

Lesson 4: Animal Identification

Grade Level: 1st Grade

Time: 60 minutes

Subjects: ELA, Agriculture

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 4 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 explore animal identification, an important way farmers and ranchers keep track of and care for their animals, through a short video, explicit digraph and decoding instruction, a whole-group *Find My Match* decoding activity, and a hands-on ear tag project. Students decode whole one-syllable farm words — including words with consonant digraphs — to find their match in the pasture. Students also write a sentence that uses commas to separate items in a series.

Skillset: Connecting prior knowledge to new content, understanding animal identification as a form of animal care, asking and answering questions about key details from media, phoneme-grapheme correspondence for consonant digraphs, decoding one-syllable words, recognizing sentence features, correct letter formation, comma use in a series, spelling untaught words phonetically, and following discussion rules.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RF.1.1.c Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation).

RF.1.3.a Know the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs (e.g., sh, ch, wh, th, gh).

RF.1.3.b Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.

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

W.1.11.c Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.

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

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

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:

- Explain that farmers and ranchers use ear tags to identify individual animals.
- Describe why identifying individual animals helps farmers and ranchers provide proper care and keep accurate records.

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Ask and answer questions about key details presented in the ear tag video.
- Know the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs.
- Decode regularly spelled one-syllable farm words, including words with digraphs.
- Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence, including the first word, capitalization, and ending punctuation.
- Correctly produce uppercase and lowercase letters when making their own ear tags.
- Use commas to separate single words in a series when writing a sentence.
- Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.
- Follow agreed-upon discussion rules, including listening with care and speaking one at a time.

Materials Needed***Whole Class:***

- 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)
- YouTube Video: Clover Meadows Beef: Cattle Ear Tags and Why We Use Them: <https://youtu.be/10mfWQuoCyl?si=gG1Ep-l4ByjmpiWm>
- Smartboard or display screen
- Chart paper and markers

Find My Match — Word Edition Activity:

- Twelve “mother” ear tag cards, each showing a picture only: pig, dog, hay, shed, chick, wheat, sheep, hen, barn, gate, rake, nest (provided below)
- Twelve “calf” ear tag cards, each showing the printed word only: pig, dog, hay, shed, chick, wheat, sheep, hen, barn, gate, rake, nest (provided below)
- Velcro dots, clothespins, magnets, or laminated pieces to attach and remove ear tags
- Ear tag templates (small rounded rectangles with a pointed end)(provided below)

Ear Tag Activity:

- Pre-cut ear tag templates (two per student, provided below)
- Pencils
- Markers or crayons (for coloring cutouts and drawing a picture only)
- Paper mother cow and calf cutouts (one pair per student)
- Glue sticks

Word Building & Writing:

- Chart paper for word modeling
- Find My Animal writing sheet — companion document (one per student, provided below)
- Pencils and crayons

Note: Before the lesson, prepare the twelve mother cow picture cards and twelve calf word cards for the Find My Match activity. Attach ear tags with Velcro or paper fasteners so they can be removed and reused. Spread the mother cow picture cards around the whole-group meeting area to represent “the pasture” before the lesson begins, and keep the calf word cards together to distribute to students.

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know

- a. Explain to students: “We have learned that farmers and ranchers care for their animals by providing shelter, feeding them, and making sure they have water. Today we are going to learn about another important job farmers and ranchers do: identifying their animals. That means knowing exactly which animal is which — and letters and words help them do it!”
- b. Ask students:
 - “If a farmer has 100 cows, how do you think he knows which cow is which?”
 - “Have you ever seen an animal with a tag on its ear? What do you think that tag is for?”
- c. Explain to students: “Let’s watch a short video to find out how ranchers identify their cattle.”

2. Video — Ear Tags in Cattle

- a. Explain to students: “As you watch, listen for key details — specific pieces of information the video gives us about ear tags.”
- b. Watch this YouTube video. Clover Meadows Beef: Cattle Ear Tags and Why We Use Them <https://youtu.be/10mfWQuoCyl?si=qG1Ep-l4ByjmpiWm>
- c. After the video, ask students:
 - “What did you see the rancher put in the animal’s ear? What is that key detail?”
 - “Why do you think ranchers give every animal its own tag instead of leaving them unmarked?”
 - “How might an ear tag help a rancher take better care of a sick or hurt animal?”
- d. Explain to students: “Ear tags help ranchers identify each animal, almost like a name tag helps people know who someone is. This is especially important when many animals look alike. Ear tags also help ranchers keep important records, like which calf belongs to which mother, which animals have been given medicine, and which animals need extra care. It is one more way ranchers show they care for every single animal, not just the herd as a whole.”

3. Consonant Digraphs

- a. Explain to students: “Today we are going to solve a problem on the ranch. Real ranchers use all kinds of ear tags — some use just numbers, and some use a mix of letters and numbers. Today your ear tags are going to have whole words on them, so before we start, we need to learn a new kind of letter team called a digraph. A digraph is two letters that team up to make one brand new sound. We do not hear each letter separately — together they make a completely different sound. Let’s learn some digraphs using farm words we will see today.”
- b. Teach each digraph explicitly, writing it on chart paper:

- sh — /sh/ — shed. “A shed is a small building on a farm where tools or feed are stored. Say it with me: shed. Do you hear /sh/ at the beginning? The s and h are not two separate sounds — together they make one new sound.”
 - ch — /ch/ — chick. “A baby chicken is called a chick. Say it with me: chick. The c and h team up to make /ch/.”
 - wh — /wh/ — wheat. “Wheat is a crop that Kansas farmers grow, and it is used to make bread. Say it with me: wheat. The w and h team up to make /wh/.”
- c. Ask students:
- “What sound do the letters s and h make when they work together?”
 - “What sound do the letters w and h make together?”
 - “Can you think of another word that starts with the /ch/ sound?”
4. Decoding One-Syllable Words
- a. Explain to students: “Now that we know our digraphs, let's practice decoding — that means reading — some of our farm words. A few of today's words are new patterns, so let's make sure we can read those together. You'll get to decode the rest on your own during our activity.”
- b. Write each word on chart paper one at a time. Model decoding, then have students decode chorally and individually:
- chick — “ch-i-ck, blend it: chick. Ch is our digraph at the beginning.”
 - wheat — “wh-ea-t, blend it: wheat. Wh is our digraph at the beginning.”
 - sheep — “sh-ee-p, blend it: sheep. Sh is our digraph, and ee makes a long /ē/ sound.”
 - barn — “b-ar-n, blend it: barn. When a vowel is followed by r, it changes the vowel sound — ar sounds like /ar/.”
 - gate — “g-a-te, blend it: gate. The silent e at the end makes the a say its name.”
- c. Ask individual students to decode several words aloud without teacher support, to check for independent mastery before the matching activity.
- This decoding practice pre-teaches the newest patterns before the Find My Match activity — chick, wheat, and sheep introduce digraphs, while barn and gate introduce an r-controlled vowel and silent-e pattern. The remaining words (shed, pig, dog, hay, hen, and nest) give students a chance to apply that same digraph and phonics knowledge independently during the activity itself.
5. Find My Match — Word Edition
- a. Explain to students: “Now it's time to solve our ranch problem. You are going to decode a whole word and find the picture it matches.”
- b. Spread the twelve mother picture cards (pig, dog, hay, shed, chick, wheat, sheep, hen, barn, gate, rake, nest — pictures only, no words) around the room to represent the pasture. Keep the twelve calf word cards (same twelve words) together to distribute.
- c. Explain the directions:
- Pick up one calf word card and decode the word on it.
 - Search the pasture for the picture that matches the word you just decoded.
 - Place your word card beside its matching picture once you find it.

- d. Model the process once with a sample word card before releasing students: “My word card says sheep. Let me decode it: sh-ee-p, sheep. Now I search the pasture for a picture of a sheep. Here it is! I place my word card next to the picture.”
 - e. Review discussion rules before students search: “As you search, remember our rules: listen to others with care, and speak one at a time. If two people reach for the same picture, wait your turn to check whether your word really matches.”
 - f. Distribute one calf word card to each student. Teachers may print multiple sets of the cards so every student has a card to decode and match, and so students get plenty of practice — this also makes it easy to run a second or third round for additional repetition. Students search the room, decode as needed, and match their word to the correct picture.
 - g. While students search, prompt decoding and discussion:
 - “What word is on your card? Can you decode it out loud for me?”
 - “You found a match! How do you know that picture matches your word?”
 - “Does your word have a digraph in it? Which letters team up?”
 - h. Once all words are matched, gather students back together and ask: “Why do you think it matters that ranchers can read and match the right labels to the right animals, and not just guess?”

SL.1.1.a is practiced throughout this activity as students take turns searching and checking matches. This activity directly applies the digraph knowledge and decoding practice from Steps 3 and 4 in an authentic, game-like context.
6. Letter Formation & Make the Ear Tags
- a. Explain to students: “Now it is your turn to become the rancher and make your own ear tags. Remember: every letter has a place on the line. Tall letters reach the top. Short letters stay in the middle. Letters that dip below the line, like g and y, have a tail that hangs down.”
 - b. Model writing a sample word on chart paper, narrating line placement: “I am writing the word ‘hay’. H is a tall letter — it reaches the top line. A is a short letter — it stays in the middle. Y dips below the line — it has a tail.”
 - c. Assign each student one of the twelve farm words from today’s activity (pig, dog, hay, shed, chick, wheat, sheep, hen, barn, gate, rake, or nest), making sure a mix of digraph, silent-e, and plain CVC words are distributed across the class.
 - d. Explain to students: “On one ear tag, write your assigned word using your pencil. On the other ear tag, draw a small picture of that word. Then glue one tag to your mother cow cutout and the other to her calf — just like a real rancher would label an animal.”
 - e. Students write their assigned word on one ear tag template with pencil and draw a matching picture on the other, then cut out the tags and glue one onto their paper cow and one onto her calf.
 - f. Circulate and support letter formation:
 - “What word are you going to write? Say it and decode it before you write.”
 - “Show me where each letter sits on the line. Is it a tall letter, a short letter, or does it dip below the line?”
 - “Does your picture match the word you wrote? How do you know?”
7. Shared Writing — Sentence Features & Commas
- a. Gather students where they can see the chart paper clearly.

- b. Explain to students: “We are going to write a sentence about the words we matched today during Find My Match. When we list more than two things in a sentence, we use commas to separate them.”
 - c. Write on chart paper: “I matched a pig, a dog, and hay.”
 - d. Explain to students: “Look at the commas after pig and after dog. A comma tells the reader to pause between items in a list. Notice we do not put a comma before the last item after the word and.”
 - e. Sentence features:
 - f. Point to the sentence and ask: “What is the first word? Is it capitalized? What punctuation mark ends the sentence?”
 - g. Explain to students: “Every sentence needs these three features: a capital letter at the start, a complete thought, and ending punctuation. Let’s check our sentence for all three.”
 - h. Model writing a second sentence using digraph words, thinking aloud about untaught spelling:
 - “I matched a shed, a chick, and wheat. Wheat is a word we just learned the sound for, but I have not been taught the exact spelling of every part, so I will use what I know: /wh/ matches wh, and I will do my best with the rest. That is exactly what first graders are expected to do with untaught words.”
 - i. Check the second sentence together for the same three sentence features: capital letter, complete thought, ending punctuation.
8. Independent Practice — Find My Animal Writing Sheet
 - a. Distribute the Find My Animal writing sheet.
 - b. Explain to students: “Your sheet has pictures of farm words, including some with digraphs like shed, chick, and wheat, plus review words like pig, dog, and hay. Decode each word, then write it. At the bottom, complete the sentence starter ‘I matched...’ by listing three words from today, and remember your commas.”
 - c. Students complete the sheet independently.
 - d. Circulate and support:
 - Support for digraphs: “What sound do those two letters make together?”
 - Support for letter formation: “Show me where your letter sits on the line.”
 - Support for commas: “How many things are in your list? Where do your commas go?”
 - Support for capitalization and end punctuation: “Does your sentence start with a capital letter? What punctuation mark goes at the end?”
 - Support for untaught spelling: “Say the word slowly and write the sounds you hear, even if we have not learned that word yet.”

Differentiation note: Students who need additional support may focus on the digraph sound only rather than the full word, or may use sound boxes again if independent segmentation is still developing. Students ready for a challenge can be prompted to write a second list sentence with a different set of three words, or to add a fourth item to their list and check whether their comma placement still follows the rule.
9. Closing Discussion & Kansas Connection
 - a. Gather students together with their ear tags and writing sheets.
 - b. Ask students:

- “Why do farmers and ranchers use ear tags on their animals?”
 - “How was today’s Find My Match activity different from the letter-matching we did in kindergarten? What new skill did you use?”
 - “What digraph word did you decode today that you are proud of?”
- c. Kansas Connection:
- d. Explain to students: “Across Kansas, ranchers use ear tags on their cattle every day to keep track of each animal — which ones have seen the veterinarian, which ones have been vaccinated, and which calves belong to which mothers. It is a simple tool, but it helps ranchers give every single animal the care it needs, just like our book taught us.”
- e. Ask students:
- “Have you ever seen an animal with a tag, collar, or brand that helps identify it? What was it?”
 - “Do you know anyone who raises cattle or other animals that need to be identified? How do they keep track of their animals?”

Assessment: Assess student understanding through teacher observation during the video discussion, digraph and decoding instruction, Find My Match activity, ear tag project, phoneme segmentation practice, shared writing, and independent practice. The teacher should note whether students can ask and answer questions about key details from the video, know the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs, decode regularly spelled one-syllable words including digraph words, follow agreed-upon discussion rules, recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence, correctly produce upper- and lowercase letters, use commas to separate items in a series, and spell untaught words phonetically. The completed ear tags and Find My Animal writing sheet serve as the primary artifacts for this lesson.

Supplemental Activities: Display the completed paper mother cows and calves with their matching ear tags along a classroom wall or bulletin board titled “Our Ranch.” Add the Find My Animal writing sheets nearby. For an extension activity, place the Find My Match word and picture cards in a classroom literacy center so students can continue decoding and matching practice throughout the week. Additional farm digraph words, such as thin (a thin fence rail) or that, gradually on the word wall for continued phonics practice.

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Find My Calf/Cow



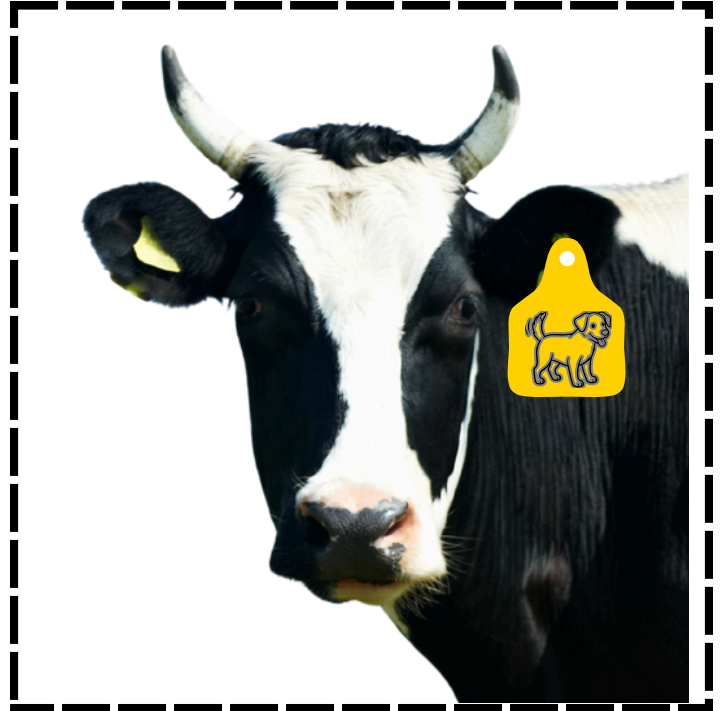
Find My Calf/Cow



Find My Calf/Cow



Find My Calf/Cow



Find My Calf/Cow

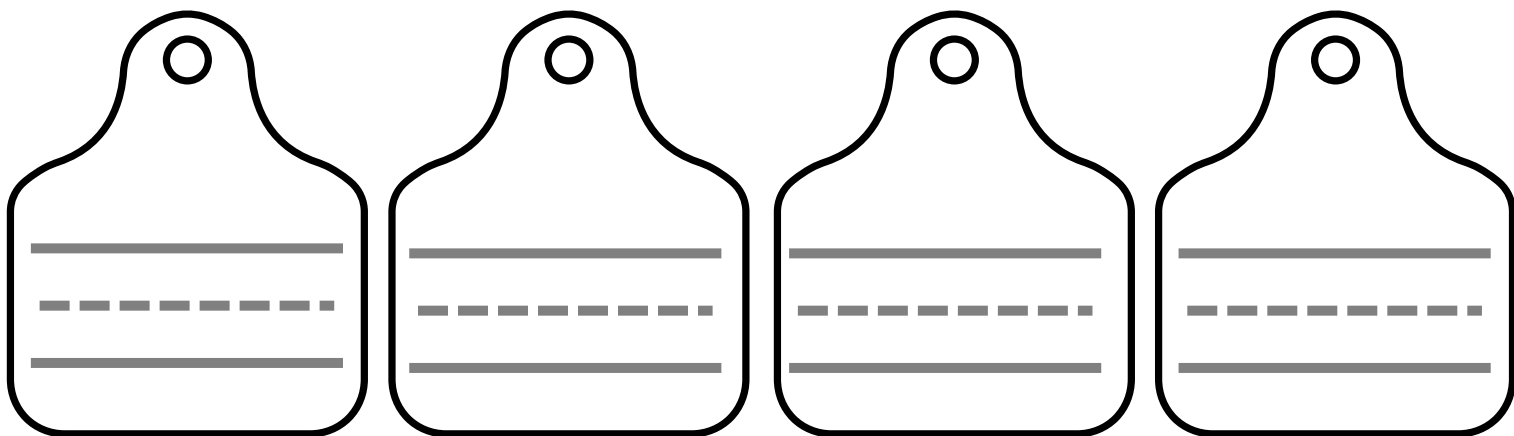
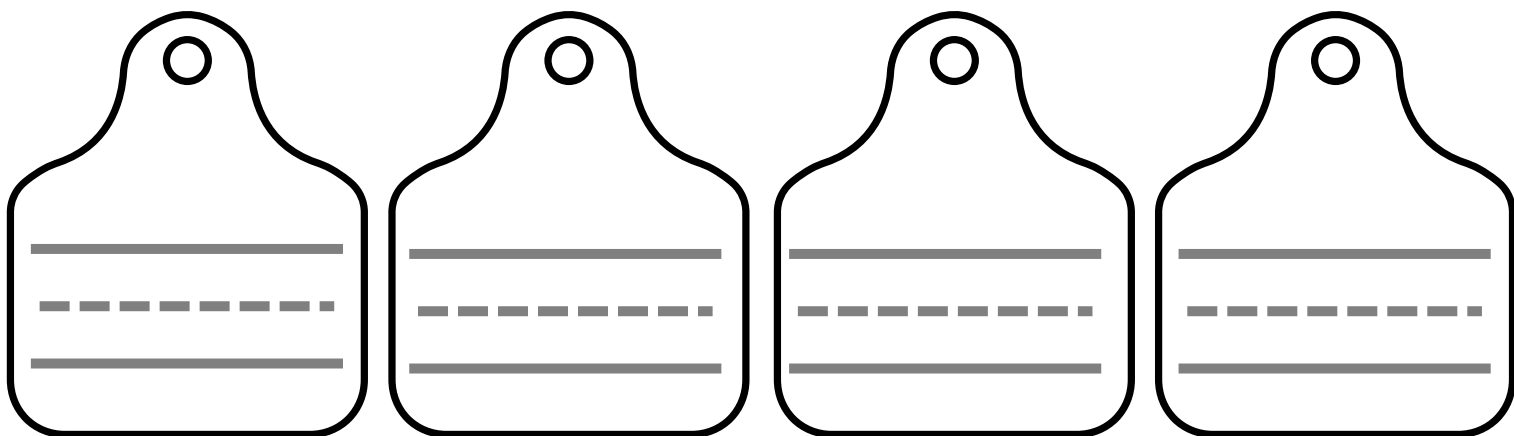
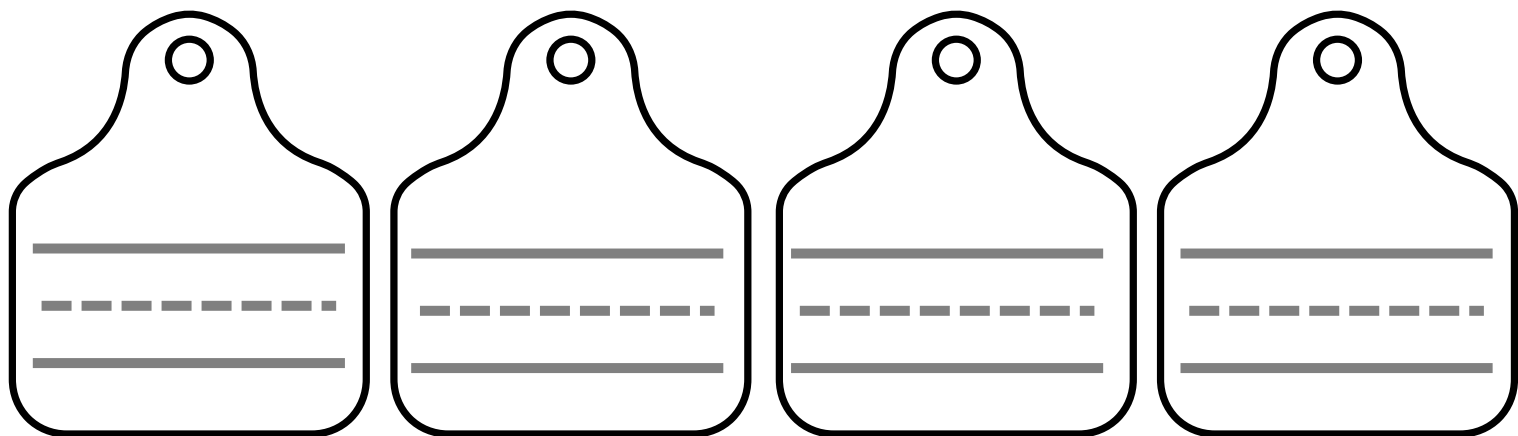
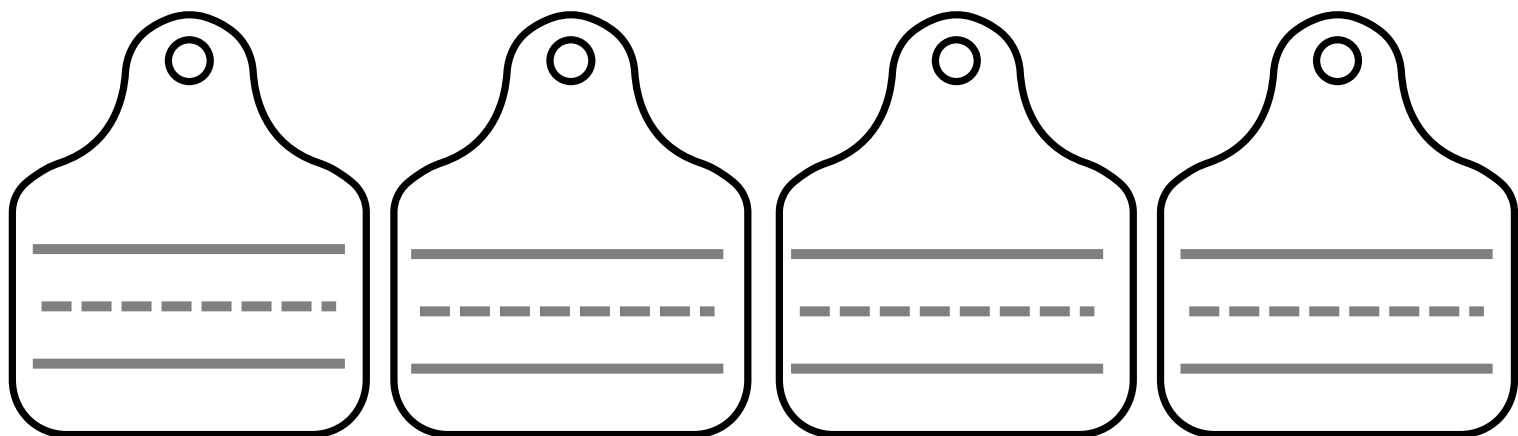


Find My Calf/Cow



Cow and Calf Cutouts





Student Name: _____

Word Match

Look at each picture. Say the word. Listen for the sounds. Write the word.

 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____
 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____
 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____	 _____ _____ _____

Choose three words from above. Write a sentence. Remember your commas!

I matched _____

_____.