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4th Grade

Life on the Street

Leo looked around desperately. He had no idea where he or his owner was. He'd found a hole in the fence and decided to go to the other side to explore. He'd walked around for a few minutes, then had tried to find his way back but couldn't. How would he survive without his owner? What changes do cats and dogs have to make to live and survive as homeless pets?

Domestic dogs have great difficulty adjusting to life in the wild. First, they have to find food and water sources. Dogs can't hunt in the wild, so they are forced to become scavengers. They often join packs, which help support them. Also, dogs who find themselves homeless must find suitable shelter to help them survive in the summer heat and the winter cold. Their bodies have a tough time resisting diseases, such as mange and parvo, which could kill them. To survive on their own, dogs should be able to make themselves invisible to humans because humans often kill or mistreat homeless dogs. And cars are a danger, so dogs also need to learn to be cautious when they're crossing a road. Life on the street is hard for homeless dogs. The lifespan of a stray dog is one to two years, while a dog with a caring owner can live eight to sixteen years.

Homeless cats are better suited to adapting to life in the wild than dogs. They are more experienced than dogs when it comes to hunting, so they can kill other animals for food. Like dogs, cats join colonies for support. Although it may seem that cats don't have many problems living on their own, they do. Some of the problems they encounter are weather extremes, not having consistency in their diet, cars passing by, hostile humans, fleas, worms, and contagious diseases. Lost or abandoned cats generally just live two to four years.

So let's return to Leo's story. Leo's story, unlike that of many other cats and dogs, has a happy ending. After a week of being homeless, Leo was looking for food when a truck drove by. It was an animal rescue truck. The people inside the truck caught sight of Leo, captured him, and brought him to a vet. The vet did a microchip scan and soon found Leo's owner, who was delighted to see him. Although Leo happily found his owner, many lost or abandoned animals never see their original owners again. If they are to survive, they must learn to adapt to a life of hardship and pain.