

Humane Education Guidelines for Children's Literature

There are numerous children's books with animal themes. As educators, we must be able to discern which books have appropriate and humane messages and which ones have irresponsible and negative portrayals of human/animal interactions.

BEWARE OF...

- 🐾 Dogs and/or cats running at large with no one to supervise them.
- 🐾 Dogs and/or cats not wearing collars and tags.
- 🐾 Cats that are allowed to roam free (this can cause cat fights, killing of wildlife, and injury to the cat).
- 🐾 Procreation of puppies and kittens.
- 🐾 Children feeding or interacting with wildlife.
- 🐾 Children buying or adopting pets on their own (adults are not mentioned in the story).
- 🐾 Over-exaggerating animal behavior (i.e. a young puppy running through the neighborhood with the kids as they play).
- 🐾 Stories where no humans are mentioned and dogs and cats are surviving on their own (the message says it's okay to be a stray).
- 🐾 Disregard for or mistreatment of any type of creature, whether it's a spider or an elephant (sends the message that these animals or insects aren't important and it's okay to treat them poorly).

REAL LIFE VS. FANTASY

An example of this type of book is the *Carl the Dog* series. These books feature a very realistic looking Rottweiler doing unrealistic things like caring for a child without adult supervision and performing tasks that dogs cannot realistically perform.

VS.

The *Berenstein Bears* books where cartoon animals are wearing clothing and walking on their back legs. These books portray unrealistic animals doing unrealistic things, which is obviously fantasy.

The difference between these types of stories can be confusing to children, so we must help them understand the distinction between the two.

Do books get discussed at school or at home? Will children expect their own pets to do unrealistic tasks?