

## ANIMAL COMMUNICATION by Joanna Mansson BVSc

This is a controversial topic for some, but not for others. When we were at University we were taught that animals are only instinctual and have no reasoning ability, which shocked me, because I felt differently. Since then this has been revised, as further research has shown that animals do have an intelligence and each one has a different personality, within each species, and within each group.

I have always loved animals but until a few years ago had never realised how intelligent they actually are. Then I worked at a place where there wasn't a full time nurse. This meant that I had to do many procedures with animals on my own, which I wasn't used to. Out of desperation I started talking to them, explaining that they were sick and as a result, I had to do some tests on them to find out what was wrong; that this meant I had to take some blood with a needle, which would hurt a little bit, but then I could put them on fluids which would make them feel better, and then they could go back to their cage. Nine out of ten times, the animals just relaxed and let me do it. I was shocked!

Then I had to run dog training classes and in this context I suddenly felt that commanding a dog to sit when it clearly wasn't planning to was somehow disrespectful to the animal. A discussion on the ethics of dog ownership and methods of training was probably more appropriate.

At my next job I was working with other vets. When we had to do a procedure with the animal I would explain to the animal what we wanted, and whether or not it would hurt, and the other vet was amazed that we were able to do things that are commonly done only under sedation, not only without sedation but with the animals' cooperation.

Then I found a book at the library called Communication with Animals, by Arthur Myers. He was a prize-winning reporter from the UK, who was sent to America to research all these people who claimed that they could talk to animals. There were about 100 stories about individual communicators and their experiences, and it was a whole new world.

From a sceptic's point of view it certainly is a strange situation to be in, working with animals, and not even knowing "who" they really are, or "if" they really are! Without reliable proof, however, having been conditioned all our lives to believe that animals are dumb, and that we simply cannot communicate with them, this can be a thoroughly challenging topic.

However, if we research animal communication without bias, we find that it is generally accepted in other cultures across the globe, and that even within our own society, children claim to get messages from and communicate with animals, an ability which is lost, forgotten or suppressed, once society convinces them that it isn't possible. Adults who claim to talk with animals are simply considered con-artists or insane.

Scepticism and prejudices aside, it is simply respectful and good nursing to explain to any patient in our care what is going on. Even if they can only pick up on body language and tone of voice, in reducing stress, which can cause fatalities all on its own, it is better than nothing.

There are at least 50 books by animal communicators on the subject, many of which are available at Amazon.com, and I encourage everyone to read about it before making up their minds. For the past 20 years, many veterinarians in America, and now in Australia, have started to offer animal communication, through reputable communicators, as one of their services to clients.

A few years ago I referred a baffling case to a communicator in Victoria, with good results. I have also spoken to two communicators in Sydney, all of whom have been doing it for years. The two in Sydney have been on TV many times.

One in particular, Trisha McCagh, teaches animal communication at workshops all over Australia and has offered to come up to Darwin 3-4 Feb 2007 for a 1-2 day course. She will keep the month of February free for other places that have also expressed interest.

Trisha said that a lot of sceptics turn up and despite scepticism, by the end of the first day, everyone has learnt how to do it; it's just a matter of practising it. The cost is \$150 for one day and \$300 for two.

Those interested can email Trisha at [trisha@animaltalk.com.au](mailto:trisha@animaltalk.com.au), or call Joanna Mansson on 0448 346 784.

Aug-Sept 2006