



Key Stage 3 Lesson Plan – Debating Animal Welfare Laws

A good lesson to do prior to this one is to book a 'RespectaBULL' workshop from the Blue Cross. Some existing dog legislation is covered in the workshop and it should stimulate the children into thinking about laws regarding dogs, the responsibility of pet owners and animal welfare issues. [Book a talk online.](#)

Main welfare aims

The main aim of this activity is to give children the opportunity to debate possible laws that could help animal welfare in the UK.

Curriculum links

English Spoken Language Programme of Study. Pupils should be taught to speak confidently and effectively, including through:

- participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said

Fundamental British Values Provision through SMSC:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England

Citizenship - Pupils should be taught about:

- the operation of Parliament, including voting and elections
- the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals
- the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society

Resources needed

[The Animal Welfare Act](#)

[Dog Licence debate](#)

[Dog Food Tax debate](#)

[Some opinions on Dog Licensing](#)

[Some opinions on the Dog Food Tax](#)

[Mandatory Dog Training Lessons debate](#)

[Some opinions on Mandatory Dog Training Lessons](#)



Starter

- Ask the children if they know of any laws relating to animals.
 - » Can they treat a pet as they would like? Are there laws to protect them?
 - » Where does a dog have to be on a lead?
 - » Do people who breed pets to sell have to follow laws and legislation?
- Show 'The Animal Welfare Act' on the Interactive Whiteboard. Explain that in 2006 a law was passed to protect pet animals. Now, every pet owner has a 'duty of care' to look after their pet properly and provide everything that they need, otherwise they are breaking the law.
- Before a law is passed there is always a lot of research and debate to make sure that the law is fair and that it is 'workable'. 'Workable' means that it would be possible for the police to get evidence that would stand up in court so that a person breaking the law could be convicted.

Main

- Choose which of the debates the class is going to work on. (There is a choice of Dog Licensing, enforced dog training classes or imposing a dog food tax.)
- Explain that their task today is to decide whether a new law should be passed relating to dogs.
- Split the class into two groups. One group will be for the law being passed, one will be against.
- Give out the 'opinions' sheet to the groups.
- Ask the children to work in groups of no more than 6 to discuss how they could argue for their point of view. Make a list of 4 points they would like to get across.
- Once they have their 4 main points, think about a little speech they could make for their 'side' and appoint a spokesperson.

Plenary

- Choose two of the groups, one for the law and one against, to 'debate' the law. Each spokesperson gets to speak first.
- The rest of the class can then ask the two teams any questions, who must try to answer as best they can – anyone in the team can answer.
- End the lesson with a vote. Has the law been passed?

Differentiation

- Rather than a verbal debate at the end, once ideas and opinions had been discussed the children could be asked to write a balanced or persuasive argument on whether the law should be passed.
- There is a choice of three different issues to be debated on. A longer but possibly more effective learning experience would be to split the class into the three debates and then into the 'fors' and 'againsts', so you end up with 6 groups. They then in turn debate their 'issue' in front of the rest of the class in the next lesson. The advantage of doing the debate this way is that whenever the class watch another debate the observers have no preconceived ideas on that issue for or against – it really will be the arguments that are put forward in the debate that will influence the vote at the end.

The Animal Welfare Act (2006)

In 2006 a new piece of legislation was passed called **The Animal Welfare Act**. This new law covered lots of things to do with animals and particularly pet animals. It was when this law was passed that it was made illegal to get your dog's tail docked if it's not a working dog, for example. However, the major change in UK law was that for the first time ever, pet owners were given a legal **duty of care** for their pet animals.

This means that by law you must provide for your pet:

- Water and the correct type and amount of food
- The right environment or shelter for your pet
- Veterinary care and medicine/treatment when poorly
- The opportunity to behave in a normal way for that animal (For example, it's normal for gerbils to dig so their home should be created in a way that gives them the opportunity to dig.)
- Company of their own kind, or to live alone if that is normal for that type of animal. (This means you need to do a bit of research on the social needs of your pet **before** you get it.)

Dog Licence Debate

It is estimated that problems caused by irresponsible dog ownership costs the taxpayer over £80 million every year.

This includes costs involved in road traffic accidents, collection of stray dogs, dog attacks on people, dog attacks on livestock, dangerous dog control and dog welfare issues.

At the moment there are not enough resources to enforce the law and address these issues so the problems we see are not likely to be dealt with significantly.

There are a number of options being considered at the moment concerning how money could be raised to address the problems, support law enforcement and improve education.

One option is to re-introduce the Dog Licence so everyone who has a dog would need to buy a special licence and all the money raised would be used to help improve the dog related issues.

Things to think about:

- How much do you think the licence should cost?
- How could you make sure that everyone was buying the licence?
- What considerations do you think should be made, for example if you are a pensioner should you still have to pay the same price for the licence?

Dog Food Tax Debate

It is estimated that problems caused by irresponsible dog ownership costs the taxpayer, £80.5 million every year.

This includes costs involved in road traffic accidents, collection of stray dogs, dog attacks on people, dog attacks on livestock, dangerous dog control and dog welfare issues.

At the moment there are not enough resources to enforce the law and address these issues so the problems we see are not likely to be dealt with significantly.

There are a number of options being considered at the moment concerning how money could be raised to address the problems, support law enforcement and improve education.

One option is to put a special tax on dog food and the money collected from this would again be given to the police and councils to help improve some of the problems. So every time you bought dog food for your dog you would pay a bit more each time.

Things to think about:

- Not everybody buys dog food from a shop; some people feed their dogs on other diets meaning they would never pay any tax.
- If the cost of dog food went up could it mean that people would not buy it and try and feed their dogs 'human' food instead that may be bad for the dogs health
- What considerations do you think should be made, for example if you are a pensioner should you still have to pay the tax? What about animal charities?

Some Opinions on Dog Licencing

Below are some opinions people have said about dog licencing in the past. Many are from individuals. Where a statement is from a charity you are told which charity it is from in brackets. There are other opinions and points to make – these are just a few ideas.

For

'Having a dog licence would make it clear that having a pet is a privilege and a responsibility.'
RSPCA's chief vet

'In Switzerland to get a dog licence you have to undergo training before a licence will be issued to you. This system has considerably cut down the number of irresponsible dog owners.'

"OneKind believes that a dog licencing scheme could provide an appropriate means of encouraging responsible dog ownership, not only with reference to dog control, but also dog welfare."
One kind spokesperson

'If dog licencing was brought in it would stop people purchasing a dog 'on impulse' and force them to think carefully before deciding to get a dog.'

Unsure

'I'd pay for a dog licence if the money went on policing the licence and helping stray and abandoned dogs. If it didn't, it's just another way of taxing people.'

'Licencing should only cover certain breeds of dog – the strong breeds most likely to seriously injure someone.'

'The jury is still out on whether dog licencing would work. We need to scrutinise all alternatives for funding in order to identify the best option for dogs and dog owners.'
Blue Cross' Deputy Chief Executive

Against

'In Northern Ireland they have a dog licence scheme and they still have more strays than any other region in the UK.'

'Irresponsible dog owners just won't get the licence, which means the licence would just be a tax on responsible dog owners.'

'We've got compulsory microchipping now – we don't need licences as well.'

'Instead of licensing dogs, we should be educating people on how to care for dogs and train them properly.'

'With 8 million dogs in the UK, we believe it would be completely wrong to penalise the millions of responsible owners because of the actions of the irresponsible minority.'
Dogs Trust spokesperson

Some Opinions on a Dog Food Tax

Below are some opinions people have said about introducing a Dog Food Tax in the past. There are other opinions and points to make – these are just a few ideas.

For

'Dogs cost the UK tax payer millions of pounds every year. Everyone shouldn't have to pay for that. By taxing dog food, only those that have dogs pay for it.'

'The taxpayer spends over 80 million pounds a year dealing with problems caused by irresponsible dog ownership. We need to pay for some way of educating people about being responsible dog owners and also pay for the enforcement of dog laws.'

'We need more dog wardens. A tax on dog food could help fund that.'

Against

'We already pay VAT on dog food. Paying an extra tax because you want to feed your dog the right food is completely unfair.'

'Responsible dog owners will pay the tax. Irresponsible dog owners will stop feeding their dog dog food and give them a cheaper alternative. That could be cat food or human food, both of which could make them quite ill.'

'I'm a pensioner and my little dog is companion and friend. If they put the price of dog food up, I may not be able to afford to keep her anymore.'

Should we be made to go to dog training classes to be allowed to keep one?

It is estimated that problems caused by irresponsible dog ownership costs the taxpayer over £80 million every year.

This includes costs involved in road traffic accidents, collection of stray dogs, dog attacks on people, dog attacks on livestock, dangerous dog control and dog welfare issues.

At the moment there are not enough resources to enforce the law and address these issues so the problems we see are not likely to be dealt with significantly.

There are a number of options being considered at the moment concerning how money could be raised to address the problems, support law enforcement and improve education.

People are sometimes required to pass tests or do training before being allowed to do things, to drive a car for example, or to perform certain jobs in a workplace.

So is it unreasonable to suggest that:

By law, people who wish to keep a dog must attend a minimum of 6 dog training classes?

Things to think about:

- How could this be paid for?
- How would you be able to check that someone had gone to the training?
- What could the dog training classes include? Would it need to be more than just how to train your dog?
- Would there be concessions so that pensioners and people not working or on a low income would not have to pay as much or not at all?
- Would you need to go to the dog training classes with your dog? If you failed to turn up to all 6 classes, would the dog be taken from you? If so, what happens to the dog?

Some Opinions on Mandatory Dog Training Lessons

Below are some opinions people have said about introducing mandatory dog training lessons.

For

'This is a great idea. All dog owners should receive up to date education when they take on a dog.'

'Dogs are such a difficult pet to own because the dogs have to be trained to be able to live with and around humans without causing upset. Some people have no idea how to train a dog effectively, so attending dog training classes would mean that there are fewer problem dogs in our society.'

'I think that if you were automatically enrolled in dog training classes the minute you bought a dog, it would stop some people getting a dog on a whim. They'd be made to understand what a commitment getting a dog is.'

Against

'This couldn't work. It would cost far more to put a system like this in place than you would get back from people paying for the lessons.'

'I already know how to train dogs. My dogs are well behaved. They couldn't make me go.'

'This is just another tax on dog owners. It's not fair.'

'I don't understand what would happen to people's dogs if they didn't go to the classes. If they were taken away, surely that's punishing the dog for something that the owner did wrong? And where would the dogs go to? I thought that all the charities were already full?'

'Just because someone goes to a class doesn't mean that they've listened or will do anything they've been told to once they leave.'