

Lesson 1: Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!

Grade Level: 1st Grade

Time: 45–50 minutes

Subject: ELA

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 1 of 5 in the *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* unit of the *Growing Readers* micro-curriculum, based on the book series by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Serving as the ELA anchor lesson for the unit, students are reintroduced to the returning characters, Kailey and Grandma, through a first read of the text. Students engage with the text, asking and answering questions about key details and word meanings, and distinguishing between information the illustrations provide and information the words provide. Structured discussion moves beyond simply following rules to genuinely building on classmates' ideas across multiple exchanges. This lesson connects learning from *Milk Comes From a Cow?* to the broader understanding that farmers and ranchers care for the health and well-being of all the animals they raise.

Skillset: Activating and connecting prior knowledge across units, asking and answering questions about key details, using context clues to determine word meaning, distinguishing between information from illustrations and information from text, engaging with informational text and media with purpose, following discussion rules, building on classmates' comments through multiple exchanges, and Kansas connections through farming and ranching.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RI.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RI.1.4 Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

RI.1.6 Distinguish between information provided by illustrations or other graphics and information provided by the words in a text.

SL.1.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.1.1.b Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud, information presented orally or through media.

Objectives

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Ask and answer questions about key details in *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!*

- Use context clues from the text to determine or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases.
- Distinguish between information provided by an illustration and information provided by the words on the same page.
- Follow agreed-upon discussion rules, including listening with care and speaking one at a time.
- Build on a classmate's comment by responding to it across multiple exchanges.
- Ask and answer questions about key details from the read-aloud.
- Explain a connection between what they learned about farming in *Milk Comes From a Cow?* and what they are learning about animal care in this book.

Materials Needed

- Book: *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* by Dan Yunk, illustrated by Michelle Johnson (physical copy or author read-aloud on the unit landing page)
- Chart paper titled: "Why Do Farmers and Ranchers Care for their Animals?"
- Markers
- *Milk Comes From a Cow?* Anchor chart or unit materials from the previous unit (for reference)

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know
 - a. Explain to students: "In our last unit, we read about how milk comes from a cow, and we followed Kailey as she learned how a dairy farm works, from Farmer George's Holstein cows all the way to the milk in our refrigerators. We also compared dairy cows and beef cattle and learned about the properties that make each one suited for its purpose. Today we are going to read a brand new book. Kailey is back — and this time she is learning with Grandma about something bigger: why farmers and ranchers take such good care of all kinds of animals, not just dairy cows."
 - b. Ask students:
 - "What did Farmer George do every day to take care of his cows?"
 - "What do you think farmers and ranchers who raise other animals — like pigs, chickens, or sheep — might do to take care of them?"
 - c. Kansas Connection: Explain to students: "Kansas is known for its farms and ranches. Farmers and ranchers across our state take care of many different kinds of animals every single day — rain or shine, hot or cold. Whether you live near a farm or ranch or in a town or city, many of the foods we eat — milk, eggs, and meat — come from animals that farmers and ranchers care for. Today we are going to find out why they take such good care of them."
2. Setting the Purpose for Listening
 - a. Explain to students: "Today, as we read, our purpose is to find out: why do farmers and ranchers care for their animals? Listen for the reasons the book gives us, and pay attention to key details you could use to answer questions about the text afterward."
 - b. Prompt students to think ahead:
 - "What do you already think might be one reason farmers and ranchers care for their animals? Take a guess before we read."

- “Kailey and Grandma are in this book again. What do you think Grandma might teach Kailey this time?”
3. First Read: Author Read-Aloud
- a. Read *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* aloud. Read expressively and hold the book so students can see the illustrations.
 Stopping Point Suggestions (3 total, brief stops to maintain flow):
 - Stop #1 — Word Meaning from Context: Page 3 — after Grandma introduces the word *agriculture*. Ask students:
 - “Grandma used a big word — agriculture. The book gives us clues about what that word means. What did Grandma say agriculture is about? Using those clues, what do you think agriculture means?”
 - “What other words or phrases in the book might be new to you? How could you figure out what they mean?”
 - Stop #2 — Illustrations vs. Text: Pages 7–8 — the veterinarian and hay-hauling pages. Ask students:
 - “Look at the illustration of the veterinarian on this page. What does the picture show us that the words do not tell us directly?”
 - “Look at the illustration of the veterinarian on this page. What does the picture show us that the words do not tell us directly?”
 - “Now think about the words on this page. What information do the words give us that the picture alone could not show?”
 - “Page 8 shows a rancher hauling hay in the snow. What does the illustration tell us about the weather that the words also describe?”
 - Stop #3 — Key Details: Pages 11–12 — the safe food connection. Ask students:
 - “The book says that when farmers and ranchers take care of their animals, people like us have safe food to eat. What key detail supports that idea?”
 - “What food from an animal do you eat? Does that connect to anything we learned in *Milk Comes From a Cow*?”

Keep stops brief to maintain the flow of the story. Push students toward independent responses — first graders should attempt these questions with less prompting than in kindergarten.
4. Discussion Rules — Building on Others’ Talk
- a. Explain to students: “Before we talk about our book, let’s review our discussion rules: we listen to each other with care, and we speak one at a time. This year, we are practicing something new — building on what a classmate says instead of just sharing our own new idea.”
 - b. Teach and post sentence starters for building on others’ talk:
 - “I agree with ____ because...”
 - “Adding on to what ____ said...”
 - “That makes me think...”
 - c. Model a short exchange with a student or teacher example: “If Sam says, ‘Farmers take care of animals because they want them healthy,’ I could respond: ‘Adding on to what Sam said, I think that is also why the book talks about the vet visiting.’ Then Sam might respond back to my idea. That back-and-forth is what building on others’ talk looks like — it usually takes more than one exchange.”

- d. Practice with a low-stakes question: “What is one animal you saw in our book today? After someone answers, the next person should build on what they said using one of our sentence starters.”

SL.1.1.b asks students to respond to comments through multiple exchanges — this is a genuine step up from kindergarten’s turn-taking. Push students to link back to a specific classmate’s idea by name rather than simply sharing an unrelated new thought.

5. Comprehension Discussion & Chart Building

- a. Display the chart paper: “Why Do Farmers and Ranchers Care for their Animals?”
- b. Explain to students: “Now we are going to use our discussion rules — including building on each other’s talk — as we build a chart together with the reasons the book gave us.”
- c. Ask students:
 - “What was one reason the book gave for why farmers and ranchers care for their animals?” (They enjoy it and it is the right thing to do.)
 - “What was another reason?” (The safety and well-being of their animals matters to them.)
 - “What was another reason?” (Proper care means safe food for everyone.)
 - “What was the last reason?” (Farmers and ranchers eat the same products, so they want them to be the best quality.)
- d. Record each reason on the chart as students share. Encourage the next student to build on the previous answer using a sentence starter before adding a new reason.
- e. Cross-unit connection:
 - “In *Milk Comes From a Cow?*, Farmer George took care of his Holstein cows every day. Which reason on our chart best describes why Farmer George did that? Build on a classmate’s answer if you agree or want to add more.”

6. Closing Discussion & Kailey’s Conversation

- a. Return to the closing pages and reread the conversation between Kailey and Grandma.
- b. Ask students:
 - “Grandma says agriculture is important to everyone, no matter where they live. What do you think that means?”
 - “Grandma says Addie will come to understand how much farmers and ranchers care about their land, water, and animals. Why do you think all three are important?”
 - “Have you ever seen a farmer or rancher taking care of animals? What did you notice?”
 - “What is one thing YOU learned from this book? Build on a classmate’s answer if it connects to yours.”
- c. Kansas Connection: Explain to students: “Just like Kailey and Grandma, we are learning that agriculture matters to everyone — no matter where we live. Kansas farmers and ranchers take care of their animals every single day so that all of us, whether in small towns, on ranches, or in cities, have safe, healthy food. In our next lessons, we will learn even more about how farmers and ranchers care for different kinds of animals.”

Assessment: Student understanding is assessed through ongoing formative and observational measures embedded throughout the lesson, including engagement during the read-aloud at each stopping point, ability to use context clues to determine word meaning, ability to distinguish between information from illustrations and information from text, participation in the comprehension discussion following agreed-upon rules, ability to build on a classmate's comment through multiple exchanges, ability to answer questions about key details from the read-aloud, and contributions to the chart of reasons. The teacher should note whether students can articulate at least one reason why farmers and ranchers care for their animals with increasing independence compared to kindergarten, and whether they make unprompted connections between this book and *Milk Comes From a Cow?* from the previous unit.

Supplemental Activities: Display the completed “Why Do Farmers and Ranchers Care for their Animals?” chart alongside anchor charts from the *Milk Comes From a Cow?* unit. Guide students to notice that caring for animals was part of dairy farming too. Invite students to write one sentence about a reason a farmer or rancher cares for their animals, using a sentence starter that builds on a classmate's idea shared during discussion, and share it during morning meeting.

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