

"Eat and Run"

OVERVIEW: It is desirable to use a simulation activity to increase attention span and to provide inclusion for all students. "Eat and Run" is a fun simulation that also mimics actual occurrences in nature.

PURPOSE: To show the dilemma deer face when they must browse for many hours daily yet also be on the alert for danger.

OBJECTIVE(s):

Students will be able "browse" like deer.
Students will demonstrate how deer react when danger appears.
Students will demonstrate survival of the fittest.
Students will be able to identify 4-5 sources of danger to deer.
Students will describe 1-2 ways deer protect themselves.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS:

- cereal (Rice Krispies are hard to ruminate, Fruit Loops are popular)
- paper to put cereal on
- white tail flag (paper works just fine)
- pictures or name tags of predators (you can have non- predator animals too (the deer continue eating).
- Information about deer is helpful. (Book= Hands-On Nature, edited by Jenepher Lingelbach, Vermont Institute of Natural Science, c. 1986--has this activity, the background information and much more).

ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Ask each child to kneel down. Put a piece of paper with cereal on it in front of each child (You can use different kinds of cereal to simulate abundant or limited browsing). Tell the children that they are deer, grazing in an open field. They should put their heads down like deer and eat. Appoint one deer to walk among them and act as a lookout (The first time through you can just let them all browse and see what happens without the lookout)

When the lookout senses danger (a child who has a picture or name of a predator attached to his/her body), the lookout deer raises his white tail (a hand-held flag). The feeding deer must stop eating and flee to SAFETY (a predetermined, marked spot).** The predator may tag deer, thus "killing" them. Discuss the action before allowing other students to become predator(s) and the lookout deer.

You can change the situation by blindfolding one or more of the deer, having some deer be crippled or old (slower), sick, etc.

****IMPORTANT:** You really MUST teach students how to be gentle and to observe the rule: It's only fun if nobody gets hurt, BEFORE you try this simulation. We even talk about what it will "look" like and "sound" like before we get started.

Possible discussion questions/topics:

- camouflage (for both predator and prey)
- other adaptations: quick runner, hooves, ruminant vs. carnivore sense of smell, signals, size of ears, eyes, etc.
- how other animals are adapted to be aware of potential danger
- survival of the fittest (why is it beneficial to the herd?)
- what are some things that help/hurt animals chances of survival?
- human adaptations to sense danger
- who or what do humans fear?

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER: There are many extension activities that would be lead-in or follow-up activities. Oh, Deer!, a Project Wild simulation is great. The Hands-On Nature book has four other activities that are deer-related. Birds 'n Worms, a Project Learning Tree activity is a good camouflage activity. Your State Dept. of Education. or Fish and Game should be able to get you in touch with a local Project Wild or Project Learning Tree facilitator.
