

CARING FOR CRITTERS

LEARN ABOUT

Children develop comprehension and vocabulary as they learn about taking care of animals. Children have the opportunity to think creatively and use a variety of materials as they participate in play.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A copy of *Not Norman: A Goldfish Story*, by Kelly Bennett
- Plush toy animals, such as dogs and cats
- A collection of materials that can be used for a veterinarian's office, such as: an assortment of bowls, boxes of different sizes, blankets, string (for leashes), cotton swabs, brushes, Band-Aids, and bandages
- Signs that read "Vet Clinic," "Open," and "Closed"
- Pictures of different pets from the Internet or magazines

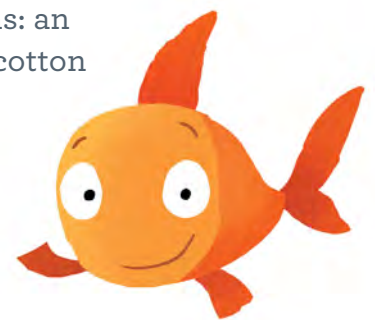
WHAT YOU'LL DO

Preparation: Collect materials for the veterinarian's office and begin to set up the dramatic play area. All materials should be reachable by and accessible to children. | Arrange the space in a way that invites creativity, including placing the plush toy animals in "beds" (boxes) and covering them with blankets, opening Band-Aids for children to use, and posting the "Vet Clinic" and "Open" signs.

Introduction: Show children the page where the little boy cleans out Norman's fishbowl. Explain that it takes a lot of work to care for animals. Pets even need to go to the animal doctor, called a veterinarian. Let children know that today they will be able to pretend to care for different animals and take them to the veterinarian's office. Tell children they will have the opportunity to take turns being the pet owner and being the veterinarian.

Not Norman: A Goldfish Story is a humorous tale about a child who finds a new friend in an unexpected place.

In this activity, children pretend to care for different pets. Children will have the opportunity to pretend to feed, walk, and take the animals to the veterinarian.



HOW IT'S DONE

1

Show children the materials that are available for taking care of animals.



2

Encourage children to take on a role as pet owner or veterinarian.



3

As the pretend play continues, model language and engage children in conversation related to taking care of animals. For example, you might say, “My dog is very hungry. I am so glad you are able to help me feed him. We can feed him together and then take him for a walk” or “My cat is not feeling well. I think she might have a cold. Do you think you can help her?”

4

Participate in the pretend play and follow children’s lead in activities and conversation.

VOCABULARY LIST

Use these words and explanations in your conversations with children:

brush | a tool that is used for cleaning an animal’s fur or hair

collar | a band of leather or fabric that is worn around an animal’s neck

groom | to clean and care for an animal

leash | a long, thin piece of rope or chain that is used for holding a dog or other animal

veterinarian | an animal doctor (sometimes called “vet,” for short)

TALKING TIPS

Use detailed descriptions and rich language to acknowledge children’s comments, extend what children are saying, and describe your actions during dramatic play.

