Name _____

Surfing Sea Otter

In 2023, surfers in California had a problem. A sea otter was doing something really strange.



She was surfing! A few summers back, this otter started scaring surfers away from their surfboards. She would chew and rip the board with her sharp teeth. She would hop on top and ride around. She did this many times.



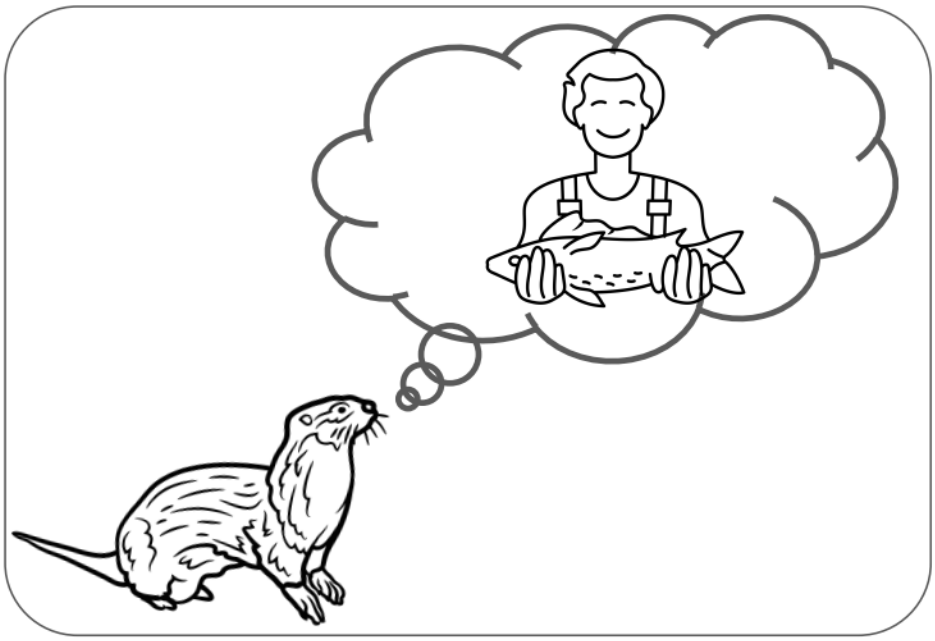
Surfers were scared. Scientists were confused. Why was the sea otter doing this?
Scientists needed to figure out why this was happening. So, they thought about it from the sea otter's point of view.



First, they thought about what she might get from her **SENSES**.

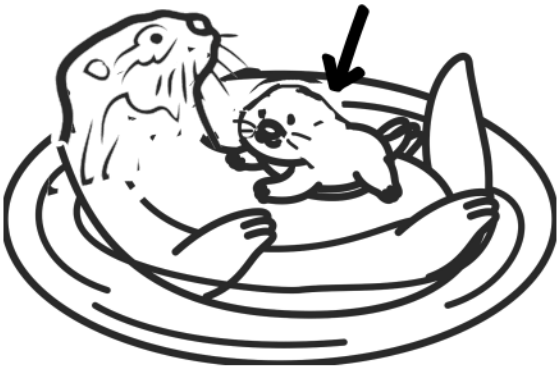
Sea otters have strong senses of sight, smell, and hearing. They also have long whiskers. Whiskers help otters feel things that are moving in the water. So this sea otter could sense human surfers in the ocean nearby.





Next, scientists thought about this sea otter's MEMORIES.
Wild sea otters don't usually have many memories of people. But this sea otter was different. This otter grew up at an aquarium. Then she was released into the wild. So she might remember people feeding her at the aquarium. These memories might explain her behavior. Maybe she thought the surfers had food for her!

Finally, scientists thought about this sea otter's INSTINCTS. Instincts are what she knows without being taught.
Like many animals, sea otters have the instinct to defend themselves. This instinct is extra strong when a sea otter has a baby pup. During this time, a sea otter's instincts make her more likely to attack.



As scientists studied this sea otter, they discovered something. She was about to have a pup! Maybe that explained her behavior.



Maybe she thought that a surfer was a danger that needed to be attacked.
Thinking like an animal helps us understand animal behavior!

