

# **Ideas for National Pet Week in the Classroom**

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If you haven't already had animal visitors bring animals and information to your students this school year, National Pet Week, typically occurring during the first week or two of May, might be a good time to do so.

Free lance educators have a wide range of animals, not all of which are comfortably held by very small students. Younger students also don't quite have a grasp on imagining how big something is, or how heavy, or uncomfortably textured. Like, an adult green iguana.

Some ideas to give kids a feel for how big and heavy and scratchy iguanas can be:

### **How long?**

Get some bright bulky yarn (or finger-crochet or braid several worsted weight strands together). A 6 foot length of it can represent a full-grown iguana's STL, with a knot 20" from one end to represent the length of the body (SVL).

- Two kids can hold one end and stretch the length of yarn between them.
- Kids can walk the length of it, or see how many kids standing together it takes to equal the length of one adult iguana.
- How many iguana-lengths long and wide is the classroom?
- How many desks or tables would an iguana need?
- Is an iguana as tall as the teacher?

This can be done with a much longer length of yarn, long enough to represent other reptiles that people find grow much bigger (and much faster) than they anticipated, such as Burmese pythons (20 feet, 150-200 lb.), and Sulcata tortoises (30", 110 lb.). For comparison, make some yarn analogs for better choices in pet reptiles, such as the ball python (4 feet) and bearded dragon (20 inches).

### **How heavy?**

Duct tape (what would we do without it!) a 10 lb. bag and a 5 lb bag of flour together (or go with two 20 lb. bags) end to end. Using tape that is sticky on both sides, cover the bags with sandpaper. (You might want to leave one or both ends exposed so you can later transfer the flour into storage containers for later use.)

- Have them pet the "iguana".
- Let the kids who are willing hold the "iguana". Depending on their age/size, have the kids try picking up the flour "iguana"; for smaller kids, the "iguana" can be placed into their arms.
- What does it feel like?
- What would it feel like if the iguana squirmed around in their arms and tried to get away?

### **Getting Proactive**

Animal shelters, whether they are city- or county-funded agencies, nonprofits funded by charitable donations, or species-specific type rescues funded out of the personal pockets of the people who run them, all have one thing in common: they always need money and *things*: toys and comfort items for the animals, volunteers to help care for and socialize the animals, equipment and supplies. Why not check out your local shelters and make a commitment to helping in some way.

Students can do things like:

- collect cans and bottles for recycling, donating the money to the shelter;
- knit, crochet or sew blankets or rugs for the animals (easy patterns for baby blankets\* work well, or just knit or crochet your favorite stitch, working back and forth until it looks big enough);
- collect unused leashes, collars, food and water bowls, or any other unused equipment in good condition, and donate them.

(\*My favorite easy blanket, which works well for just about any pet that likes to curl up on top of or under their own blankie, is a simple increase-decrease blanket pattern, found at [www.anapsid.org/pdf/incdecblanket.pdf](http://www.anapsid.org/pdf/incdecblanket.pdf))