

Lesson Plan 1: Animals and their Environment

It's no surprise that animals and humans have a lot in common. After all, humans are animals too. Like us, animals can feel pain and want to live without being harmed. And, like us, they need to eat, move, grow and reproduce (give birth).

Think of all the animals from **A**nteater to **Z**ebra. Choose one species and think about their lives and the place where they live.

Find out all you can about those four life processes that we share with them: nutrition (the food and water we take in), movement, growth and reproduction. You might know quite a lot already, but you may need to find out more information using books, magazines, the Internet and other sources.

When you have found all the information you need, draw a diagram to show how that animal lives.

Here is an example:

Nutrition

Badgers eat a variety of foods, but earthworms form a large part of their diet. Badgers also eat insects and their larvae, small mammals, fruits and nuts such as blackberries and acorns, carrion (dead animals and birds), cereals, roots, bulbs and tubers. Badgers drink water. In the autumn, badgers eat more than usual, as they are building up their fat reserves for the winter.

Movement

Badgers are mainly nocturnal, which means they move around at night and sleep during the day. A badger's home is called a 'sett'. Badgers move around their home range, where there may be a number of setts. They move to find food, to find a mate, to dig setts and clean them out, to take care of their young, and defend their home territory. In very cold weather they may stay underground and not move very much at all. This is to conserve energy and keep warm.

Badger

Growth

Badger cubs (baby badgers) spend the first eight weeks of their lives underground, where they are nursed by their mother. As they grow, they move above ground and explore the area, play and learn. The cub then has about 8 months to grow and prepare for their first winter. Adult badgers grow to around 90 cm long and can weigh anything from 6-17 kg, although the average is around 10 kg. A fully-grown male badger is called a boar and the female is called a sow.

Reproduction

Badgers are mature and ready to mate and reproduce at around the age of 12 – 15 months. Their reproduction is unusual because they can mate at any time of year, but the fertilised eggs stay in the womb unchanged until the end of December, when they start to grow again. The gestation period (the length of time that the badger is pregnant) is 6 – 7 weeks, which means that sows usually give birth in February. The litter sizes range from 1 to 5 cubs.