TOO MANY — A PROJECT OUTLOOK ACTIVITY

With this role playing activity, organized in the learning cycle format, children in grades 3-8 can discover that problems occur when basic needs of a population cannot be met due to overcrowding. By the end of this activity, children should be able to: (1) identify and describe problems within a wildlife population that result from overcrowding; and (2) design and describe wildlife management options to address problems of overcrowding in a wildlife population.

The best site for this activity is an outdoor area or playground, though a classroom would suffice during inclement weather. Plan on 40-50 minutes.

Materials required for this activity are minimal. For each group of students you will need: one die or numbered spinner; tokens to represent food and water (e.g., popcorn, beans, or poker chips); and small containers for gathering the tokens (e.g., sandwich bags or cups).

**Exploration Phase**

Place 5 to 7 students in a designated area with a natural or established boundary. Or, indoors use a table. They will be role playing whitetail deer. The different food and water supply tokens are placed within their boundary.

The amount of food and water consumed by each deer will be determined by the roll of the die or the spin of the spinner. For example, if "6" is rolled, each student will take that number of food tokens. Each student will take one water token each round.

After every two rounds (rolls or spins), add two or three more players into the area (due to reproduction or immigration). Do not increase the amount of food, water, or space.

As soon as food or water is depleted, move on to the next phase of the lesson.

**Invention Phase**

Have the class describe problems that developed with their deer population. Display these on the chalkboard or overhead projector.

Encourage students to discuss the nature and ramifications of each problem listed and challenge them to suggest ways each problem might be resolved.
Application Phase

Discuss with the class how people might assist in handling the problem of overcrowding in deer populations.

Ask the students to name other species that are managed by humans. For example: fish, which are aquatic; bobcats, which are predators; or coyotes, which can be scavengers; or perhaps even livestock species. Discuss how their management is similar and/or different from deer.

Follow-up Suggestions and Resources

There is an excellent article, by Mike Blair, on whitetail deer in the July-August, 1987 issue of Kansas Wildlife magazine. "Magic Bones" features the annual cycle of antler development in deer but is also a good summary of the animal's natural history. Most school libraries subscribe to this popular magazine. If yours doesn't, encourage them to add it to their holdings.

Invite a conservation officer from Kansas Wildlife and Parks to discuss game and non-game management. To find the officer nearest you, contact their Pratt headquarters at Tel: 316-672-5911. Or, speak to their Wildlife Education Specialist, Joyce Harmon-Depenbusch.

Challenge students to share information with the rest of the school and the general public through poster, written word, media, etc. The Kansas Wildlife Federation annually sponsors a wildlife poster contest. For more information contact their executive director: Jerry R. Hazlett, Tel: 913-266-6185; or Jim Bennett, Tel: 913-273-6740.

Research the history of hunting regulations.

There is a complete set of Project Outlook materials available for you to check out from the Science Education Center at Emporia State University. Look for Project Outlook courses in the ESU summer catalog for 1988.

References


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