

# The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals

By Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

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Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's groundbreaking bestseller, *When Elephants Weep*, was the first book since Darwin's time to explore emotions in the animal kingdom, particularly from animals in the wild. Now, he focuses exclusively on the contained world of the farm animal, revealing startling, irrefutable evidence that barnyard creatures have feelings too, even consciousness.


Weaving history, literature, anecdotes, scientific studies, and Masson's own vivid experiences observing pigs, cows, sheep, goats, and chickens over the course of five years, this important book at last gives voice, meaning, and dignity to these gentle beasts that are bred to be milked, shorn, butchered, and eaten. Can we ever know what makes an animal happy? Many animal behaviorists say no. But Jeffrey Masson has a different view: An animal is happy if it can live according to its own nature. Farm animals suffer greatly in this regard. Chickens, for instance, like to perch in trees at night, to avoid predators and to nestle with friends. The obvious conclusion: They cannot be happy when confined twenty to a cage.

From field and barn, to pen and coop, Masson bears witness to the emotions and intelligence of these remarkable farm animals, each unique with distinct qualities. Curious, intelligent, self-reliant—many will find it hard to believe that these attributes describe a pig. In fact, there is much that humans share with pigs. They dream, know their names, and can see colors. Mother cows mourn the loss of their calves when their babies are taken away to slaughter. Given a choice between food that is nutritious or lacking in minerals, sheep will select the former, balancing their diet and correcting the deficiency. Goats display quite a sense of humor, dignity, and fearlessness (Indian goats have been known to kill leopards). Chickens are naturally sociable—they will gather around a human companion and stand there serenely preening themselves or sit quietly on the ground beside someone they trust.

For far too long farm animals have been denigrated and treated merely as creatures of instinct rather than as sentient beings. Shattering the abhorrent myth of the “dumb animal without feelings,” Jeffrey Masson has written a

revolutionary book that is sure to stir *human* emotions far and wide.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The horrors have been pointed out before—that factory farm chickens are genetically altered, debeaked without anesthesia, and crammed into overcrowded coops; that calves are separated from their mothers and kept in dark crates to become veal. Here Masson (*Dogs Never Lie About Love*) makes the case that the animals humans eat on a regular basis—pigs, chickens, sheep, cows and ducks—feel, think and suffer. Each animal gets a chapter, in which Masson interweaves folklore, science and literature (he quotes Darwin, Gandhi and the Bible) with his observations of the animals' behaviors. He relates how a pot-bellied pig saved the life of her keeper and visits Dr. Marthe Kiley-Worthington, of Little Ash Eco-Farm in England, whose cow does agility tricks; he also interviews those who raise animals for profit. But there is no subtlety in his sometimes nauseatingly Edenic anecdotes: abused animals always come around and we live happily ever after. The text is pocked with far-fetched hypotheses (e.g., "A woman coming across a young lamb in ancient times might well have nursed the lamb" to explain the domestication of sheep). Arguing that all farming of animals for food is wrong (even eggs), Masson rebuts the fallacy that farm animals would die out without us, but doesn't say how we are to make the transition. His peripatetic style lacks transitions, for example going from cock fighting, which gets only one paragraph, to meditations on why roosters crow at dawn. Despite the holes in his preachy argument, his narrative contains some solid, fascinating information on the emotional life of farm animals.

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From [Booklist](#)

Masson is a champion of the rights of animals to live their physical and emotional lives to the full, unfettered by human demands. He has written about wild animals (*When Elephants Weep*, 1995) and companion animals (*The Nine Emotional Lives of Cats*, 2002, *Dogs Never Lie about Love*, 1997) and now turns his attention to the animals we raise for food. Domestic animals have been with us for roughly 10,000 years, yet they still retain the behaviors and instincts of their wild ancestors. Masson explores the emotional lives of our most common farm animals, devoting a chapter each to pigs, chickens, sheep and goats, cows, and ducks. Anecdotal stories mix with quotes from scientists, other authors' observations, and philosophical musings on the nature of each species. Masson is passionate in his beliefs, and a strong thread of animal rights runs through his entire narrative. Readers not convinced by his philosophy will learn quite a bit about the animals we mostly take for granted. A good choice for all collections. *Nancy Bent*

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Review

"In this latest leg of Jeffrey Moussaieff's journey through the animal kingdoms, this perceptive writer peels back our prejudices to reveal the depth of feeling and thought in animals' minds and the leap we must make to be worthy of understanding them. Eye-opening, warm, thoroughly engaging."

-Ingrid Newkirk, President of PETA

"I found **The Pig Who Sang to the Moon** wrenching, yet vitally important—at last a voice for the domestic animals who need it most. While every attention is paid to wild animals and to pets, farm animals are systematically ignored because the fact that we kill and eat these sentient beings is almost unbearable to acknowledge. Yet if that is what we are doing, we must acknowledge it. We must understand our actions. This powerful, excellent book is not for cowards."

-Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, author of **The Hidden Lives of Dogs**

"For years now, Jeffrey Masson has been illuminating the emotional world of animals, and helping to restore the beauty of the human-animal bond. I've wondered if he might ever turn his extraordinary gaze to the animals we eat. In this book he has done just that, and it is a whopper! **The Pig Who Sang to the Moon** will forever enrich, deepen and make real your relationship with extraordinary beings we farm for their meat, eggs, and milk. This is a great book!"

-John Robbins, author **The Food Revolution** and **Diet for a New America**

"At last, we have a book that treats farm animals as individuals, with emotions just like those that dogs and cats have. Masson is a fine writer, and this is his most important book yet. I hope everyone reads it. It will change the way people think about the animals they encounter everyday - on their plate."

-Peter Singer, author of **Animal Liberation**, Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics, University Center for Human Values, Princeton University

"Jeffrey Masson has written another winner. He skillfully juxtaposes fascinating facts with moving tales about the amazing ways in which farm animals show us how they feel--and rounds off with a forceful ethical challenge to the reader. The days when farm animals were categorized simply as 'products' must surely now be over. This is, without doubt, a vital book of our times."

-Joyce D'Silva, CEO, Compassion in World Farming

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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