



TattleTails & Tidbits



Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary Journal

Volume 2, Issue 2 March/April 2023

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Sticking Together

As the days get a bit longer now and the signs of spring start to appear, it is a time we are reminded about the strength of teamwork and the importance of sticking together. The animals are anxious to get back outside on nice spring grass and days lounging in the sun. Yet we still have to get through this in-between phase where we still can have heavy snow, and ice is still a factor in the pastures. They have to wait it out a little longer until it is safe and just the right time. They grow impatient just as we humans do.

But the animals understand the importance of staying strong together. The pigs may have their differences at times but they know the best way to stay warm is to lay together and benefit from one another as a group. It makes life so much easier. The cats await the use of their enclosed porches again where the windows will be open for them to smell the fresh air, watch the birds, and bask in the sun. But for now, they have to temper their desires and wait it out just a little longer.

We humans can learn so much from the animals. Spring fever can put us on edge too. But we have to stick together and it will make it easier in the long run.

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The Confounding Camille

by Bonnie Reynolds

Camille was about 8 weeks old when he came to us. He bit the person who found him and brought him to us. We could not therefore adopt him out, but had to keep him on a 6-month rabies watch. During that time he showed himself to be most unfriendly, and terrified of everyone.

Except me. He evidently decided that I was trustworthy, worthy of being his friend and confidant. Perhaps it was because I was the one who knew just exactly how to stroke and rub him in the preferred manner. I thus brought him to my house, thinking that he would not fit in or be happy any other way. He is 12 now. Over the years he gradually accepted several others who often come to visit me. And he became ... well, awesome. To start with, he grew to be huge, more than twice the usual size of an adult male cat. And his demeanor became so dignified, so calm, cool, collected ... as well as mystical, spiritual. It was like living with the Dalai Lama. I was given regular audiences morning and evening. At those times he would come to me, jump up on the desk in front of me, stretch out to his 3-foot+ length, nose to tail tip, and allow me to stroke and massage him, his purr filling the world.



About 3 years ago he developed physical problems. The first was mega-colon, requiring special diet and attention. Then diabetes. He took the needle morning and evening with his typical dignity, laying down and stretching out when he saw me coming, purring as I administered the jabs.

Then about five months ago he started refusing food, obviously unwell. I took him up to Kigercat Hall to be checked out by Dr. Christine. And multiple life-threatening problems were found. He continued to refuse food, to the extent that we had to insert a feeding tube into his stomach. Three times a day our gallant staff squeezed a nutritious gruel into the tube to keep him alive. After a couple of months he began to eat again and the tube was removed. Then it was found that he has Lymphoma. Dr. Christine gingerly explained to me that, sooner or later, probably sooner, this was going to kill him.

Camille, however, became a new cat. With all of his problems needing Dr. Christine's daily monitoring, he didn't return to my house. Instead, he took over Kigercat Hall. He wandered at will, even managing to open doors to go where he wished to go. He wrapped every member of our staff around oversized paws, impressing them all with that dignified and admirable purring demeanor which I have enjoyed for so many years. Camille became everyone's cat.

Then one evening 5 or 6 weeks ago just at closing time I received a terse call from Dawn. "Bonnie, you had better come up to the hall. We think Camille is dying." I raced up and found Dawn and Dr. Christine in the kitchen, hovering over a comatose Camille. I laid down beside him and began stroking him the way that he loved. It was all I could do. Even in his coma, he gently purred at my touch. Dr. Christine finally left for the night, and Dawn left to do her own evening animal chores, both of them saying goodbye to Camille. We all thought that it would be the last time that they would see him alive. I left him to do my own closing animal chores, then returned to the kitchen and laid down beside him, petting and stroking, considering how to arrange a bed, to spend the night beside him, to be with him as he passed. His purrs grew louder. And suddenly he got up, walked over and got a drink of water, used his litter box, then began looking for something to eat. When we called Dr. Christine with that news she said, "Whaaattt?!!! You've got to be kidding!"

In the ensuing weeks the "arisen" Camille continued his charming habits, wandering the hall and treating all who petted him to his purrs. About 2 weeks ago he stopped eating again. This went on for a week. He would drink water, but

refused all food. He spent his time stretched out on one of the sofas in the hall, getting weaker and weaker, obviously dying. And, unfortunately, we could not beef him up with subcutaneous fluids, as, on top of everything else, he had developed immune mediated hemolytic anemia. In other words, his blood wouldn't clot. Poking him with large needles was ill-advised. Each morning when I awoke I was amazed to find him still living.

Then, several days ago, he began suddenly to eat with his old gusto. He is up, enjoying himself and making his charming rounds of the hall. Everyone's head is shaking, with both amazement and relief.

P.S. Well, just before we went to press, one of Camille's "deaths" became real. Without tears, instead with awe and respect, we bid farewell to that magnificent spirit who graced us with his presence.



Camille in previous incarnation, besides Washington, shielding two of Bonnie's 4th great-uncles, who were rowing the boat.

(Used with kind permission of Fat Cat Art)

Sanctuary Spotlight: Molly

by Dawn Hayman

Molly



Molly is a Welch Pony cross who was born in 1997 and came to the farm in 2010. Molly had been a career hunt/jump show pony who suddenly lost most of her vision and had to be retired at age thirteen. After coming here to the farm, she gradually lost what little sight she had remaining. Life became very difficult for Molly as she no longer felt she had a purpose. But another pony named Annie befriended her and became her "guiding eye" pony. Molly began to really settle with Annie by her side. Sadly, Annie died a few years later but Molly had learned in their time together that she did have a purpose and that life was still very meaningful for her.

Molly is a highly functional blind pony. She is able to easily navigate in her paddock area where she is led outside for sunshine and fresh air. She also does very well navigating around our indoor arena when the weather is not suitable for her to go outside. In 2019, the eye disease that took her sight had progressed to a point where she was in constant pain.

It was decided with her veterinarians that the best thing to do for her was to remove her eyes (especially that she had no sight whatsoever in either eye.) Molly had instant relief after that surgery and continues to thrive in her life here with us. What started out as a great tragedy for her, ended up bringing her to a different life of happiness and purpose. We are so proud of Molly and she is such an inspiration.

The Healing Power of Kindness

by Christine Schneider, DVM cVMA, CHPV

Forest arrived at Spring Farm in a laundry basket carried by a gentleman who had just been involved with some flooring repairs here at the farm the previous week. The repairman hadn't actually been inside the Kigercat Hall (our small animal facility), but had seen enough through the windows to know we had "some" rescue cats inside. It turns out that he had been feeding local stray cats and noticed Forest had a wound but was unable to get him veterinary care. He asked if we could take him in. This is a tall order being that we are totally full. But one look at Forest and we knew he could not be put back out on the street. He needed help so we set up an isolation pen for him until I could properly evaluate him.



Initially, Forest was nervous and shut-down. He would yowl incessantly and showed no interest in human interaction. He would only eat the tastiest, most aromatic food we had. I even had the discussion with Dawn that we needed to consider releasing Forest back into his colony after we neutered him and fixed his wound. To add insult to injury, because there was the potential that Forest's wound was from a bite, we needed to have strict rabies quarantine protocol in place which limited staff interaction with him for a minimum of 10 days.

My examination of Forest revealed a severe upper respiratory infection and a badly infected wound on his right front leg. The injury was so bad that tendons were destroyed and he was barely using the limb. I had big concerns that we would eventually need to amputate. But, cats are amazing healers and so we were going to try to save the limb however we could. We started Forest on high doses of antibiotics and pain medications. He surprisingly let us clean the wound every day without a fuss. And then one day, when we went to go get him out of the pen, he rubbed against my hand that was protected by thick handling gloves. I tentatively reached out a finger, petted his head and he started purring.

Forest's leg has completely healed. He has a mild limp on that leg because of the ruptured tendons, but he is pain-free and can easily walk, run and jump. He was cleared off his rabies quarantine and is now fully vaccinated and neutered. He spends his days lounging in our staff kitchen, snuggling with every person who enters. His days of being a stray feral cat are long gone.

It is by a series of fortunate events that Forest came to Spring Farm. His journey here has emphasized the importance of not taking an animal at face value. Of course Forest was stressed and unsure of his new environment. He was sick and was suddenly confined after being a stray his whole life. Forest was met with kindness and compassion from our staff which allowed him to decompress and thrive in his new environment. And now he has a new life ahead filled with love and care.

The Grace of Aging

by Dawn E. Hayman

One of the hardest things to face with our animal companions is watching them age. In our attempt to ignore the inevitable advancing time, we frequently ignore the processes that our animals go through as they age. Maybe it is a form of denial. Maybe a fear of also facing our own inevitable aging. Whatever the case, we often don't recognize some of the challenges that they start to face as they age.

We still want to do the things we did together when they were younger. The long hikes, the horseback rides on the trails or the ribbons from the show rings, or watching our cats race to the top of a cat tree and zoom back down. We tend to see them almost frozen in time as if they will never age. And then there comes a day when we suddenly see the graying muzzle, the slower gait, the gradual but inevitable physical decline of aging. And we feel like someone pulled the rug out from under our feet. How did this happen? Why? Where did time go? And life suddenly changes seemingly before our eyes.

Sometimes, our animals struggle to keep up with us, not wanting to let us down and wanting with all their hearts to be with us and support us through their changes. I've seen animals push themselves to the max to be able to be there with their human companion no matter what. But are they pushing too hard, beyond what they are letting us know about? Is there something else they need from us?

As animals age, we often see not just physical changes, but also emotional changes that can drastically change their interactions with others – both human and animal. They may have decreasing vision and hearing. They may not be able to move as easily as before. Maybe they have some cognitive impairment. Any or all of these things can make them feel vulnerable.

I've seen horses eagerly and enthusiastically still being ridden in their senior years. They love their connection to their human companion and want to spend that time together. But horses start getting arthritic and sore. Their legs and back can become very stiff and painful. Carrying weight that was once easy for them now becomes a challenge. Many horses "tough it out" in order to remain with their human. For most horses, the fact remains that if they cannot be ridden, their human can no longer afford to keep them. I've seen horses endure tremendous pain in order to still "be there" for their human friend. I've also witnessed the absolute magic of people who can still keep their retired horse companion and find other ways to spend time together that is just as wonderful as when they were riding together. Horses hold those heart connections very dear. It is a great way to end their lifetime to be able to walk beside them and enjoy a hand walk or just spend time with them as they graze in the pasture. It can be a most profound time in that precious relationship.

Cats' needs are often not recognized as they age. Many of them deal with arthritic joints and have difficulty getting to their litter boxes. Often times, we place cat litter boxes in places totally convenient for the humans in the household. Many times they are in the basement, for example, where in elder years, the climbing of the stairs gets difficult and eventually impossible for our cats. Many times we buy hooded litter boxes to make them more appealing to us. Yet, some cats have enormous difficulty using those boxes because they cannot stand in them to posture the way that they need to in order to urinate or defecate. All of these factors can start to lead



to inappropriate house soiling.

Cats and dogs also start to sleep very soundly and deeply as they grow older. Especially when combined with some hearing loss, they can be easily startled when suddenly awakened by our touching them or moving them when they don't realize we are there. This can cause them to snap at us or scratch us unintentionally.

These are just some examples of how our animal friends change as they age and we as their companions need to make allowances for special care and understanding that they may need. The first step is recognizing the changes and challenges. Then we can also help reassure them that it is all ok. We are the ones that need to make adjustments for them. We have to come to grips that our relationships will change over time. Our roles in their lives will shift and change as well. But we cannot expect them to always be young, vibrant, and always there for our needs and desires. There will come a day when we can't take them jogging or riding or laugh at them getting the zoomies around the house and yard. Instead, they will now look to us to be there for them and to give them what they have always given so freely to us – companionship, tolerance, compassion, and unconditional love that will never die.



Question and Answer with Animal Communicator Dawn Hayman

Question: If we are not able to hear/feel our animal in spirit what are some of the signs that they come to visit us in the physical realm?

From Dawn: Our loved ones in spirit (both animal and human) often send us signs that they are thinking of us and with us even though we cannot see them. We can experience this in so many different ways. The trick is not to write it off as wishful thinking as many of us do. Or we chalk it up to a weird coincidence. It can be anything from a bird perched outside your window or a butterfly magically landing on your hand to a song that is meaningful to both of you coming on the radio just as you are thinking of your loved one. These messages come in a myriad of different ways. It may not even be something you instantly recognize as your loved one, but by seeing it, you suddenly feel them. It will make you feel your love for them and their love for you.

I remember once losing one of our female horses here at the farm. She was a strong mare with a really large presence and the farm instantly felt empty without her. Within a few hours after her passing, I was standing outside and realized the most amazing clouds stretching across the sky. They were beautiful. The sun was just starting to set and I watched them suddenly turn golden and deep orange. Someone near me said, "Wow, those are the most amazing mare's tail clouds I've ever seen?" I didn't even know at the time that those clouds were called Mare's Tails. But as I looked at them, I realized indeed they did look like a horse's tail running through the sky. My heart instantly filled with the energy of our horse. And I knew she was letting us know not only that she was ok, but that she was still right here with us ... only now in a different way.

Our loved ones in spirit often go through great lengths to try to reach out to us and touch our hearts. It is their way of reminding us that the connection between us is eternal. That love surpasses the physical realm. We may not be able to see or touch them, but our hearts are still just as connected as before.

Question: If an animal had a traumatic and painful death and his human guardians couldn't help him leave without pain, will that animal be bothered in the spirit world by that traumatic experience or will he just enjoy being free and healthy and happy without worrying about the painful and traumatic death that is in the past? I know that I do think about it a lot and the guilt is enormous, but what is important is that an animal doesn't think about it and can enjoy being in the spirit realm. What did animals who died like that say to you? Did they forget about that horrible experience or, if they didn't forget, can they just not think about it ever again? I am a little afraid of your answer but nevertheless, I'd like to know.

From Dawn: These questions are a bit difficult because in my experience, there are no absolutes. Every soul, animal or human, experiences things differently based on what they are trying to learn and experience. In general, I always find it comforting when I talk to human and animal friends in Spirit that they do not take traumas with them. Many times, what we may view as a "painful death" may not be what that animal is actually experiencing. Our physical bodies do have a disconnect mechanism where we do not experience the pain and trauma per se. I guess a way to say this is that our physical bodies know how to die. There is a process when an animal or human starts the death transition. As we reconnect more to Spirit, we start to experience less in the physical. I think this is an important distinction that we often forget or do not understand. It's not to say that someone cannot experience trauma or pain in an event leading up to their release from the physical body. But when I have communicated to those in Spirit, they tell me that they did not retain that experience with them once in the spirit realm.

It is not to say, however, that that is a hard and fast rule. Some souls' journeys include trying to face and overcome certain fears or challenges and if they feel they did not grow or learn from something at the end of one lifetime, they may carry that with them into another lifetime to continue their work and learn what they needed to from that experience.

In general however, the pain and suffering from the physical realm gets left behind.

The other part of this question I want to address is guilt. Many times, after we lose an animal, especially when a euthanasia decision is involved, we tend to go through a period of second-guessing ourselves. I have worked with many people who hold enormous guilt for either feeling they missed something that they "should have" caught sooner or that they "should have" known something they didn't and the outcome would have been different. The "should haves" come to haunt us, sometimes for years. But when we are in that state of guilt or beating ourselves up for things that aren't even true (or even if they are true) we are in a state that puts us out of connection with our loved ones in Spirit. Guilt becomes a wall that interferes with our ability to hear and feel our loved ones in Spirit. It becomes a wall that they cannot get through to reach us with signs that they are there with us, even though we cannot see them. But these walls are built by us in the physical realm.

The wonderful and comforting truth is that our heart connections are eternal. Love is eternal. Love surpasses our physical bodies. It is an energy shared from one being to another. This energy is alive and can be felt no matter where the two beings are located. It surpasses the physical realm. Your heart connections remain alive after you leave your bodies. That energy stays with you as you pass into Spirit. And in that way, your loved ones in Spirit can still feel their connection to you. When you think of them with love, they feel it. When you find yourself suddenly thinking of them with joy in your heart, it is them thinking of you and sending you their love. That connection is always there. But we must keep the channel free of our own walls of doubt, guilt, and disbelief.

Coexisting with Woodpeckers

by Matt Perry



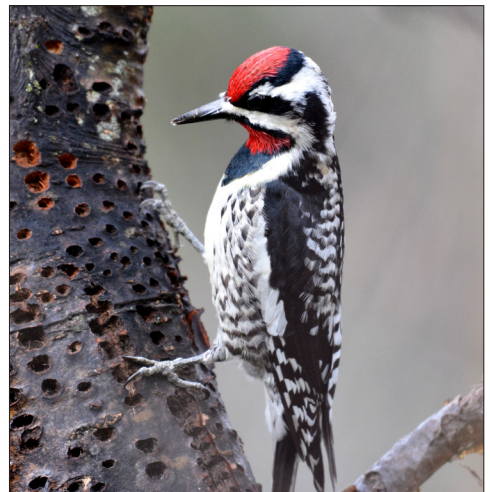
Red-bellied Woodpecker

Woodpeckers sometimes find themselves in conflict with people. Their occasional habit of pecking on and/or drumming on houses as well as their penchant for chiseling into shade trees are enough to raise the ire of some. Having said that, woodpeckers have more fans than detractors and most consider them to be desirable visitors to their yards. After all, they are attractive birds with spritely attitudes and boldly patterned plumage.

All woodpeckers use their bills to rap on wood. This behavior is called “drumming”. Woodpeckers also produce vocalizations, although it is through drumming that they make territorial pronouncements. During the breeding season, the male woodpecker strives to find a tree that resonates well and can project his drumming as far as possible. He often chooses a large hollow tree. However, sometimes a woodpecker will find

something that resonates even better – something like a metal chimney, vent, or flashing on the roof of a house. It is this behavior that causes headaches for people. Once the woodpecker’s power to project is discovered, he may return to the metal time after time and really hammer away at it. Recently a friend of mine resolved an issue with a flicker drumming on her chimney by recording his drum and playing it back through the fireplace. The flicker must have thought his “echo” was another woodpecker with a claim on the territory. He soon ceded the chimney and found another place to drum.

Some complain about woodpeckers perforating their wood siding. Although they may be blamed for damaging shingles, the woodpecker’s attention reveals the presence of wood boring insects. In other words, the woodpecker is not the problem, but only there to take advantage of an existing infestation. Similarly, when woodpeckers enthusiastically chisel on the trunk of a favorite shade tree, it typically means the tree had been colonized by insects. Essentially, the woodpeckers are doing no harm, and in some cases, they may be assisting the tree by ridding it of pests. There is one exception to the rule. The woodpecker known as the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker can harm living trees. The sapsucker makes its living by drilling small holes in trees and drinking sap. Although this behavior never benefits the tree, when sap-holes are not too numerous, trees can withstand it. However, a tree with particularly tasty sap may become riddled with sap holes. These wounds can leave a tree open to disease, insect infestation, and fungal infection. A tree with too many holes may lose the ability to transport enough sap to its leaves to survive. On the positive side, in the spring, the sap holes feed early arriving hummingbirds and early emerging butterflies.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

It’s best to keep in mind that woodpeckers benefit the environment much more than they harm it. Not only do they reduce the number of tree-damaging insects active in a forest, but they also provide nesting cavities for scores of birds and other wildlife. They are the housing contractors of the animal world. The cavities they create are used by them for one season but then are available for other creatures to use in successive seasons. Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Great Crested Flycatchers, Screech Owls, and so many others that lack the ability to create their own cavities, largely rely on woodpeckers to provide their housing.