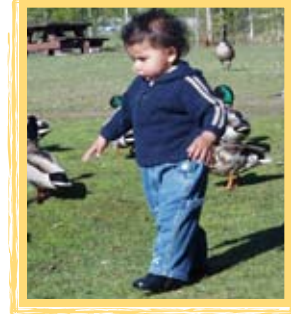


A child's interests are

Windows of Opportunity

to fun and enjoyable learning

Interacting with
animals is a powerful
learning activity
for many young children



Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AT HOME**

In the living room or family room

- Show your child how animals like to be petted and spoken to. Guide his hands to teach him where to touch and how to stroke or scratch.
- Talk about what your pets are doing: "See Kitty, Kitty's sitting in the window watching the birds outside."
- Look for animal pictures in storybooks or magazines together. Name and talk about the different kinds of animals you see. Make up stories about them.
- Sing songs about animals. "Old McDonald" is a fun choice because the child gets to make different farm animal sounds. Find animal songs at the library in children's books and recordings.

Bedroom

- Stuffed animals make comforting bedtime companions.
- Decorate a wall with animal pictures cut from magazines or wallpaper samples, copied from stencils, or painted yourself!



Kitchen and dining room

- Make wipe-clean place mats your little one will love. Paste magazine pictures of animals on construction paper and cover both sides with clear adhesive plastic.
- Use animal-shaped cookie cutters to make special treats: slices of melon, toast or sandwiches, pancakes, etc.

Out in the yard

- On a warm, sunny day, let your child help give your pet dog a bath.
- Let your child help prepare food and call the pets or farm animals at feeding time.
- Show your child how to play active outdoor games with your pets such as throwing balls or other toys for a dog to fetch or dragging a toy on a piece of string for a kitten to chase.

Bath tub at bath time

- Play with plastic animal toys like fish, ducks, and otters in the tub.
- Let the tub be an ocean, pond, or river and pretend to be a duck, turtle, frog, starfish, seal, or any other animal that spends some time in water.

Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AWAY FROM HOME**

Taking a walk in the neighborhood

- When you meet neighbors walking their dogs, ask if the dog would welcome petting from your child. Have a chat about the dog.
- Point out pets or other animals in yards as you pass. As you learn which yards have bird feeders, bird baths, dog houses, pet doors, fish ponds, or other signs that animal life is present there, stop regularly at those places to look for animals.
- Name the pets that live in each house as you pass. Talk about the pets, what they look like, what they eat, how they sound, etc.
- Be sure to stop and look at passing butterflies, playful squirrels, busy ants, hunting cats, and other animals.

Playground or park

- Fill a small bag with dried bread crumbs or cracked corn and visit a duck pond in an area park. Let your child feed the ducks, waddle like them, imitate their quacking, collect fallen feathers, and search for hidden eggs.
- Help your child sit on and enjoy playground equipment shaped like animals: spring-mounted animals with saddles, merry-go-rounds, climbing toys, etc.
- Bring small plastic animal figures, a shovel, and a pail from home. In the sandbox, help your child build a farm setting with twig-fenced corrals for them.



Visits to friends and family

- Introduce your young child to pets in the homes you visit. Ask your hosts to show her how to touch and/or interact with them.
- Point to and talk about images of animals when you spot them (in frames on walls, in fabric designs, painted on dishes, as knickknacks, etc.) in other people's homes.

Public library

- Ask the children's librarian to help you select good animal storybooks for young children.
- If the children's department has a collection of toys and puzzles, let your child have fun playing with stuffed animals and animal puppets.

Other community resources

- Does your community sponsor a petting zoo or nature center for supporting wildlife? Check with your visitor's bureau or chamber of commerce to find out, then visit often with your animal-loving child.
- Watch community bulletin boards or the news media for announcements of pet adoption events. You and your child can enjoy interacting with the cats and dogs even if you're not in the market for a pet to take home.

- Visit a pet store together. You might get to see gerbils, hamsters, and mice; pet fluffy rabbits; talk to frisky puppies; watch colorful tropical fish swimming in tanks, and much more.

Young children learn to love and care for animals.

