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Sheep suicides cause financial ruin

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9 July, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Sheep suicides cause financial ruin

BNE: Sheep are generally not known for their intelligence. This was verified in the Turkish village of Gevas, Van province yesterday, when 450 of the woolly creatures followed each other in jumping to the deaths. The Turkish newspaper *Radikal* reported on Friday that almost a third of a flock of 1,500 sheep incomprehensibly tried to jump across a 15-metre ravine. Naturally their long-jump skills were not up to the leap and, one after another, they plunged to their deaths into the chasm below.

Stunned shepherds were left as helpless onlookers, unable to prevent their animals' nonsensical suicide mission. The lemming-like incident is a financial calamity for the village, which has calculated it has lost up to \$100,000. Villager Umit Ozalan said he was distraught with grief. He said: "This is a catastrophe. I am financially ruined. I always thought sheep had some grey matter between their ears. I have lost all of my respect for sheep." Mr. Ozalan said he would switch to chicken farming.

WARM-UPS

1. I'M A SHEEP: Everyone in the class is now a sheep. Introduce yourself to the other sheep in the class and talk about your sheep lives. What do you do every day? What do you worry or get stressed about? What do you think about humans keeping you in fields or dogs chasing you? Don't you get fed up with eating grass all the time?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Sheep / intelligence / wool / Turkey / long jump / shepherds / \$100,000 / catastrophes / chicken farming

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. SHEEP: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with sheep. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

4. SHEEP OPINIONS: In pairs / groups, talk about how far you agree with these opinions about sheep.

- a. Sheep are very intelligent creatures.
- b. Sheep make wonderful pets.
- c. Sheep are dangerous.
- d. Sheep are among the most useful animals in the world.
- e. Sheep have wonderful, stress-free lives.
- f. Lamb is the most delicious meat around.
- g. Being a shepherd and looking after sheep is a relaxing and enjoyable job.
- h. The world would be in big trouble without sheep.

5. FARMING: Imagine you are farmers. In pairs / groups, talk about the advantages and disadvantages of raising the following animals on a farm. Which animal would you choose?

- Sheep
- Cows
- Chickens
- Pigs
- Ducks
- Ostriches
- Snakes
- Other

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Sheep are very well known for having high IQs. | T / F |
| b. 450 sheep in Turkey copied each by leaping to their deaths. | T / F |
| c. The long jump skills of the sheep were not good enough. | T / F |
| d. The sheep plunged to their deaths into a chasm. | T / F |
| e. The shepherds tried to help the sheep jump. | T / F |
| f. The sheep were chasing lemmings. | T / F |
| g. The incident has brought financial ruin to the village. | T / F |
| h. A shepherd said he would abandon sheep in favor of pigs. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| a. intelligence | dumbfounded |
| b. verified | unfathomably |
| c. creatures | frantic |
| d. incomprehensibly | IQ |
| e. plunged | catastrophe |
| f. stunned | beasts |
| g. onlookers | brain |
| h. calamity | bystanders |
| i. distraught | plummeted |
| j. grey matter | proven |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| a. generally | their deaths |
| b. woolly | mission |
| c. a flock of | matter |
| d. their long-jump skills were not | creatures |
| e. plunged to | with grief |
| f. helpless | up to the leap |
| g. nonsensical suicide | onlookers |
| h. financial | not known for |
| i. distraught | 1,500 sheep |
| j. grey | calamity |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

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BNE: Sheep are _____ not known for their intelligence. This was _____ in the Turkish village of Gevas, Van province yesterday, when 450 of the _____ creatures followed each other in jumping to the deaths. The Turkish newspaper *Radikal* reported on Friday that almost a third of a _____ of 1,500 sheep _____ tried to jump across a 15-metre _____. Naturally their long-jump skills were not _____ the leap and, one after another, they _____ to their deaths into the chasm below.

_____ shepherds were left as helpless _____, unable to prevent their animals' _____ suicide mission. The lemming-like incident is a financial _____ for the village, which has calculated it has lost up to \$100,000. Villager Umit Ozalan said he was _____ with grief. He said: "This is a catastrophe. I am financially ruined. I always thought sheep had some _____ matter between their _____. I have lost all of my respect for sheep." Mr. Ozalan said he would _____ to chicken farming.

flock
verified
plunged
ravine
generally
incomprehensibly
up to
woolly
ears
calamity
onlookers
distraught
switch
stunned
grey
nonsensical

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'grey / gray'** and **'matter'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT SHEEP SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about sheep.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| • generally | • helpless |
| • woolly | • nonsensical |
| • Turkish | • calculated |
| • flock | • distraught |
| • skills | • ruined |
| • plunged | • grey |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you saw this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What is your general opinion of sheep?
- d. Would you choose to have a sheep as a pet?
- e. How intelligent do you think sheep are?
- f. Do you think the life of a sheep is an easy one?
- g. Why do you think sheep always follow each other?
- h. What do you think sheep think about all day?
- i. What do you think is the biggest dream for a sheep?
- j. Do you think sheep are dangerous in any way?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. Do you feel sorry for the shepherds?
- d. Do you think a shepherd's life is a good one?
- e. Why do you think the sheep jumped to their deaths?
- f. Do you think sheep farming is a risky business?
- g. What is your favorite farmyard animal and why?
- h. Do you have any respect for sheep?
- i. What do you think of the phrase, "grey matter between their ears"?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

SHEEP COUNSELING:

You are a sheep counselor. It is your job to provide help for stressed sheep. You have to train some new sheep counselors. In pairs / groups, create an information sheet for new counselors about what kinds of things makes sheep stressed and how to help the sheep overcome their stress.

	STRESSFUL THINGS	HOW TO DEAL WITH STRESS
Life on the farm		
Dogs		
Other sheep		
Rumors about kebabs, mint sauce and dinner tables		
Weather		
Other		

After you have finished, change partners and tell each other about your worksheets. Give each other advice on how to improve your worksheets.

Return to your original partners and incorporate the advice you received into revising your original worksheets.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Sheep suicides cause financial ruin

BNE: Sheep are generally not _____ their intelligence. This was _____ in the Turkish village of Gevas, Van province yesterday, when 450 of the _____ followed each other in jumping to the deaths. The Turkish newspaper *Radikal* reported on Friday that almost a third of _____ 1,500 sheep incomprehensibly tried to jump across a 15-metre _____. Naturally their long-jump skills were _____ leap and, one after another, they _____ to their deaths into the _____ below.

Stunned shepherds were left as _____, unable to prevent their animals' _____ suicide mission. The lemming-like incident is a financial _____ for the village, which has calculated it has _____ \$100,000.

Villager Umit Ozalan said he was _____ with grief. He said: "This is a catastrophe. I am financially ruined. I always thought sheep had some _____ between their ears. I have lost all of my _____ sheep." Mr. Ozalan said he would _____ chicken farming.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on sheep. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. FARMER: Write an essay about what life as a farmer is like. Read the main points of your essay to your classmates in your next lesson. Did everyone have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the Turkish shepherd Umit Ozalan. Tell him what you think he should do to make a living. Read your letter to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. intelligence	IQ
b. verified	proven
c. creatures	beasts
d. incomprehensibly	unfathomably
e. plunged	plummeted
f. stunned	dumbfounded
g. onlookers	bystanders
h. calamity	catastrophe
i. distraught	frantic
j. grey matter	brain

PHRASE MATCH:

a. generally	not known for
b. woolly	creatures
c. a flock of	1,500 sheep
d. their long-jump skills were not	up to the leap
e. plunged to	their deaths
f. helpless	onlookers
g. nonsensical suicide	mission
h. financial	calamity
i. distraught	with grief
j. grey	matter

GAP FILL:

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Stunned shepherds were left as helpless **onlookers**, unable to prevent their animals' **nonsensical** suicide mission. The lemming-like incident is a financial **calamity** for the village, which has calculated it has lost up to \$100,000. Villager Umit Ozalan said he was **distraught** with grief. He said: "This is a catastrophe. I am financially ruined. I always thought sheep had some **grey** matter between their **ears**. I have lost all of my respect for sheep." Mr. Ozalan said he would **switch** to chicken farming.