

Strange but true

WORKSHEET A

As many people who have pets will know, animals can sometimes behave in surprising ways. Below are four descriptions of unusual animal behaviour: three of the cases are real, one has been invented. Can you identify which case is not true?

1. On a farm in England a female dog called Nettle had a litter of puppies that lived with her in a basket in the kitchen of the farmhouse. Also in the farmhouse was a hen called Mabel, which the farmer allowed to live inside during the winter. One day, when Nettle briefly went outside, Mabel jumped into the basket to keep the puppies warm. The hen didn't budge when Nettle came back: she seemed to want to take over and behave like the puppies' mother. At first Nettle was a bit confused, but soon she and Mabel seemed to come to an agreement, with each of them spending some time in the basket with the puppies.

2. A baby hippopotamus in Kenya, whose mother had been killed in the 2004 tsunami, was rescued and taken to a park where there was a 130-year-old giant tortoise named Mzee. The hippo, named Owen by its rescuers, immediately showed that it wanted to stay close to Mzee. At first Mzee ignored Owen, but after a while the two very different animals were playing, swimming, sleeping and eating together. The friendship only ended with the arrival of a female hippo a couple of years later. She was a very large animal (as was Owen, by then) and didn't like Mzee, so it was decided to take Mzee away to a new home.

3. Two baby flamingoes called Little and Large in a British Zoo seemed to hate the colour pink. The birds – which were white, like all young flamingoes – were in a different part of the zoo from the adult flamingoes, which were pink. The zookeepers noticed that the birds avoided a pink plastic tray that contained water for them to walk around in, and ran away from a pink toy that was given to them to play with. The zookeepers changed the tray for a yellow one, but still had a problem to solve before the young flamingoes had the nasty shock of turning pink themselves.

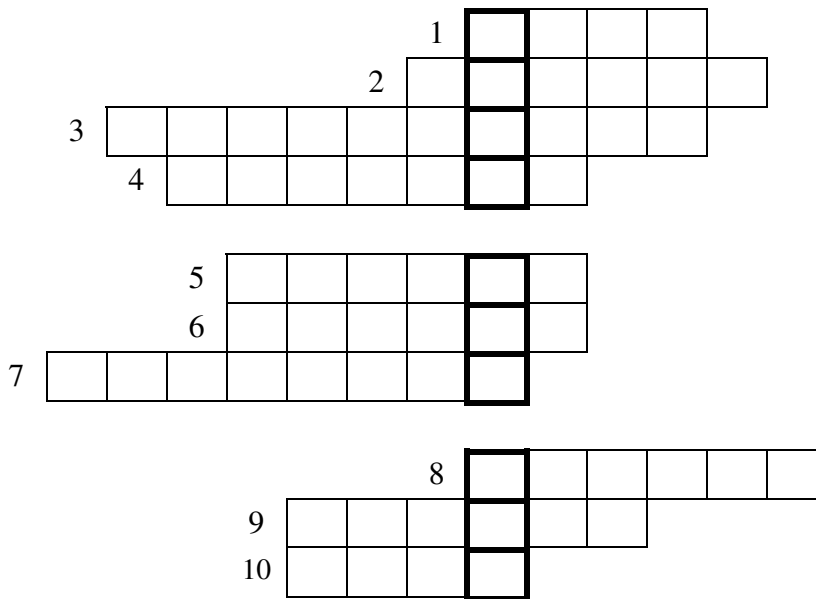
4. In the state of Vermont in the north-east of the United States, a cat called Tommy had an unusual passion: baseball. When there was a game of baseball in the local park, Tommy would usually sit on the grass among the players on the fielding team. He would watch the ball as the pitcher threw it towards the batter, waiting to see if the batter would hit it in his direction. Although Tommy was obviously unable to catch the ball in the way a person could, he never seemed afraid when the ball flew past him at high speed – and would always try to stop it with his paws when it came towards him on the ground.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, the meaning in Swahili (a language spoken in Kenya) of Mzee, the name of the 130-year-old giant tortoise, will read from top to bottom.



1. The two young flamingoes at London Zoo would not play _____ the pink toy they were given.
2. Mabel the hen wanted to keep the _____ of puppies warm.
3. Owen the hippopotamus and Mzee the giant tortoise had a very unusual _____.
4. Owen was given his name by the people who _____ him.
5. It seems the two young flamingoes didn't have a problem with the colour _____.
6. Mzee had to leave after the _____ hippo arrived.
7. Nettle became _____ when Mabel jumped into the basket with her puppies.
8. Owen had lost his _____ in the 2004 tsunami.
9. Mabel seemed to want to _____ like the mother of the puppies.
10. The big problem for the young flamingoes was that one day they would _____ pink themselves.

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

Fill in the gaps to complete the text.

1. On a farm in England a female dog called Nettle had a litter of puppies that stayed with her in a basket in the kitchen of the farmhouse. Also in the farmhouse was a hen called Mabel, which the (1) **rm** (2) **ll w** to live inside during the winter. One day, when Nettle briefly went outside, Mabel (3) **j ed** into the basket to keep the puppies warm. The hen didn't (4) **b dg** when Nettle came back: she seemed to want to (5) **t o** and behave like the puppies' mother. At first Nettle was a bit confused, but soon she and Mabel seemed to come to an (6) **agree**, with each of them spending some time in the basket with the puppies.

2. A baby (7) **h p t m s** in Kenya whose mother had been killed in the 2004 (8) **t u a** was rescued and taken to a park where there was a 130-year-old (9) **g n** tortoise named Mzee. The hippo, named Owen by its rescuers, immediately showed that it wanted to stay close to Mzee. At first Mzee (10) **ig d** Owen, but after a while the two very (11) **ff t** animals were playing, swimming, sleeping and eating together. The friendship only ended with the arrival of a female hippo a couple of years later. She was a very large animal (as was Owen, by then) and didn't like Mzee, so it was decided to take Mzee away to a new (12) **h**.

3. Two baby flamingoes in London Zoo seemed to hate the colour pink. The birds – which were (13) **w**, like all young flamingoes – were in a different part of the zoo from the adult flamingoes, which were pink. The (14) **zoo-ke s** noticed that the birds (15) **vo e** a pink plastic tray that (16) **c nt i d** water for them to walk around in, and ran away from a pink toy that was given to them to play with. The zookeepers changed the tray (17) **r** a yellow one, but still had a problem to (18) **s v** before the young flamingoes had the (19) **sty** (20) **s k** of turning pink themselves.