The Guardian

one stop english

Back-scratching bovine leads scientists to reassess intelligence of cows

Level 1: Elementary

> **Article summary:** This article is about Veronika, an extraordinary pet cow from Austria. Veronika learned to use natural tools in different ways to scratch herself when she was uncomfortable. Her behaviour has led scientists to rethink animal intelligence, especially their assumptions about livestock.
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> **Time:** 60 minutes
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> **Skills:** Reading, Speaking
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> **Language focus:** Parts of speech
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> **Materials needed:** One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

a. The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to rethink their assumptions about different types of animals. To start, elicit some animals from students and write them on the board. Explain how a Venn Diagram works. On the left side, students should write the names of animals that are pets only. On the right side, they write the names of animals that are farm animals only. In the middle, they write the names of animals that can be both pets and farm animals. Have students work in pairs. Then draw a Venn Diagram on the board and ask students to share their answers. To extend, ask students to explain why they put particular animals in the *pet only*, *farm animal only* or *both* categories.

2. Key words

a. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the definitions and then find the words in the article. Tell students that some words may appear in different form in the article. Allow a few minutes for students to check answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

1.	cattle	6.	pattern
2.	rethink	7.	livestock
3.	broom	8.	scratch
4.	sharp	9.	smooth
5.	colleague	10.	meadow

b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using the words from the previous activity. Encourage students to read complete sentences to you when they give answers, so you can check their pronunciation of the key words. To extend the activity, have students make sentences of their own with the key words.

Key:

1.	meadow	6.	sharp
2.	colleague	7.	scratch
3.	broom	8.	rethink
4.	livestock	9.	smooth
5.	cattle	10.	pattern

3. Comprehension check

a. As an extra activity, play a short video of Veronika scratching her back before students start the comprehension check. Search for the original article on the Guardian website and scroll through to show the class a video of Veronika using the tools. For this activity, students will work individually or in pairs to complete a summary of the article, using the words in the word pool. Tell students to read through the entire summary once to familiarise themselves with the article. Then have them read it again, completing the gaps as they read. Remind students that there is only one correct word for each gap. After students complete the task, check answers as a class. Have students take turns reading the sentences aloud, including the word in the gap. To extend, have pairs write one or two more sentences to include in the summary. Then have volunteers share their sentences with the class.

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Key:
1. *scratch*
2. *scientists*
3. *mouth*
4. *smooth*
5. *tools*
6. *intelligence*

4. Key language

a. This activity focuses on parts of speech. Remind students of the difference between a *noun* (a person, place, thing or idea) and an *adjective* (a word that describe a person, place, thing or idea). Read the adjective forms in the table aloud. Check for understanding. Explain the meaning of the words if necessary. Have students work individually to find the corresponding noun forms in the article. Check answers as a class.

Key:
1. *ability*
2. *calmness*
3. *contentment*
4. *gentleness*
5. *importance*
6. *intelligence*
7. *patience*
8. *talent*

b. Tell students to use the words from the table to complete the sentences. The order of words matches in a and b, e.g. sentence 1 uses word 1, sentence 2 uses word 2, etc. Have students work in pairs to complete the sentences. Then check answers as a class. To extend, have volunteers share their own sentences with either the noun or adjective forms of the words in the table.

Key:
1. *able*
2. *calmness*
3. *content*
4. *gentle*
5. *importance*

6. *intelligence*
7. *patience*
8. *talented*

5. Discussion

a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences or beliefs whenever possible. Invite volunteers to share their answers with the class. To extend, ask students to share what they learned from discussing the questions with their classmates.

6. In your own words

a. The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they learned in the article, and to broaden their knowledge of related topics. Tell students that they are going to research another amazing animal. The animal can be an individual, like Veronika, who has very special skills. It can also be a breed or type of animal that is known for being very intelligent. Encourage them to look for other examples of animals that use tools too. Students can use English-language websites to search for the information. Tell them to make a poster with key information and fun facts about the animal. Have them add photos of the animal and its habitat.

b. Have students share their posters with the class. To prepare, they can take turns presenting in pairs or small groups. Vote on the most amazing animals from the presentations. You can include subcategories like *most intelligent*, *most creative*, *most surprising*, etc.