

## Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – More Animals

### Introduction

During the first 18 months of life, children are usually referred to as young infants (birth to 8 months) and mobile infants (8 to 18 months). Children between the ages of 18 and 36 months are usually called toddlers.

In Focus Area #7, **More Animals**, children are involved in activities that focus on living things: animals. They are involved at a foundational level in the science component of **STEM** (science, technology, engineering and math).

As in all of the Focus Areas, there are experiences that support all of the Domains of Child Development and Early Learning with a strong emphasis on the following Domains: **Language Development (LD)** and **Emergent Literacy (EL)**.

Toddlers encounter animals in their yard, in their neighborhood, in creeks, lakes and ponds, and as they travel with their family. They may see rabbits, squirrels, frogs, turtles, bugs and spiders. Animals are a part of children's environment. Through both planned and spontaneous experiences, caregivers can provide opportunities for toddlers to discover many things about these animals.

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### Teacher Notes

- *In this Focus Area, More Animals, there are three Topics of study:*
  - *Squirrels and Rabbits*
  - *Frogs and Turtles*
  - *Bugs and Spiders*
- *Many of the experiences in this Focus Area have an age designation of either Young Toddler (YT) or Older Toddler (OT). However, these two age designations do not specify age in months.*
- *Use your knowledge of individual children to determine which experiences are appropriate for which children in your care.*
- *Consider extending a Topic of Study over several weeks. There is so much toddlers can learn about this topic. Carry over activities from one week to another because toddlers enjoy and learn best through repetition.*

*Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements (Rev. 1.1.15) requires the following:*

**400 PROGRAM – 401 Program Requirements for all ages**

5.1 The facility shall have an approved curriculum with weekly activity plans appropriate for the developmental needs of each group of children.

*To assist your program in meeting this requirement, refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for Toddlers for information on how to develop your plans. In addition, 2 different examples of blank Weekly Activity Plan sheets are included. Feel free to make copies of the plan sheet you select and use it each week.*

*To help you in planning, there are 4 samples of completed Weekly Activity Plans that you may use as guides when developing activity plans for your group of children.*

*Should you choose to develop your own Weekly Activity Plan sheet, feel free to use the information presenter here as a guide.*

## Resources

- Children’s books can be purchased online, from school supply catalogs or local book stores.
- Check with your local library for the availability of children’s books.
- **The Infant/Toddler Photo Library** from Lakeshore Learning (50 photos and activity cards focusing on the following topics: Transportation, Farm animals, Nature, Pets, Home, Food, Community Helpers, Emotions)
- CDs which can be ordered online or from school supply catalogs:
  - Baby Beluga by Raffi
  - Songs for I Love You Rituals 2 with songs by Dr. Becky Bailey and music by Mar Harman
  - Sea Gulls Music for Rest and Relaxation by Hap Palmer
  - Quiet Time by Raffi
  - Singable Songs for the Very Young – Great with a Peanut Butter Sandwich by Raffi
  - Toddlers on Parade, KIMBO Educational
  - Toddlers Favorite Music – for Little People

## Picture File

- Collect pictures that relate to this Focus Area – **More Animals**. Examples of pictures to collect include:
  - pictures of animals: rabbits, squirrels, turtles, frogs, bugs and spidersInclude small (index card size) as well as larger pictures. Consider mounting the small pictures on index cards. Laminate or cover all of the pictures with clear, self-adhesive paper for durability.
- Post some of the pictures on the wall at toddler’s eye level. Observe to see if toddlers look at the pictures and point to and/or name the objects or people in the pictures. Join them and expand on what they say. For example, say to Megan who is looking at a collection of squirrels, “Megan, you’re looking at a squirrel that is climbing a tree and this one that is holding an acorn in its paws.”
- Put some of the small pictures in a container and place it in the library area so that it is accessible to children. Observe a child as he takes the pictures out of the box. Should the child bring a picture to you, involve him in discussing what he sees in the picture. “The spider is spinning a web. We read a book about the very busy spider spinning her web.”
- Keep some of the pictures in a basket or tote bag within easy reach. Use the pictures with an individual child or a small group of children. Invite them to name the animals and to talk about what is happening in the pictures. Allow children to look at the pictures on their own. Model and talk with them about the proper way to handle the pictures.
- Determine if funds are available to purchase **The Infant /Toddler Photo Activity Library**, a Pam Schiller resource published by Gryphon House. See **Resources** for ordering information.

**Teacher Note:** Refer to **Curriculum Tips and Techniques** – Picture File, for additional information about how to organize a picture file.

## Toddler Environment

The toddler environment should always provide equipment and materials for language experiences, manipulative exploration, gross motor and block play, sensory exploration, pretend play and outdoor exploration. The following additions to the environment are intended for the entire Focus Area: **More Animals**.

### Language Area

- Add the following book:
  - *Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See?*
- Add stuffed animals such as rabbits, squirrels, frogs and turtles
- Add container of pictures that have been laminated or covered with clear self-adhesive paper. (See **Picture File**, page 2 for examples of types of pictures to collect.)

### Manipulative Exploration

- Add animal puzzles
- Sensory Bottles with bugs and spiders (also Sensory Exploration)

### Gross Motor & Blocks

- Add small boxes of different sizes
- Add small vinyl animals: squirrels, rabbits, frogs, turtles, bugs and spiders
- Add a small tree branch
- Add lily pads and logs from vinyl or paper that have been laminated or covered with clear self-stick adhesive

### Sensory Exploration

- Add Sensory Bottles with bugs and spiders
- Add sensory tub with sand, vinyl frogs and turtles, and vinyl bugs and spiders
- Add sensory tub with water, vinyl frogs and turtles, and aquarium net
- Add tub of cotton balls with tongs (ice)

### Pretend Play

- Add stuffed rabbit in a basket
- Add stuffed frogs and turtles
- Post pictures of animals such as rabbits, squirrels, frogs, turtles, bugs and spiders in the pretend play area
- Add the book, *Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See?*

### Outdoor Exploration

- Read *Our Bug Book* to the children on the playground.
- Take a magnifying glass outdoors and involve older toddlers in looking for bugs.
- Involve children in looking for squirrels on playgrounds with large trees.
- Use sidewalk chalk to create lily pads on the sidewalk and invite children to jump from one lily pad to the next.
- Hide plastic bugs and spiders on the playground and invite children to find them.
- Provide large snap-together cubes for children to crawl through.

**Teacher Note:** *Discourage children from killing bugs they see on the playground.*

**Safety Note:** *It is the responsibility of the child care program and each employee to ensure the safety of toddlers in the program. This includes the materials and equipment provided for children's use. Should you have safety questions, the developers of this curriculum suggest that you consult with your Child Care Licensing Specialist for technical assistance.*

Curriculum books such as *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & 2s, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, contain safety information. See **Curriculum Tips and Techniques, References and Resources**, for additional resources.

## Family Connection and Engagement

Send home a note to families stating that for the next few weeks the children will be involved in the focus area: **More Animals**. They will participate in experiences that focus on animals they may see in their environment. How families can be involved in this focus area will depend on the situation of each child and his or her family.

Consider some of the following ways to involve the families:

- Invite families to send pictures of animals. Specify the animals that the children will be learning about.
- Suggest that families call their child's attention to animals they see in their backyard, their neighborhood, in the park, in lakes and ponds, or as they are riding in the car.