

MUTUAL of OMAHA'S  
**WILD KINGDOM**

Tune in Sundays at 7pm E/P

## **Animal Behaviors and Emotions**

### **Objective**

These simple activities center on observing animal behavior and emotions.

### **Grades**

K-3

### **Activity 1: Animal Diaries**

#### **Materials**

- Journal or notebook
- Markers
- Animal to observe

#### **Explanation**

How do scientists learn about animal behavior? By watching animals—very, very closely. Observation is a vital part of the scientific process and requires keen attention to detail. The study of an animal's behavior by professional scientists is called "ethology." Though it sounds fancy, the most important tools are your eyes and ears and a notepad and pencil.

In this exercise, students write an animal diary for their classroom or family pet, or an observation journal for zoo or wild animals. Observations can take place during one long session (approximately 30 minutes), or several shorter sessions. Teachers should prompt students and spark ideas by asking questions throughout the process.

#### **Vocabulary**

Ethology: The study of an animal's behavior by professional scientists

#### **Procedure**

1. Students choose an animal to observe:
  - a. classroom pet(s)
  - b. zoo animals (as part of a field trip)
  - c. animals in a park, e.g., squirrels, ducks
  - d. family pet(s)
  - e. buddy up and observe a classmate's pet, or have a student bring in their pet for an observation session
2. During and after observation, students should make notes and may also sketch pictures. Sample questions:
  - How does your pet act when it wants food?
  - How does it interact with other animals and with humans?

- Can you tell if it is happy or sad?
- Does it have a personality?
- How does its environment affect its behavior?

## Activity 2: Picture Book

### Grades

K-3

### Materials

- Picture books featuring animals
- Markers
- paper

Many children's picture books feature animals displaying human behavior. Choose one such book from your school or public library and examine the behavior of the animal. Find a nonfiction book on that same animal. Make a list of examples of behavior that are implausible; make another list of characteristics that are based on fact (e.g., the tortoise is slow, the hare is fast).

### Recommended for read-aloud anecdotes

*When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* by Jeffrey M. Mason

From dancing squirrels to bashful gorillas to spiteful killer whales, Masson and coauthor Susan McCarthy bring forth fascinating anecdotes and illuminating insights that offer powerful proof of the existence of animal emotion. Chapters on love, joy, anger, fear, shame, compassion, and loneliness are framed by a provocative re-evaluation of how we treat animals, from hunting and eating them to scientific experimentation. Forming a complete and compelling picture of the inner lives of animals, *When Elephants Weep* assures that we will never look at animals in the same way again.

### Animal Behavior Society's Outstanding Children's Book Award winner

*Animal Groups: How Animals Live Together (Animal Behavior)* by Etta Kaner and Pat Stephens

Honeybees do a special dance to tell their hive mates where to find food. A group of ground squirrels will rush a threatening snake and throw sand in its face. Babysitter flamingos watch over hundreds of chicks while the mothers are away hunting. Whether it's to find food, protect themselves or raise their young, animals live and work together in amazing ways.

