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The Top 10 Worst Classroom Pets



petMD.com celebrates the 'Back to School' season by helping teachers avoid a disaster in the classroom

MIAMI, Aug. 18, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Classroom pets are an excellent way to teach young children about responsibility; however, deciding which animal is best suited to a noisy environment and constant human attention can be a daunting task. To make sure elementary school teachers know what to avoid, petMD.com has put together a list of the top 10 worst classroom pets.

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10 - Snakes

Snakes don't shed, aren't noisy and, if you keep their habitat clean, don't emit a strong odor either. So, why don't snakes make good classroom pets? Their unpredictable temperament (especially when molting) can result in aggressive behavior towards inquisitive children. Most importantly, being reptiles, snakes have been known to transmit salmonella.

9 - Ferrets

These carnivorous members of the weasel family fall under the category of exotic (read: more expensive to care for) pets. Plus, they have a strong odor even after their musk glands have been removed. Generally, ferrets have excitable and aggressive dispositions. Even well-trained, they have a tendency to nip when they feel threatened. Overall, ferrets and small children are not a good combination.

8 - Birds

If children in your classroom suffer from allergies, you might think a bird would be a good fit -- but birds shed dander. They're also messy and noisy. Birds bite if handled too much, especially if they're not being handled gently. Also, all that classroom noise and activity isn't very peaceful; a nerve-racked bird will pluck out its feathers. Finally, they can transmit [bird diseases](#) like parrot fever and salmonella.

7 - Rabbits

Thinking pet rabbits are safe for young children is one of the biggest mistakes teachers make when picking a classroom pet. Rabbits don't like to be handled and retaliate by biting or scratching with their strong hind legs. The [House Rabbit Society](#) has a downloadable PDF listing the criteria for keeping a rabbit as a classroom pet. Unfortunately, many don't meet the standard, especially in providing a peaceful environment.

6 - Frogs

Raising a frog to adulthood from the tadpole stage, or keeping an adult frog in a class full of young children is appealing but misguided. Why don't frogs make good classroom pets? Younger children will want to handle and pet the amphibian and that poses a considerable risk for transmission of salmonella. The Center for Disease Control provides vital information in this article: [Reptiles, Amphibians and Salmonella](#).

5 - Hamsters

They're low maintenance and take up virtually no room, which makes this "starter pet" a top choice for teachers in the pet store. But hamsters are nocturnal rodents. This means disappointed children won't get to observe or interact with it at all. Also, the end result of a rattling the cage to wake up and play with "Harry the Hamster" is usually a bite.

#4 - Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are nocturnal, which means they won't be in a good mood if they're woken up and will likely bite as a result. Falling under the "exotic" category, hedgehogs have very specific environmental needs, and their quills can be very irritating to young children.

3 - Chinchillas

Like hedgehogs and ferrets, chinchillas are nocturnal, excitable, and don't like to be handled. This pet needs to stay in constantly cool temperatures (under 85 degrees Fahrenheit) and to be set free daily so they can roam. Even considering taking a pet chinchilla to class for one day is considered a bad idea.

2 - Turtles

Their patience, hard shell and ease of care make turtles a seemingly perfect fit for the classroom. But like frogs and snakes, turtles commonly carry the disease salmonella, which is highly infectious and transmittable to humans. In addition, turtles are not as docile as people think.

1 - Iguanas

Iguanas are, in many ways, the least ideal pet to keep in a classroom. Like most reptiles, iguanas don't like to be handled. And because iguanas can grow to over six feet in length, a tail "lashing" can be quite dangerous to young children. Iguanas also have unique dietary needs and cannot subsist on greens alone.

So what animals *do* make for good classroom pets? According to the [Humane Society](#), rodents such as rats, mice, gerbils and guinea pigs present less of a disease risk and are very sociable creatures. Goldfish are also an excellent choice for students who may suffer from allergies. They are relatively low-maintenance to care for and feed, and most importantly, they aren't disruptive to a healthy learning environment.

About petMD

petMD is a leading online resource focused solely on the health and well-being of pets. The site maintains the world's largest pet health library, written and approved by a network of trusted veterinarians. petMD was founded to inspire pet owners to provide an ever-increasing quality of life for their pets and to connect pet owners with pet experts and other animal lovers. petMD is a subsidiary of the Pet360 family of brands, which also includes www.PetFoodDirect.com -- the most complete pet food and supply retailer online, and www.NationalPetPharmacy.com -- a fully certified, full-service pet pharmacy delivering pet meds, vitamins and comprehensive pet health and wellness products.

Contact:

Kelly Lange
610-234-4114