



Lesson 3: Animals Need Food and Water

Grade Level: 1st Grade

Time: 60 minutes

Subjects: ELA, Agriculture

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 3 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. Students deepen their understanding that farmers and ranchers intentionally provide animals with the food and water they need through a purposeful second read of the text, a hands-on feed investigation, and a narrative writing response. First graders engage with the text and describe the connection between food and water as two essential needs, sort both objects and words into categories, and write a sequenced narrative using temporal words, pronouns, and untaught phonetic spelling.

Skillset: Purposeful rereading, identifying main topic and key details, describing the connection between ideas in a text, sorting objects and words into categories, hands-on science observation, connecting feed and water to animal needs, narrative writing with sequenced events and temporal words, using personal and possessive pronouns, recalling information from experience, and spelling untaught words phonetically.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RI.1.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

RI.1.3 Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

RI.1.12.a Sort words into categories to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.

W.1.3 Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order and provide some sense of closure.

W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

W.1.10.a Correctly produce upper- and lowercase letters.

W.1.10.d Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my).

W.1.11.e Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

National Agriculture Literacy Outcomes

Plants and Animals for Food, Fiber, and Energy

T2.K-2.b Identify animals involved in agricultural production and their uses (i.e., work, meat, dairy, eggs).

T2.K-2.c Recognize that farmers and ranchers are responsible for raising animals that provide food and fiber for people.

Objectives:

Agriculture Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Observe and describe the appearance and texture of real farm animal feed ingredients.
- Sort feed ingredients and feed-related words into categories by nutrient type.
- Explain that farmers choose specific feed for specific animals to meet their nutritional needs.
- Explain that food and water are both essential and describe how they work together to keep animals healthy.

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the main topic of *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* and retell at least two key details.
- Describe the connection between food and water as two ideas presented in the text.
- Sort feed-related words into categories to gain a sense of what each category represents.
- Write a narrative that recounts two or more sequenced events using temporal words and provides a sense of closure.
- Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns correctly in writing.
- Recall information from the investigation and book to support their writing.
- Correctly produce upper- and lowercase letters.
- Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

Materials Needed

Read-Aloud:

- Book: *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* by Dan Yunk, illustrated by Michelle Johnson (physical copy or author read-aloud on unit landing page)
- Chart paper titled: "What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals?"
- Markers

Feed Investigation:

- Whole wheat kernels (small amount per table)
- Cracked corn (small amount per table)
- Oats (small amount per table)
- Hay (small bundle per table)
- Mineral salt block pieces (small amount per table)
- Magnifying glasses (one per student or one per pair)
- Small sorting trays or paper plates (one per student)
- Word cards for sorting: wheat, corn, oats, hay, minerals, water (one set per table)
- Feed Sorting Mat — companion document (one per student)
- Pencils and crayons

Writing:

- What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals? writing sheet — companion document (one per student)
- Chart paper for shared writing model
- Pencils and crayons

Note: Check for any allergies to wheat, corn, or oats before this lesson. Students should not eat the feed ingredients. Remind students that these are foods for animals, not people, and that we observe them with our eyes and hands only.

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know

- Explain to students: “In our last two lessons, we learned that farmers and ranchers care for their animals every day and that one way they do that is by building shelters to keep animals safe. Today we are going to learn about another very important way farmers care for their animals: feeding them and giving them water. Farmers don’t just give their animals any food — they think carefully about what each animal needs to stay healthy and strong.”
- Ask students:
 - “What do you eat every day to stay healthy? Does everyone eat the same thing?”
 - “Do you think a cow eats the same food as a chicken? Why or why not?”
 - “In our book, Grandma told Kailey that farmers make sure their animals have enough food and water. Why do you think water is just as important as food for a farm animal?”

2. Purposeful Second Read-Aloud

- Set a listening purpose before reading: “We have already read this book once. Today we are reading it again, but with a new job. Listen for the main topic and key details about how farmers feed and care for their animals. Also think about how food and water are connected — why does an animal need both, not just one?”
- Read *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* aloud.
Stopping Point Suggestions (2 total, brief stops to maintain flow. Keep stops brief. After the read-aloud, return to the main topic question before moving to the chart building.):
 - Stop #1 — Main Topic & Key Details: After the vet and medical care page.
Ask students:
 - “What is the main thing this book has been teaching us so far? What is it mostly about?”
 - “Look at this illustration. A vet is using a stethoscope on a calf. What key detail does this page give us about how farmers care for their animals?”
 - “The words say farmers make sure animals have food, water, and medical care. Which part of that does this picture show?”
 - Stop #2 — Connection Between Ideas: After the safe food connection.
Ask students:
 - “This page connects taking care of animals to having safe food to eat. What is the connection between those two ideas? Why does one lead to the other?”

- “Would we understand this connection as well without both the picture and the words? What does each one add?”
Keep stops brief to maintain the flow of the story. Push students toward more independent responses — first graders should be able to identify the main topic and describe connections with less prompting.

3. Main Topic & Key Details Chart

- After the read-aloud, display chart paper: “What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals?”
- Explain to students: “Every informational book has a main topic — the most important thing it is teaching us. In our book, the main topic is why farmers and ranchers care for their animals. All of the details in the book — the shelter, the food, the medical care — those are the key details that support the main topic. A key detail is a specific piece of information that helps explain or prove the main topic. Let’s name several key details together and think about how each one connects back to our main topic.”
- Ask students the following questions and record their responses on the chart:
 - “What is the main topic of our book?”
 - “What is one key detail you remember about how farmers care for their animals?”
 - “What is a second key detail? How does that detail connect back to our main topic?”
 - “What is a third key detail about how farmers and ranchers feed or water their animals specifically?”
- Read each detail back to the class after recording it, and ask: “How does this detail help explain why farmers and ranchers care for their animals?”
- Explain to students: “Retelling key details is something good readers do after they finish a book. When you retell, you are not just remembering random facts — you are choosing the details that best explain the main topic.”

4. Farm Animal Feed Investigation

- Introduce the investigation:
- Explain to students: “Farmers think carefully about what they feed their animals — just like your caregivers think about what to feed you. Today you are going to look at some real farm animal feed ingredients that farmers use. These are things that go into feed for animals like cows, chickens, horses, sheep, goats, and pigs. Use your magnifying glass to look closely at each one, just like a scientist.”
- Distribute materials: magnifying glasses, sorting trays or paper plates, and the Feed Sorting Mat. Place a small amount of each ingredient at the center of each table: whole wheat kernels, cracked corn, oats, hay, and a small piece of mineral salt block.
Remind students that these are animal foods, not people food, and that we observe them with our eyes and hands — we do not taste them.
- Guided observation — examine each ingredient:
Wheat kernels:
 - “What do the wheat kernels look like up close through your magnifying glass? What color are they? Are they smooth or rough?”
 - “Wheat kernels come from wheat plants — the same wheat that makes bread and crackers. They give animals carbohydrates, which provide energy. Which animals do you think might eat wheat?”

Cracked corn:

- “What does the cracked corn look like? How is it different from the wheat kernels?”
- “Corn gives animals carbohydrates too — energy for moving and staying warm. Cows, pigs, and chickens all eat corn. Have you ever seen a farmer feed corn to animals?”

Oats:

- “Look at the oats. What shape are they? Are they bigger or smaller than the corn?”
- “Oats provide carbohydrates and some protein. Farmers may feed oats to horses — oats help give them energy and keep their muscles strong. Protein is what helps muscles and bodies grow.”

Hay:

- “What does the hay look like and feel like? Is it soft or scratchy? What does it smell like?”
- “Hay is dried grass. It is one of the most important things cattle, horses, sheep, and goats eat, especially in the winter when there is no fresh grass. It gives animals fiber and energy to stay warm.”

Mineral salt block:

- “Look at the mineral salt block. What do you notice about it? What does it feel like?”
- “Farmers put mineral salt blocks out for their cattle and other animals to lick. The minerals in the block — things like calcium and phosphorus — help keep animals’ bones and bodies strong. Vitamins and minerals are nutrients that keep animals healthy in ways that grain and hay alone cannot.”

- e. Explain to students: “We looked at five feed ingredients today — but there is one more thing every farm animal needs that is not on our table: water. Just like you need water every single day to stay healthy, farm animals need fresh, clean water every day too. A cow can drink up to 40 gallons of water in a single day! Farmers and ranchers make sure their animals always have access to water — through water troughs, automatic waterers, or even ponds on the ranch. Animals need both food and water to stay healthy — one without the other is not enough.”

- f. Ask students:

- “Why do you think an animal needs water even if it is eating plenty of hay and grain?”
- “How do you think a rancher gets water to cattle that are out in a big pasture far from the barn?”

5. Sorting Activity — Objects & Words

- a. Explain to students: “Now we are going to sort. Scientists and farmers sort things into categories to understand them better. We are going to sort our feed ingredients into categories: ingredients that give energy, and ingredients that keep animals healthy in other ways.”
- b. Guide students to sort the physical ingredients on their Feed Sorting Mat:
- Energy category: wheat kernels, cracked corn, oats, hay
 - Health category: mineral salt block
 - Essential for life: water — not on the table today, but equally important as any feed ingredient

- c. Sorting words into categories:
 - d. Explain to students: “When we sort with our hands, we sort the actual objects in front of us. Sorting words is a different skill — that means using the word itself, without the object in front of us, to figure out which category it belongs to. This helps us understand what each category really represents, even without touching the object.”
 - e. Distribute word cards (wheat, corn, oats, hay, minerals, water) to each table. Guide students to sort the word cards into the same categories on their mat:
 - Energy words: wheat, corn, oats, hay
 - Health words: minerals
 - Essential for life: water
 - f. Ask students:
 - “Why did you sort the word water into its own category, separate from the energy words and the health words? What does that category represent?”
 - “What is the connection between the energy words and the health words — how do they work together to help an animal grow?”
 - “Why do animals need energy from their food?”
 - “Why do animals need minerals even if they are already eating grain and hay?”
 - “How is a farmer choosing what to feed an animal like a parent choosing what to feed you?”

Keep nutrient categories accessible: “energy foods” for carbohydrates and protein, and “health foods” for minerals. The goal is for students to understand that farmers choose feed intentionally and that sorting words — not just objects — helps build category understanding, not to master nutrition science.
6. Narrative with Temporal Words & Pronouns
- a. Gather students where they can see chart paper clearly.
 - b. Explain to students: “Now we are going to write about what we did today and what we learned. I am going to model how to write first, and then you will write on your own. In first grade, our narrative writing tells about two or more events in the order they happened, uses temporal words to show that order, and ends with a closing thought.”
 - c. Pronouns:
 - d. Explain to students: “Watch the words I use to talk about myself: I looked at the feed. That is my hay. Give it to me. I, my, and me are pronouns — they take the place of a person’s name so we do not have to repeat it every time. Today, use I, my, and me when you write about your own investigation.”
 - e. Ask students: “Can you use the word ‘I’ in a sentence about something you observed today?”
 - f. Temporal words for sequencing:
 - g. Explain to students: “When we tell about two or more things that happened, we use temporal words to show the order things occurred: first, next, then, finally. These words help our reader follow along in the right order. Watch me use them as I write about my own investigation.”
 - h. Model a fully sequenced narrative on chart paper, thinking aloud about letter formation and phonetic spelling at each step:

- “First, I looked at the wheat. I will spell it the best I can: /w/ /ea/ /t/. W-e-t. That is my best try, and that is exactly what first graders are expected to do with untaught words.”
 - “Next, I felt the hay. Let me write hay: h — tall letter, reaches to the top line. a — short letter, sits in the middle. y — this letter goes below the line; it has a tail. H-a-y. It felt scratchy.” (temporal word, detail)
 - “Then, I sorted my words into groups” (temporal word, detail)
 - “Finally, I learned that my animal needs both food and water. That is my closing thought — it wraps up what I learned from the whole investigation.” (temporal word, closure)
- i. Point out each pronoun (I, my) and each temporal word (first, next, then, finally) in the model. Check capitalization and end punctuation together as a class: “Do each of my sentences start with a capital letter? Does each one end with a period?”
 - j. Explain to students: “Some of the words you write today may not be words we have taught you yet — sound them out the best you can, just like I did with wheat. That is what good first grade writers do.”
7. Independent Writing — What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals?
- a. Have students return to their tables and distribute the writing sheet.
 - b. Explain to students: “Now it is your turn. Write about your investigation today. Recount at least two things that happened, in order, using temporal words like first, next, then, and finally. Use pronouns like I, my, and me. End with a closing thought about what you learned.”
 - c. Students write independently, using drawing to support their writing as needed.
 - d. Circulate and support:
 - Prompt for sequencing: “What did you do first during the investigation? What happened next? What happened after that?”
 - Prompt for pronouns: “Can you use the word I or my in that sentence instead of saying your own name?”
 - Support for untaught spelling: “Say the word slowly and write the sounds you hear, even if we have not learned that word yet. That is your best try, and that is okay.”
 - Support for letter formation: “Let your letters sit on the line. Show me where the line is.”
 - Support for capitalization and end punctuation: “Does your sentence start with a capital letter? What goes at the end?”
 - Support for closure: “How does your writing end? What is your final thought about what you learned today?”

Differentiation note: Students who need additional support may dictate their narrative while the teacher or a classroom helper scribes. Students ready for a challenge can add a third or fourth sequenced event, or explain in more detail why food and water work together. The teacher may provide a word bank for feed-ingredient words if needed.
8. Closing Discussion & Kansas Connection
- a. Gather students back together with their writing sheets.
 - b. Ask students:
 - “What was the main topic of our book? What is the most important thing it is teaching us?”

- “What key detail do you remember about how farmers feed and water their animals?”
 - “What is the connection between food and water for a farm animal? Why does an animal need both?”
 - “Which feed ingredient surprised you the most today? Why?”
 - “Why do you think farmers choose specific feed for specific animals instead of just giving all animals the same thing?”
- c. Kansas Connection:
- d. Explain to students: “Kansas farmers and ranchers feed their animals every single day of the year — rain or shine, hot or cold, just like our book says. In the Flint Hills of Kansas, cattle graze on native grasses in the spring and summer. In the winter, ranchers haul hay out to feed their herds every morning so the cattle have enough to eat even when the grass is buried under snow and isn’t growing. Farmers who raise chickens, pigs, and horses mix special feed with grain and minerals to make sure those animals get everything they need. Feeding an animal the right food and water is one of the most important ways a farmer shows they care.”
- e. Ask students:
- “Have you ever fed an animal before — a pet, a farm animal at a fair, or an animal at a petting zoo? What did you feed it?”
 - “Do you know anyone who feeds farm animals? What do they do?”

Assessment: Student understanding is assessed through teacher observation during the second read-aloud, chart building, feed investigation, sorting activity, shared writing, and independent writing. Teacher should note whether students can identify the main topic of the book and retell at least two key details with increasing independence compared to kindergarten, describe the connection between food and water as two ideas in the text, sort feed ingredients and corresponding words into categories and explain what each category represents, write a narrative that recounts two or more sequenced events using temporal words and provides a sense of closure, use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns correctly, recall information from the investigation and book to support their writing, correctly produce upper- and lowercase letters with line awareness, and spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness. The completed writing sheet serves as the primary written artifact for this lesson.

Supplemental Activities: Display the completed writing sheets alongside the feed sorting mats and the “What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals?” chart from this lesson. Add the chart to the growing classroom display alongside the charts from Lessons 1 and 2. Guide students to see that feeding, sheltering, and providing medical care are all reasons farmers show they care. For an extension activity, challenge students to write a second narrative sentence using a different temporal word, describing another part of the investigation, or to sort additional feed-related words (such as trough, pasture, or graze) into the existing categories.

Author: Kelsy Sproul, M.S., Literacy Specialist, 2026 KFAC Teacher of the Year, KFAC Curriculum Advisory Council, Former Elementary Teacher, Graduate Teaching Assistant and doctoral student at Kansas State University College of Education. Edited by Marissa Cook, KFAC intern, Kansas State University Secondary Education.

Feed Sorting Map

Energy

Health

Essential for Life

Student Name: _____

What Do Farmers Feed Their Animals?

Draw and write about your investigation. Use temporal words and pronouns. End with a closing thought.

Check Your Writing!



Underline
capital letters.

I, you, me

Use correct
pronouns.

First, next,
then, finally

Use temporal
words.



Include a
closing thought.



Period at
the end.