

GS Senior - Voice for Animals Badge

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Introduction- Our conflicting views of animals

[Video introduction](#) by Dr. Sarah Balcom

Step 1- Find out about domestic animals (pets)

How many animals and how much money? The [APPA Annual Survey](#)

Option A: Learn about animal shelters and their issues. Find out why spaying and neutering are important, what the animal populations are locally and nationwide, and what “overpopulation” means for unwanted animals.

- In some parts of the country, there are more pets than homes. Read up about [companion animal “overpopulation”](#) statistics.
- Animal shelter online tours: [Baltimore Co Animal Services](#) (MD), [St. Charles Parish Animal Shelter](#) (LA)
- [Open Admission](#) vs. [“No-Kill” Shelter](#) perspectives
- Animal cruelty examples: [Dog beating](#), [Animal Hoarding](#), [Horse neglect](#)
- Resources for [helping pets stay in their homes](#) in the face of behavior problems, health issues, sudden loss of a job.
- [Adopting a pet from an animal shelter](#)

Option B: Compose a Pet’s Rights Document for a pet species. Is it okay to declaw a cat? Or to use a shock collar on a dog? What guidelines should be in place for a classroom hamster, a family dog, or a pet rabbit? Start by looking at city and state laws. Then, write up what you think it takes to treat a pet species ethically and respectfully. You can make a website, a poster, or a brochure.

- Search for laws at the [Animal Law Resource Center](#).
- Here are some links for hot-topic issues: Cats ([declawing](#)), dog ([shock collars and other negative training](#)), ferret (“[descenting](#)”)
- Helpful websites with evidence-based resources on a variety of species
 - American Veterinary Medical Association <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/pet-owners>
 - ASPCA <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care>
 - American College of Veterinary Behaviorists <https://www.dacvb.org/page/petownerresources>
 - PetPlace.com <https://www.petplace.com/>

Step 2- Investigate animals used for science

Whether animals should be used in product safety testing and biomedical research are controversial issues. First, look up the arguments for or against the use of a particular species for a particular type of testing or research. What animals are most likely to be used and why? Are they protected by any laws or regulations? How are they kept? Are there scientifically valid alternatives to using them?

Option A: Learn about the range of viewpoints that Americans have about the use of animals in biomedical research and product safety testing. They might be a scientist and an animal-rights activist. From these websites and videos, make a list of factors to consider when thinking about an animal research issue. Then, check out the rules and guidelines for the use of animals in biomedical research. Are they different from state to state? Who regulates animal research*.

- [Using Animals for Testing: Pros Versus Cons](#)
- [Speaking of research](#)
- [USDA's Animal Welfare Information Center](#)
- [National Association of Biomedical Research](#)
- [ASPCA](#)
- [Johns Hopkins University Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing](#)
- [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#)

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act>: The Animal Welfare Act was signed into law in 1966. It is the only Federal law in the United States that regulates the treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transport, and by dealers. Other laws, policies, and guidelines may include additional species coverage or specifications for animal care and use, but all refer to the Animal Welfare Act as the minimum acceptable standard. The Act is enforced by [USDA, APHIS, Animal Care](#).

In addition to the AWA, the NHS policy for studies funded by the NIH might apply. Private labs may put additional rules and restrictions on their work.

Option B: Learn about how animals are handled in biomedical research labs. Find out what animals are used and how they are treated. (Hint: More fish are used than any other species!)

With the closure of most research universities and private entities during the COVID19 outbreak, it will be impossible to show you the inside of a research lab in real time. However, there is much you can learn about the way animals must be treated by reading [The Guide to the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#), which is *the* set of requirements that US biomedical research labs follow to remain in compliance with a federal law called [the Animal Welfare Act](#).

For this Option, please do the following:

1. Learn about [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees](#) (IACUCs) which approve and oversee scientific research that uses animals.
2. Research and explain what the 3Rs are and provide examples for how scientists use these principles in designing their studies.
3. Take a brief [tour of an animal research facility](#) and learn about [the people who care for laboratory animals](#).

Share your findings with your GS friends through a poster, collage, interview, or other creative means!

Step 3- Explore animals in husbandry

Husbandry is the practice of breeding and raising animals. Cows, chickens, sheep, and pigs are examples of animals in production agriculture.

Animals kept for food, fiber, or work are kept in a range of housing styles. We house animals to provide them protection from extremes of weather, predators, and diseases from their wild cousins. We keep them outside to give them exercise, enrichment, and access to pasture. There are tradeoffs to both types of housing, as you will learn.

Check out: [Our world in data: Meat](#)

Option A: Visit a working farm or ranch. See what you can learn about their animal practices. Share what you learn with family or friends.

- [Virtual dairy farm tour at Kinard Farm](#)
- [Virtual broiler chicken farm: Bell & Evans Organic Broilers](#)

Option B: Investigate livestock breeding. Many farms employ breeding specialists to improve the genetics of the herd and speed up reproduction (fix reproduction problems). For example, embryos from a prime-quality cow-bull pairing might be transplanted into another cow to allow that prime-quality cow to breed again more quickly. What other practices are being used? How are they regulated? What is the science behind them?

- [Selective breeding](#) allows farmers to breed the best animals.
- Farmers can accomplish this by limiting which males and females are allowed to mate naturally, which is done through what is called “Natural cover with deliberate selection”
- In the dairy industry, it is common to use semen from really good bulls to impregnate many females. [Artificial Insemination in dairy cattle](#)
- With very expensive animals, or very endangered animals, more advanced techniques are used. For example, check out [Embryo flush](#) and [embryo transfer](#) in horses.
- Many reproductive biologists and conservation geneticists are applying these techniques to species conservation. [Could scientists save the endangered Northern White Rhino with IVF?](#)

Step 4- Take a look at animals used for sport and entertainment

Think about the first time you saw an elephant in a circus (have you?). Or, visited a marine park and watched killer whales perform. Or, attended a rodeo to see calf-roping competitions. Worldwide, from bullfighting in Spain to fox hunting in England, animals are part of our sport and entertainment culture.

Option A: Take a look at animals in sport. Choose a sport to research. It might be rodeo, greyhound racing, polo or dressage, horse racing, or falconry. See if you can find video footage of that sport so that you can watch it from home. How are the animals trained? What do they do when they are competing? How are they taken care of outside of training and competing? Share your findings.

Here are some options for your to investigate, although you are welcome to look at any animal sport.

- Thoroughbred racing: [A day in the life](#) [Is this the future of the racehorse training?](#) [Race horse injuries](#)
- Greyhound racing: [A day in the life](#) [Greyhound Adoption](#) [Adopt-a-Greyhound](#)
- [Falconry](#)

Option B: Interview people behind the scenes. This might be a zookeeper, animal trainer, or the owner of a show dog. Find out the daily routine for the animals, how they are cared for, and what happens when they get sick and can't perform or be watched. Share your findings. Here are some videos to get you started.

- [Interview with a zookeeper](#)
Want to learn more? Check out [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of this "How to become a zoo keeper" series from the San Diego Zoo
- Interview with a [movie animal trainer](#)
- Behind the scenes interviews with owners at the [Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show](#)

Step 5- Look into an animal issue

Option A: Compose an editorial - Present your issue as an opinion article. You might want to post it to a blog or website devoted to your cause.

Option B: Create a 2 minute video with a public service announcement about an animal issue. Put your audiovisual skills to work and create a two-minute public service video or slide show to get your meaning across. Some topics you might want to investigate include:

- Disaster preparedness for pets or livestock
- Cat declawing, dog shock collars, or another pet-related issue you care about
- The use of animals in a particular sport
- The care of animals in a certain industry
- The role of zoos in our modern life
- Supporting conservation of an endangered species
- The killing of wildlife for things such as the ivory trade, bushmeat, or medicinals

Conclusion

There are many points of view to consider when thinking about animal issues. Some people like to think of these issues as having two sides, a for and against, but in reality these issues are far more complex. Get accurate, up-to-date information, consider all points of view, and own your mind!