

### Pets, pets, pets



The British really love their pets – in fact they have a special fund-raising period dedicated to them – National Pet Month, 1<sup>st</sup> April to 4<sup>th</sup> May.

The British love animals! Around thirteen million households (that's just under half) have pets of some kind. The most commonly owned pets are fish kept in tanks, followed by fish kept in ponds in the garden. Together, all those fish add up to more than 40 million. (Is there any connection between these pet fish and the British love of fish and chips? Probably not ...) And what is the second most popular pet? The dog, of course! There are over 9 million of them barking their way through the United Kingdom. And then comes the cat: 8 million kitties living in 17% of all UK households. There are one million rabbits, and one million domestic fowl (chickens and ducks) and one million caged birds (canaries and budgerigars). Guinea pigs are also popular pets, there are 400,000 of them living in just over 1% of households. There are a similar number of lizards kept as pets. Just outside the top ten pets list are horses, snakes, pigeons, tortoises and turtles, rats and mice, and frogs and toads.

In a recent survey by a pet insurance company, it was found that 37% of the respondents have mixed up pet names with the name of their partner or children; 65% feel their pet is more reliable than their spouse and over half of pet owners would include a pet in their will. So these pets are well and truly part of the family!

And the British show their love of animals by giving generously to animal charities: in 2012, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) received over £100 million in donations while the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) received just a few thousand pounds less. And the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) received over £60 million and the Dogs Trust over £56 million. One of the most famous animal homes in the world, The Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home, received nearly £10 million. And even the Bransby Home of Rest for Horses received well over £2 million pounds.

So with all this love and charity for animals already in evidence, what's the aim of National Pet Month? It certainly doesn't seem as if they need more pets in the UK or that more money needs raising. The aim of National Pet Month is, in a nutshell, to improve the welfare of pets. And they do this by promoting responsible pet ownership; making people aware of the benefits of pets for people and people for pets; increasing

public awareness of services available from professionals who work with animals and finally raising awareness of the role, value and contribution to society of working companion animals such as guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for deaf people.

If you would like to find out more about National Pet Month, click [here](#).

And if you would like to know more about Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home (the oldest and best known animal home in the UK), click [here](#).

And if you would like to use pets as a topic in your lesson, we have provided you with two activities. You'll find them in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

### Teacher's notes

#### Activity 1: Pet jumble (level A1 upwards, 10 minutes)

- On the board write the following words as anagrams (jumbled words): *dog, cat, hamster, rabbit, horse, fish, mouse, rat, snake.* (Add *lizard, canary, tortoise, turtle, guinea pig* if you want to make it more challenging.)
- Tell students the words are all kinds of pets. Ask them to reorder the letters. Check answers together.
- Explain that April is National Pet Month in the UK and tell students about the reason behind it.
- Ask students if they have got any pets or if they had any pets when they were children. Ask them what they like(d) most about having a pet. / Ask them why they don't/didn't have a pet.

#### Activity 2: Pet chat (level A2 upwards, 20+ mins)

- Make a copy of **Pet chat** (see Worksheet) for each group of 3-4 students and cut as indicated.
- Pet jumble** (see above) could be used as a warm-up activity.
- Give each group of students the nine slips of paper from the Worksheet. Explain that they are going to do a discussion activity about pets.
- In turn, each student picks up a slip of paper and reads out the sentence. Each student gives his/her opinion.
- Go round to each group to monitor and help with any unknown vocabulary.

## Worksheet

### Pet chat

✗

**Do you think it is fair to keep a dog in the city?**

✗

**A dog is more loyal than a cat. Do you agree?**

✗

**Do you think a pet is a good companion for an old person?**

✗

**Cats are the best pets – do you agree?**

✗

**Do you think birds should live in cages?**

✗

**It's a good idea for a child to have a rabbit or a guinea pig.**

✗

**A pet is always part of the family.**

✗

**A dog licence (*Hundesteuer*) should be more expensive for a big dog.**

✗

**Leaving money in your will to a pet is crazy. Do you agree?**