

Lesson 4: Animal Identification

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Time: 60 minutes

Subjects: ELA, Science

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, the *Find My Calf* matching activity, and a hands-on ear tag project. As they match uppercase and lowercase letters, create ear tags for a paper cow and calf, and read and write simple farm-related CVC words, students strengthen foundational literacy skills while developing an understanding of how animal identification supports responsible animal care.

Skillset: Connecting prior knowledge to new content, understanding animal identification as a form of animal care, letter recognition, letter formation with line awareness, phoneme isolation in CVC words, phoneme-grapheme correspondence, phonetic spelling, recognizing that spoken words are represented by written letters, following discussion rules, and extending conversation through multiple exchanges.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RF.K.1.b Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.

RF.K.1.d Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

RF.K.2 Demonstrate understanding of phonemes (sounds).

RF.K.2.b Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final phonemes (sounds) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant or CVC) words.

RF.K.3.a Demonstrate basic knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences of predictable consonants.

W.K.10.a Correctly form upper and lowercase letters with line awareness.

W.K.11.c Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short vowel sounds.

W.K.11.d Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of letter-sound relationships.

SL.K.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.K.1.b Extend a conversation through multiple exchanges.

Science Standards

K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

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

Science 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.

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize and name uppercase and lowercase letters during the Find My Calf activity.
- Correctly form upper- and lowercase letters with line awareness when making their own ear tags.
- Demonstrate understanding that spoken words are represented by specific sequences of letters.
- Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial, and final phonemes in simple farm-related CVC words.
- Demonstrate knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondence for predictable consonants.
- Write letters for consonant and short vowel sounds and spell simple words phonetically.
- Follow agreed-upon discussion rules, including listening to others and taking turns.
- Extend a conversation through multiple exchanges with a partner or the class.

Materials Needed

Whole Class:

- Book: *Farmers and Ranchers Care about their Animals!* by Dan Yunk, physical copy or author read-aloud on the 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 Calf Activity:

- Cow (mother) cutouts or pictures — one per uppercase letter used (provided below)
- Calf cutouts or pictures — one per matching lowercase letter used (provided below)
- Construction paper in different colors
- Ear tag templates (small rounded rectangles with a pointed end) (provided below)
- Velcro dots, clothespins, magnets, or laminated pieces to attach and remove ear tags
- Uppercase alphabet letters (A–Z) — one per mother cow ear tag

- Lowercase alphabet letters (a–z) — one per matching calf ear tag

Ear Tag Activity:

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

CVC Word Building & Writing:

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

Note: Before the lesson, place one uppercase letter on each mother cow's ear tag and the matching lowercase letter on each calf's ear tag. Attach ear tags with Velcro or paper fasteners so they can be removed and reused. Mix up the cows and calves and spread them around the whole-group meeting area to represent "the pasture" before the lesson begins.

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know

- Explain to students: "We have learned that farmers and ranchers care for their animals by providing shelter for them, 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 it turns out letters help them do it!"
- 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?"
- Explain to students: "Let's watch a short video to find out how ranchers identify their cattle."

2. Video — Ear Tags in Cattle

- Play a YouTube video. Clover Meadows Beef: Cattle Ear Tags and Why We Use Them <https://youtu.be/10mfWQuoCyl?si=gG1Ep-l4ByimpiWm>
- After the video, ask students:
 - "What did you see the rancher put in the animal's ear?"
 - "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?"

3. Letter Recognition:

- 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."

- b. “Ear tags often have letters and numbers on them. Today our ear tags have letters — some uppercase and some lowercase. Let’s review: uppercase letters are the big letters, and lowercase letters are the smaller letters. Every uppercase letter has a matching lowercase partner.
 - a. Hold up two letter cards side by side so students can see them at the same time, one showing an uppercase B and one showing a lowercase b. Hold them at the same height so students can visually compare their size difference.
 - b. Explain to students: “This is an uppercase B, and this is a lowercase b. They are partners — the same letter, just two different sizes.”
 - c. Point to the uppercase B and trace its shape in the air with your finger, then do the same with the lowercase b, so students see that the shape is similar, but the size differs.
 - d. Set the two cards on the chart tray or board where all students can see them together for the remainder of the instruction.
 - e. Hold up several uppercase and lowercase letter pairs and ask students to name each one: “What letter is this? Is it uppercase or lowercase?” (Repeat with 5–6 letter pairs.)
 - f. Explain to students: “Today, we are going to use our letter knowledge to solve a big problem on the ranch.”
4. Find My Calf — Whole Group Activity
- a. Gather students in the whole-group area. Spread the mother cow cutouts around the room to represent the pasture. Give each student one calf cutout.
 - b. Explain to students: “Calves usually stay close to their mothers, but a storm came through the pasture, and all of the calves got separated from their mothers! Ranchers use ear tags to help identify cattle. Today you are going to help each calf find its mom by matching the letters on the ear tags.”
 - c. Explain the directions:
 - Pick up your calf and look closely at its ear tag.
 - Read the lowercase letter on your calf’s ear tag.
 - Search the pasture for the mother cow with the matching uppercase letter.
 - Place your calf beside its mother once you find the match.
 - d. Model the process once with a sample calf and cow before releasing students.
 - e. Students search the room and match their calf to the correct mother cow.
 - f. While students search, prompt letter naming and discussion:
 - “What letter is on your calf’s ear tag? What letter are you searching for?”
 - “You found a match! How do you know those two letters go together?”
 - g. Once all calves are matched, gather students back together.
 - h. Explain to students: “When we talk about what we just did, I want us to practice something important: extending a conversation. That means when someone answers a question, the next person adds something new instead of just repeating the same idea. Watch how this works.”
 - i. Model an extended exchange:
 - “I’ll ask: How did you find your calf’s mother? If one student says, ‘I looked for the matching letter,’ I can extend that by asking, ‘What made it tricky to find the right one?’ Then that student might add something new, and I can ask another question about what they said. That is extending a

conversation — we keep building on what the other person said instead of stopping after one answer.”

j. Practice with the class:

- “How did you find your calf’s mother?” (Ask a student, then follow up with a related question based on their answer. Repeat with 2–3 students, modeling the follow-up each time.)
- “Why do you think it matters that every calf found its correct mother, and not just any mother?”

(SL.K.1.a and SL.K.1.b are both practiced here — students follow the rule of taking turns and listening, while the teacher models and scaffolds extending the conversation through follow-up questions. This is a skill that requires repeated modeling before students can do it independently.)

5. Letter Formation

- Explain to students: “Now that we have matched letters, it is your turn to become the rancher and make your own ear tags. When you write your letters, 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, have a tail that hangs down.”
- Model writing an uppercase and lowercase letter pair on chart paper, narrating line placement: “I am writing an uppercase M. It starts at the top line and comes all the way down to the bottom line — tall and straight. Now the lowercase m: it is a short letter; it stays in the middle space. Watch how much smaller it is than the uppercase M.”
- Ask students:
 - “Which letter is taller — the uppercase or the lowercase?”
 - “Where does a short letter sit on the line?”

6. Make the Ear Tags Activity

- Have students return to their seats.
- Distribute ear tag templates, pencils, and paper mother cow and calf cutouts to each student. Crayons or markers may be used afterward if students wish to color their cow and calf cutouts, but pencils should be used for writing the letters. Assign each student a letter — this can be the first letter of their name, a letter from the current classroom letter focus, or the same letter pair they used during the Find My Calf activity.
- Explain to students: “Now you get to be the rancher. Each of you has your own letter today. You are going to trace or cut out two ear tags. On one tag, you will write the uppercase form of your letter using your pencil. On the other tag, you will write the lowercase form of the same letter. Then you will glue one tag to your mother cow and the other to her calf — just like a real rancher would.”
- Model the process once with a sample letter before releasing students. Write the uppercase and lowercase form of the letter on chart paper, narrating line placement as you go, so students see exactly what is expected before they begin.
- Students write their assigned uppercase and lowercase letter pair on the ear tag templates with pencil, then cut out the tags and glue one onto their paper cow and one onto her calf.
- Circulate and support letter formation:
 - “What letter did I ask you to write? Show me your uppercase letter first.”

- “Show me where your letter sits on the line. Is it a tall letter or a short letter?”
- “Does your lowercase letter match your uppercase letter? How do you know?”

7. Hearing and Building Farm Words

- Gather students back on the carpet. Display three large sound boxes drawn on chart paper or three pieces of tape on the floor — one box per sound.
- Explain to students: “We have been working with letters today. Now we are going to do something writers and readers do all the time — take a word apart by its sounds, and then figure out which letters go with those sounds. We are going to use these three boxes to help us hear each sound separately.”
- Explain to students: “First, let’s hear a whole word. ‘Hog’. Say it with me: ‘hog’. That word can be written down using letters — h-o-g. But before we write it, we need to hear each sound inside it separately.”
- Model segmenting the word into the sound boxes:
 - “Hog. What is the very first sound I hear? /h/. I tap box one.”
 - “Now the middle sound: /o/. I tap box two.”
 - “Now the last sound: /g/. I tap box three.”
 - “Put them together: /h/ /o/ /g/ — hog. Three sounds, three boxes, one word.”
- Model a second word the same way: “Let’s do one more together. Pig. First sound — /p/, box one. Middle sound — /i/, box two. Last sound — /g/, box three. /p/ /i/ /g/ — pig.”
- Guided practice — students respond chorally, then individually: “Now it’s your turn to help me. Everyone say the word with me: hen. Everyone tap the beginning sound in the air. What is it? Now the middle sound. Now the last sound.” Call on 2–3 individual students to repeat the process aloud with a new word, such as ram or cat.
- Support note: If a student says an incorrect sound or freezes, stretch the word out together as a class before asking again — “Let’s stretch it out together: hhhh-eeee-nnnn. Now, what was that first sound?” Avoid moving on until the student has heard the word stretched at least once.
- Explain to students: “Now that we can hear the sounds in a word, let’s match each sound to its letter. Every sound has a letter that goes with it.”
- Display an alphabet chart or letter cards where all students can see them.
- Ask students, pointing to the alphabet chart as students respond:
 - “What letter matches the sound /p/?”
 - “What letter matches the sound /g/?”
 - “What letter matches the sound /m/?”
- Explain to students: “You just did the hard work of a reader and a writer — you heard the sounds in a word and matched them to the letters that go with them. That is exactly what we are going to do next when we write our own farm word together.”

8. Shared Writing — Building a Farm Word Together

- Gather students where they can see the chart paper clearly.

- b. Explain to students: "Now that we can hear sounds in a word and match them to letters, we are going to write a whole word together. Watch closely, because in a few minutes you will do this same thing on your own."
 - c. Explain to students: "Before I write anything, I always say the word slowly first and listen for each sound by itself. Watch: pig. /p/ — /i/ — /g/. I heard three sounds before I wrote a single letter. Saying the sounds first helps me know exactly what to write."
 - d. Explain to students: "Now I write a letter for each sound I heard. /p/ — what letter matches that sound? P. I write p. /i/ — that is a short i; I write i. /g/ — what letter matches that sound? G. I write g."
 - e. Write each letter on the chart as you say it, pointing to the corresponding sound box from Step 7 for each one.
 - f. Explain to students: "Now let's put the letters together and read the whole word: p-i-g, pig. I listened for the sounds I heard and wrote the letters that matched. That is exactly what good kindergarten writers do."
 - g. Explain to students: "As I wrote each letter, I also thought about where it belongs on the line. My p has a tail that dips below the line. My i is a short letter that sits in the middle. My g also has a tail below the line. Every letter has its own place, and paying attention to that helps our writing be easy to read."
 - h. Guided practice — spell a second word together, such as hog or ram, with the teacher writing as students supply each sound: "Let's do one together. Say the word with me: hog. What is the first sound? What letter matches it? I will write it. What is the middle sound? The last sound?" Pause after each sound so students can respond before the teacher writes.
 - i. Explain to students: "Now it is your turn to do exactly what we just did — say the sounds, match them to letters, and pay attention to where each letter sits on the line."
9. Independent Practice — Find My Animal Writing Sheet
- a. Distribute the Find My Animal writing sheet.
 - b. Explain to students: "On your sheet, you will see pictures of eight farm animals. Say each animal's name slowly, listen for the sounds, and write a letter for each sound in the boxes next to the picture. Then write the whole word on the line."
 - c. Students complete the sheet independently.
 - d. Circulate and support:
 - Support for phoneme isolation: "Say the word slowly. What is the first sound you hear?"
 - Support for letter formation: "Show me where your letter sits on the line."
 - Support for unfamiliar animal names: "That animal is called a kid — that means a baby goat" or "That animal is called a pup — that means a young dog."

(Differentiation note: Students who need additional support may focus on isolating just the beginning sound of each word rather than all three sounds. Students ready for a challenge can be prompted to write the word a second time from memory, without looking at their sound boxes.)
10. Closing Discussion. Gather students together with their ear tags and writing sheets.
- a. Ask students, modeling extended conversation as needed:
 - "Why do farmers and ranchers use ear tags on their animals?"
 - "How does an ear tag help a rancher take better care of an animal?"

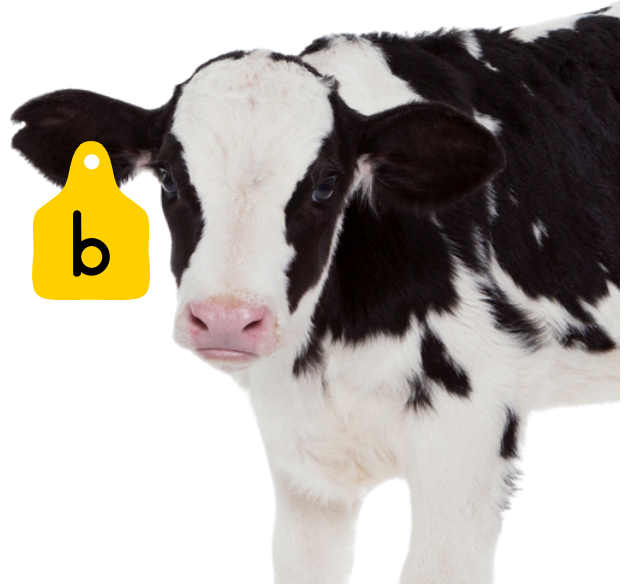
- “What farm word did you spell today that you are proud of?”
- b. Kansas Connection:
 - Explain to students: “Across Kansas, ranchers use ear tags on their cattle every day to keep track of each animal — which ones have seen the veterinarian, which ones have been vaccinated, and which calves belong 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.” 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: Student understanding is assessed through teacher observation during the video discussion, Find My Calf activity, ear tag extension, phoneme instruction, shared writing, and independent practice. Teacher should note whether students can recognize and name upper- and lowercase letters during the matching activity, correctly form upper- and lowercase letters with line awareness when making their own ear tags, demonstrate understanding that spoken words are represented by specific sequences of letters, isolate and pronounce the initial, medial, and final phonemes in farm-related CVC words, demonstrate phoneme-grapheme correspondence for predictable consonants, write letters for consonant and short vowel sounds and spell simple words phonetically, follow agreed-upon discussion rules, and extend a conversation through multiple exchanges with teacher modeling and support. 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 letter ear tags in a classroom literacy center for the remainder of the week so students can continue practicing uppercase and lowercase matching independently. Additional farm CVC words can be introduced gradually on the word wall for continued phonemic awareness practice.

Author: Kelsy Sproul, M.S., Literacy Specialist, 2026 KFAC Teacher of the Year, KFAC Curriculum Advisory Council, Former Elementary Teacher. Edited by Marissa Cook, KFAC intern, Kansas State University Secondary Education.

Find My Calf/Cow



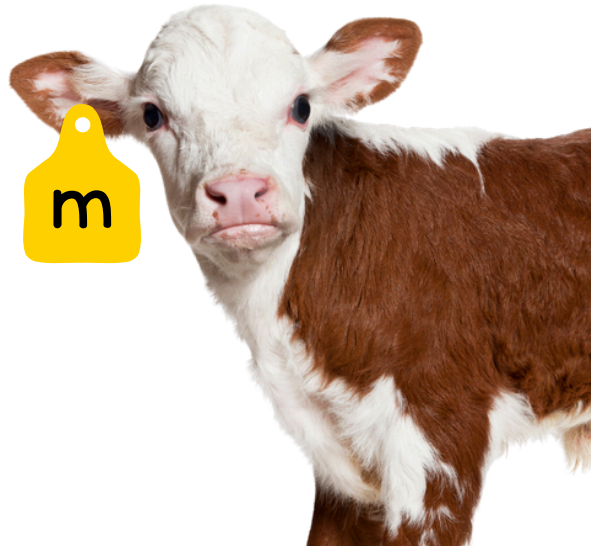
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Find My Calf/Cow



Find My Calf/Cow



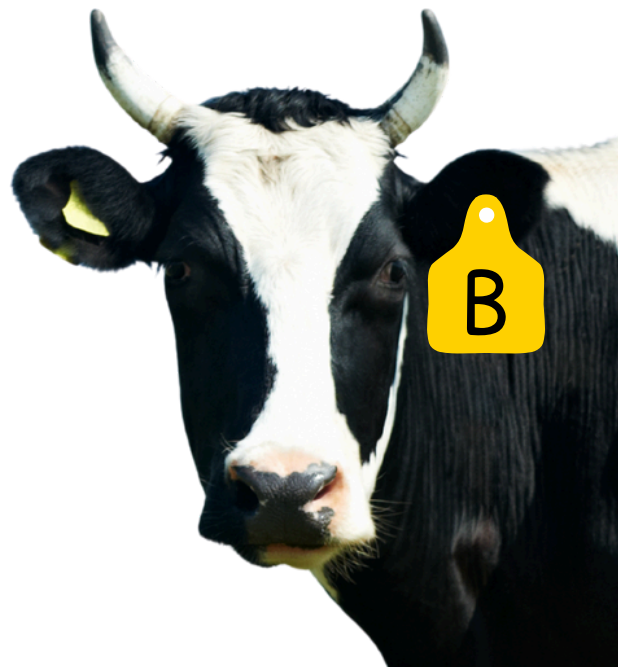
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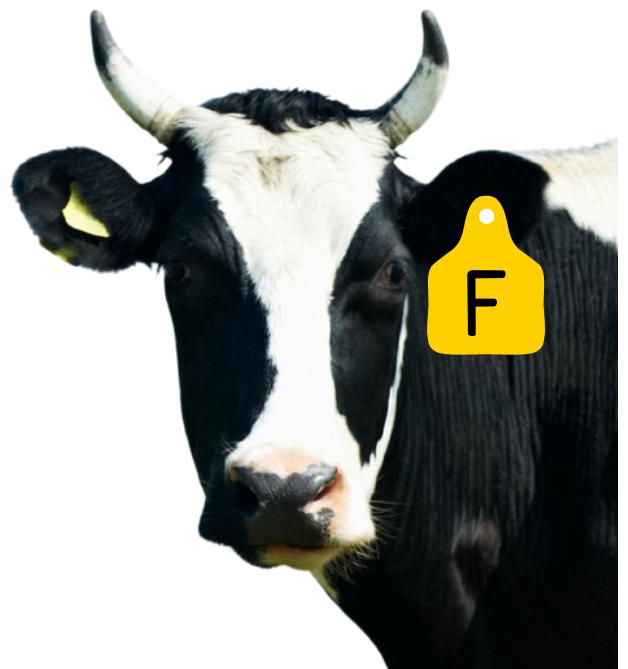
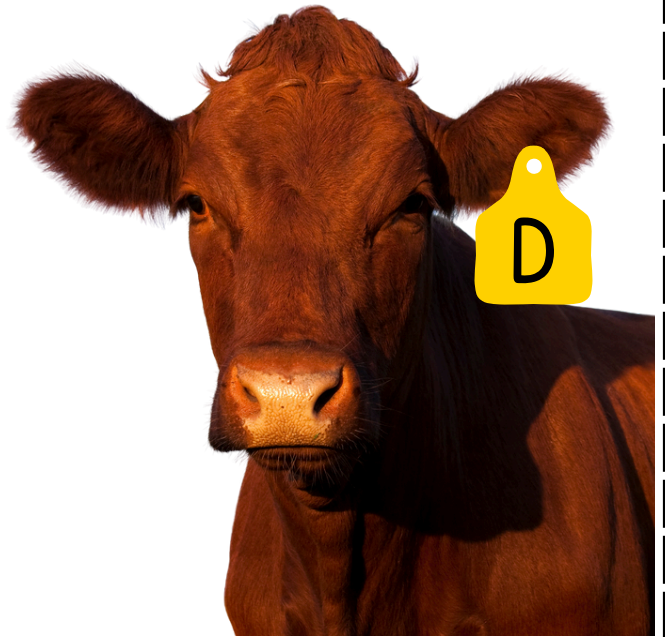
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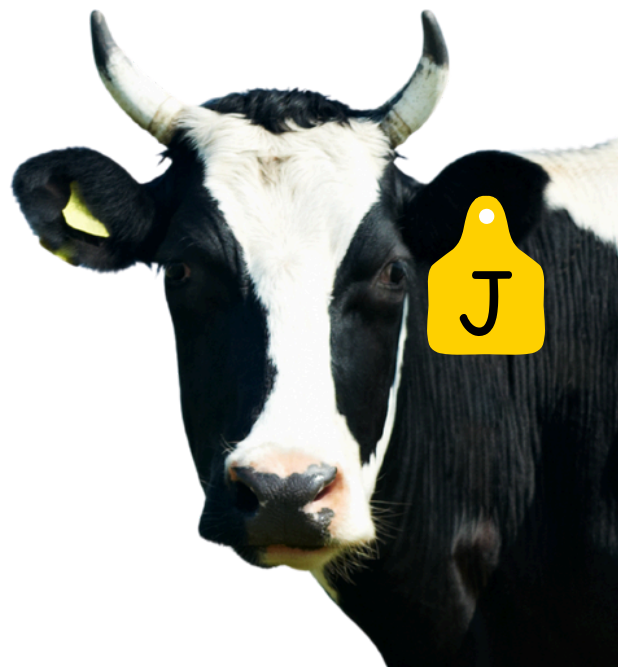
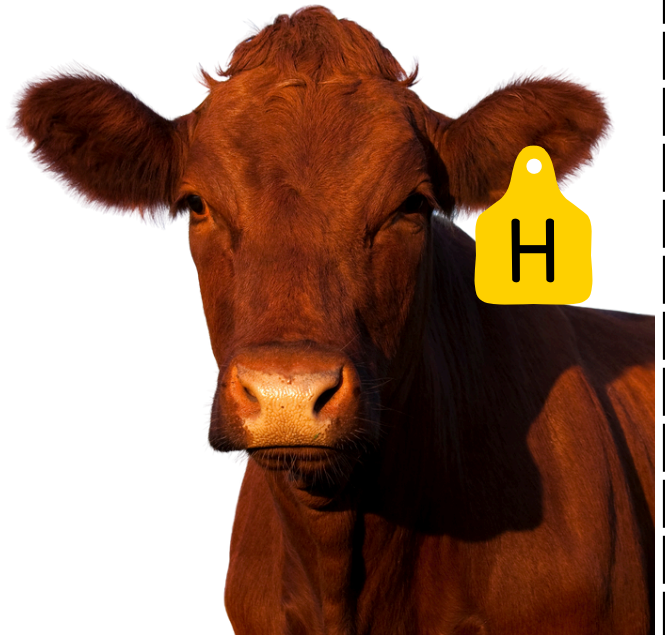
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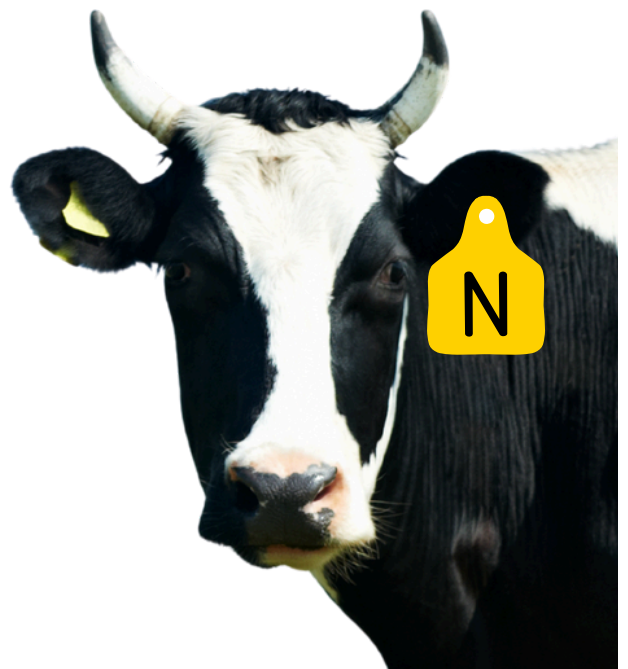
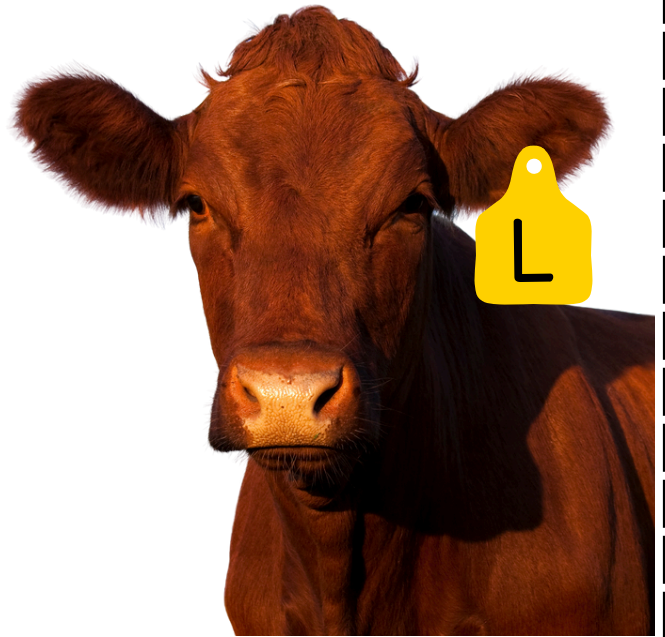
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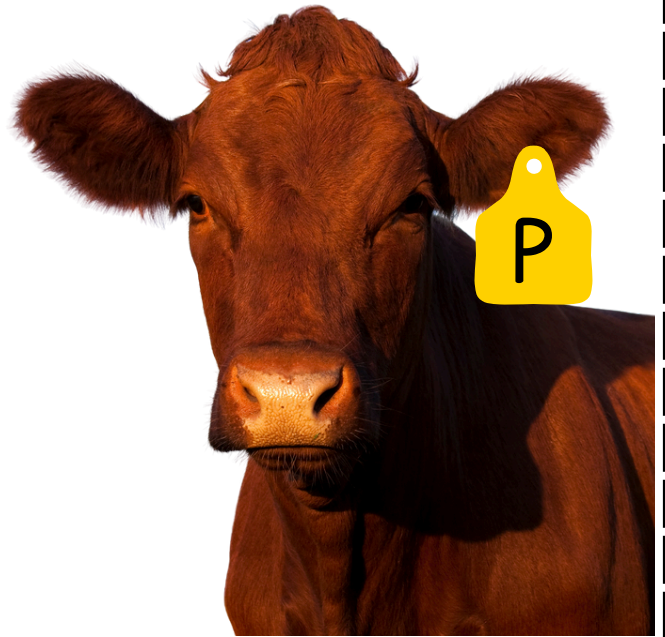
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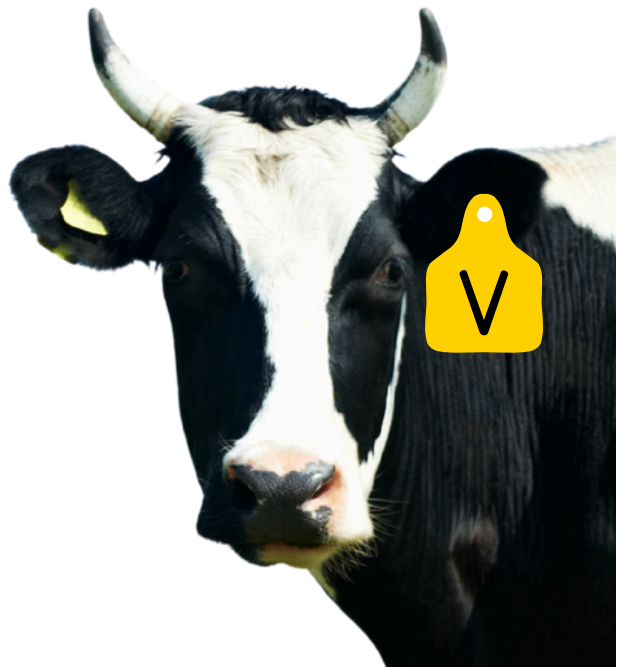
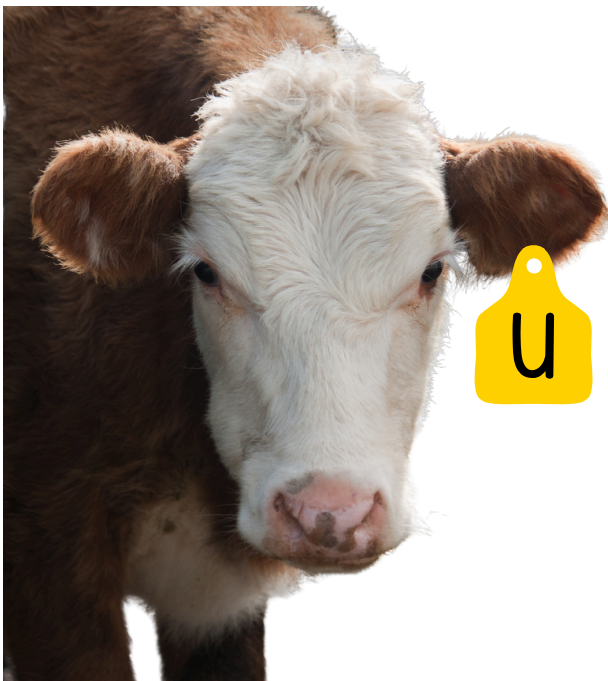
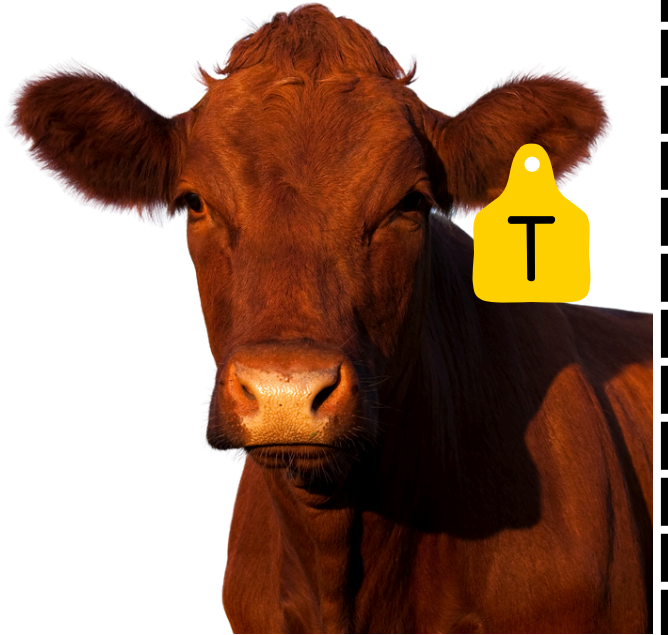
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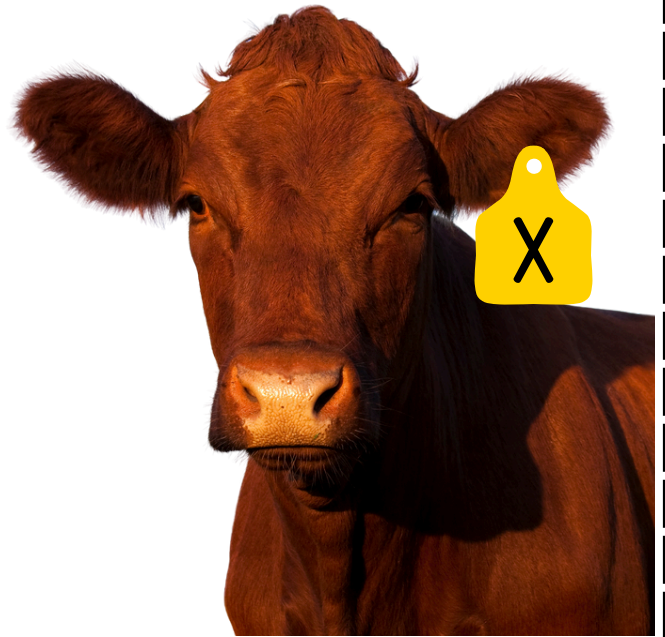
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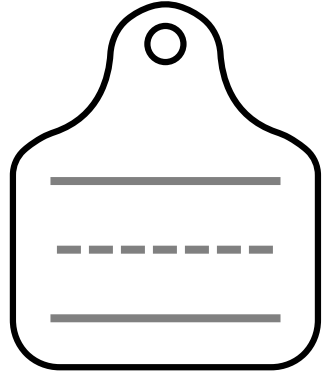
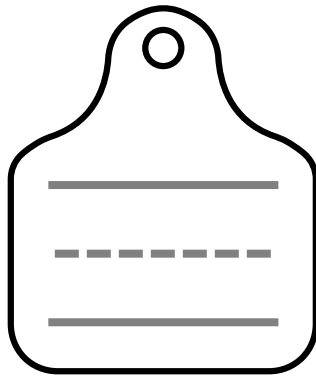
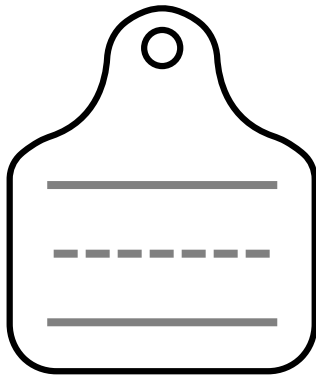
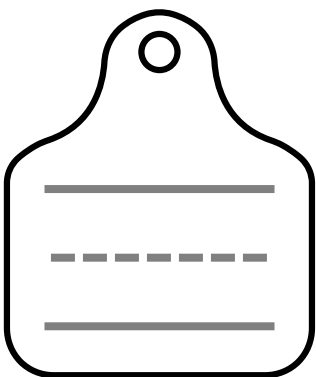
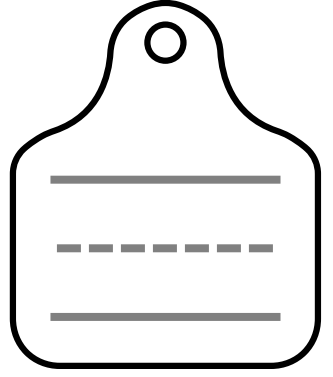
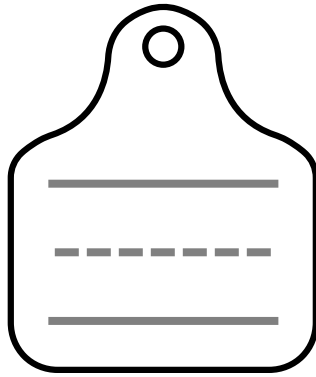
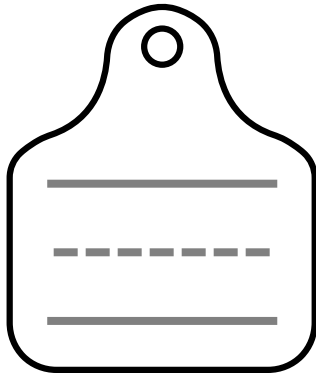
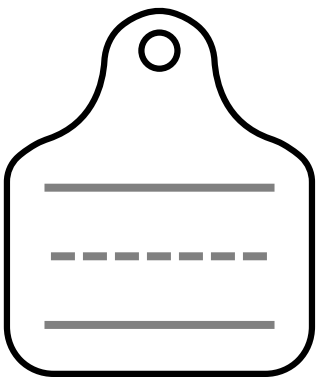
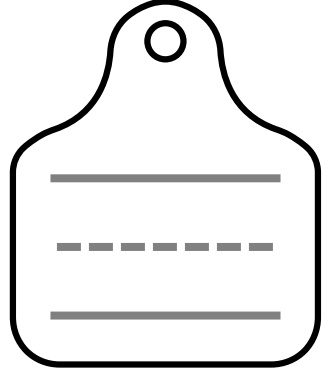
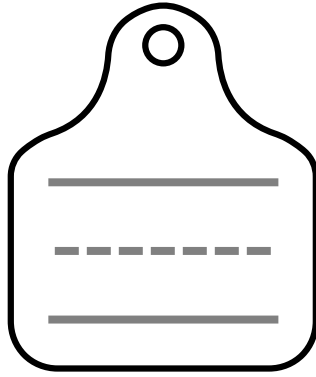
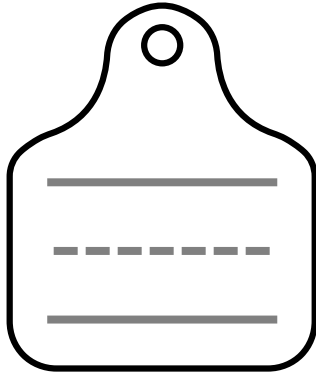
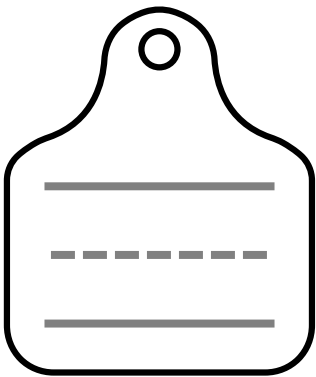
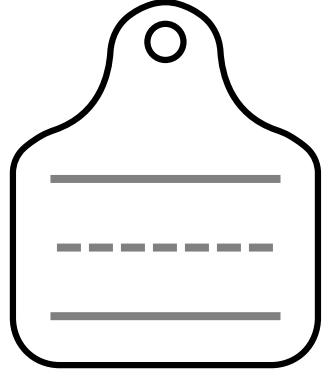
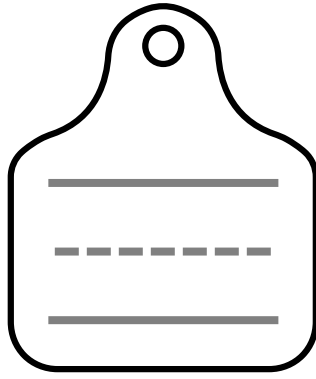
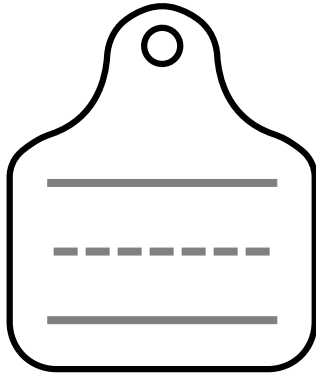
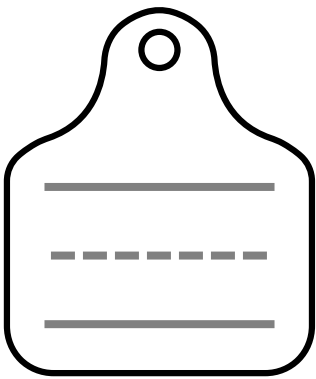


Find My Calf/Cow



Cow and Calf Cutouts





Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Find My Animal

Say each animal name. Listen for the sounds.
Write a letter for each sound you hear.

Word Bank: pig, hog, hen, ram, kid, pup, cat, dog

Animal	Sound 1	Sound 2	Sound 3	Write the Word
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				