirement, instead of having a veterinarian explain health issues for 2-3 pets, we are going to use our "pet store" education animals to explain some of the health issues. You will probably want to crate the animals before the girls arrive and leave them in animal quarters. You can bring the animals into the room when the girls are washing their hands after making the toy.

Explain that part of being a responsible pet owner is keeping them healthy. Part of that is making sure your pet goes to the vet for regular check-ups, and also knowing what health issues are common for your type of pet so you can look out for them. I'm going to show you a few of our education animals that some people keep as pets.

(Make sure you cover the following information for each animal, as well as a few fun facts)

Ferret:

Life expectancy: 8-10 years

Common Health Issues:

They can easily catch a cold or get a respiratory infection from people. You should not handle ferrets if you have a cold. (It's actually a rule here at the zoo)

When ferrets get to be 4-6 years old, it's very common for them to develop problems with their adrenal glands. You will have to take the ferret to the vet for treatment

Other things to consider:

They are nocturnal, so they can be very active while you are trying to sleep.

They are carnivores so when they bite, it hurts!

They have a scent gland (related to skunks!) which makes them kind of stinky, so they need regular baths.

If a ferret escapes from its owner, it can revert back to a feral (wild) state in about 2 weeks.

Chinchilla:

Life expectancy: up to 20 years

Common health issues:

Their fur is so dense, that if it gets wet, it might never dry all the way. This can lead to skin rot, which is of course bad for the animal and very stinky.

Their teeth grow for their whole life, so they need things to chew on to wear them down.

Otherwise, it can become difficult for them to eat.

Other things to consider:

They need dust baths, which can create some mess.

They are nocturnal, so they might want to play while you need to sleep.

They like to chew on things, and they have strong teeth.

Box Turtle: NOTE: It is illegal to take a turtle (or any other animal) from the wild and keep it as a pet. Almost all turtle species in Michigan are threatened or endangered.

Life expectancy: over 100 years (oldest known was 138, ours is 25)

Common health issues:

If they are not fed a proper diet, they can develop weak bones and a soft shell. It is important to know what a particular kind of turtle eats, because different turtles eat different things.

They also need to have a special light that simulates sunshine to help keep them healthy.

Other things to consider:

They aren't cuddly or playful, so if you are looking for a pet to cuddle and play with, a turtle might not be the best fit.

Some turtle/tortoise species can grow to over 100 pounds!

Turtles live a long time. You will have to make a commitment to it for pretty much the rest of your life.

Tour (45 minutes)

Choose 4-5 animals and answer the following questions through discussion with the girls.

1. Would this animal make a good pet? Why not?
2. What are the costs associated with this animal?
  - a. Vet Staff
  - b. Keeper staff
  - c. Medicine
  - d. Food
  - e. Enrichment
  - f. Transportation
  - g. Habitat
3. How much space does this animal need?
  - a. How active is it?
  - b. How big is it?
  - c. Does it live with other animals?
4. What kinds of things do we do to keep this animal happy?
  - a. Enrichment
  - b. Exhibit features
5. How much food does this animal need? (General terms)
  - a. What do we feed it?
  - b. Carnivore, herbivore, omnivore
  - c. Keepers monitor how much they eat. If there is a change, it might mean that something is wrong.
6. What kind of human contact does this animal have?
  - a. Not very much. We don't snuggle or pet the zoo animals because they are still wild animals, even if they have lived their whole life in a zoo.
7. How do we keep this animal "comfy"?
  - a. Cleaning exhibit
  - b. "beds" or material to make their own bed
  - c. Things to keep them warm in winter and cool in summer
8. How do we keep this animal healthy and safe?
  - a. Vet staff
  - b. Physicals once a year or every other year depending on the animal
  - c. Medication if needed
  - d. Ways to get exercise (furniture, enrichment)

Ask if there are any questions. Congratulate the group for completing their Pets badge. (If asked, remind the leader that they will need to purchase the actual badges from the council office) Pass out patches to the girls. Have a few extra on hand in case an adult wants to purchase one (\$3, exact change only). Thank them for coming and let them know that they are welcome to stay and visit some of the animals we didn't get to see on the tour (unless the zoo is already closed). If they have to leave, escort them up to the front gate and bid them farewell from there.