



TattleTails & Tidbits



Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary Journal

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Gratitude and Hope

As we step into the season of gratitude, we do so with the hope of a joyous new year ahead. But we all know the reality of life is that there will be ups and downs. There will be beginnings and endings. There will be challenges and times when things seem to flow effortlessly. We will have sun and rain. There will be hope and pain. There will be times everything seems out of our control and we will feel helpless in the bigger picture. But the animals teach us the importance of looking deep into our own hearts to find the light that is always there, even on the darkest nights.

The animals teach us to walk in kindness and to never lose sight of hopes and dreams. They show us how to live in unconditional love and to never judge the path that others choose to take. They teach us the power in oneness. And when we feel most alone, the animals stay present with us, inviting us to come home.

We are eternally grateful for all of you and your support. It is with hearts full of hope that we close out this year and look forward to more love and compassion in the next - with you by our sides. The animals guide our every step as they always have and we will share their wisdom and hope with all of you who make this journey possible for them. Happy Holidays! With loving gratitude from all of us at Spring Farm CARES.

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The Sugar Response

by Bonnie Reynolds



Successful old age includes gratitude for no longer being young enough to know it all – treasuring the life that one has lived and eagerly anticipating one's life yet to live – ever-growing amazement at, and appreciation of, both the living and the inanimate wonders of the world in which one lives – loving each moment and those who share those moments – noticing that sunsets are often much more beautiful than sunrises – enjoying visits to beds that are soft and warm – remembering incidents from one's past with forgiveness as often as with pleasure.

Animals are especially good at all of these things. They grow old with great grace. And they are especially good at an ability badly needed by our whole world right now. The ability to forgive.

Early in the history of Spring Farm CARES, Dawn and I were shamed by the words of an animal and were taught a life-changing lesson. The animal was a Shetland pony,

our darling Sugar. Sugar was the first animal from an abuse case that we ever took in. Part of a herd of ponies kept for breeding, foal after foal had been pumped out of Sugar over many years. And no attention had ever had given to her hooves. We were later told of children being allowed to ride her, even whip her, as she struggled along on overgrown hooves. One by one, her fellow ponies died or were sold off, till she was the only one left. At that point her owners put her out into a field and left her there to die. (They said that they "just couldn't bear to her put down".)

But stubborn Sugar wouldn't die. For three years she stood there. No shelter. Alone. People later spoke of seeing her standing there in winter with a foot of snow on her back. Over the years she became covered in pounds of burdock. And her hooves grew into skis that then curled up and backward into her knees. She could no longer even lay down. People had called authorities about the abuse a couple of times, but her owners had received nothing but slaps on the wrist. It seems that everyone was afraid of these people. Even judges. She was finally rescued when a telephone lineman saw movement in what he had thought was a bush out in the field. Realizing that the bush was an animal, he called the humane society. They weren't afraid of her owners. They found a judge who wasn't afraid either, and got an order seizing the pony. And she then came to us. (The entire touching and amazing story of our Sugar can be found in our latest book, *The Magic Years*.)

Dawn and I both harbored, and voiced, bitterness against the owners who had abused her. We rejoiced when we learned that they were facing both a large fine and a possible year in jail. Yet when we asked Sugar what punishment she would give them – expecting a harsh and bitter reply – that reply was a shock. 'I would lock each of them up alone for a year and not let anyone come to see them.' It was said mildly. Loneliness. That had been the mistreatment that had hurt the most. A year later, the obituary of her prior owner (the man) appeared in the paper. When we told Sugar about it she said sadly, 'He's going to have a hard time of it over there.'

We were so ashamed of ourselves. If any creature had ever had cause to seek retribution and shout it from the housetops, it was Sugar. Instead she spoke gently and with forgiveness.

We've tried to make "The Sugar Response" our own in all that we do. And at Spring Farm CARES it is taught to all of our employees. Whenever a situation with an animal arises where we might act in an angry, unforgiving manner against a person or persons, The Sugar Response reigns. Because we have yet to find an animal who seeks revenge against those who have hurt them. Animals know how to forgive. And so who are we to do anything for that animal except forgive along with them and give them the most wonderful new life that we can provide.



When Words Matter

by Dawn Hayman



Lamoka Bo (left) was known for her often lack of common sense. But she was a beloved and cherished member of the horse herd. Her two friends Gypsy (center) and Smiley (right) watched out for her and helped her with decision making when needed.

Often the animals express very important concepts to me that they want their person to know and there may not be a comparable word in the English language to express it. Many times it takes me longer to express a seemingly simple communication, simply because there are not adequate words to do it justice.

I often use the example of how animals treat individual intelligence among themselves. If I am speaking to a household with multiple animals, I have had many instances where one animal will be talking about the intellectual shortcomings of one of their animal companions. But I cannot find a word in the English language to adequately convey what they are saying. Because in the animal world, this is not talked about as anything negative or demeaning. In our culture and language, I have not been able to find a word that is even neutral at best. Our typical words for lesser intelligence include: idiot, stupid, dumb, ignoramus, etc. All have very negative connotations. That is not what the animal is trying to convey. So it will take me entire paragraphs to communicate the notion that the animals recognize when a fellow animal may not be as intelligent as others so they step in to help them. And it is not seen as anything negative or anything "wrong" with their friend. It is simply a fact – and a very neutral fact/observation.

The words we choose can carry extreme importance. Animals want their people to know how much they love them and they also know how to express that to their loved one in a way that their human can hear it. I have been amazed and humbled how an animal will work with me to translate their thoughts and feelings just right so their human companion feels it in their heart. And sometimes, it is in ways I never would have guessed. But when you listen to and trust the animals, they will always guide you to the right words to express their hearts.

So choose your words consciously, wisely, and lovingly. It truly makes a difference.

People have asked me in Animal Communication workshops if the words we choose when speaking to animals matter, since we are communicating telepathically. In a word, the answer is Yes!

As an animal communicator and a writer I pay very close attention to the words I choose when communicating a message to an animal as well as translating a communication from them into words. Sometimes choice of words can be critical to a communication. This is true in verbal communication between humans as much as it is in telepathic communication with animals or humans.

Words are simply symbols representing an object, an emotion, or a concept. And words can create very strong emotional responses. Whenever I do a communication between a person and their animal, I am always checking with the animal to make sure the words I choose correctly represent what they are trying to express to their human. And, likewise, I am making sure that their human companion has heard the message exactly as it was intended for them to hear it. While at first that may seem easy, frequently it is a big challenge.

Secrets Inside The Beaver Lodge

by Matt Perry

Editor's Note: Matt is offering us a very special and rare look inside a very sacred space, the beaver lodge. All of these photos were taken by him and/or the trail camera he has used to capture these precious moments. Because it is a trail camera using infrared night vision, the photos are more grainy and lower resolution. We want to make clear that **these are not AI generated**. Spring Farm CARES will only use photos captured directly by us unless otherwise noted in any of our publications, website, or social media posts. Matt and his team, as well as management and Directors of Spring Farm CARES animal and nature sanctuaries are dedicated to presenting you with authentic material that you can trust.

It should also be noted that these pictures were taken only when an opportunity presented itself to Matt and in no way interfered with the beaver's daily lives or well-being. At some point after these pictures were taken, the juvenile members of the beaver family became interested in the camera and walled it off with mud. It was the end of the glimpse we had inside a very special place with some very amazing animals.



Beavers Tippy & GenLo

For twenty-six years, we've shared the Nature Sanctuary with a colony of beavers. In that time, we've come to know them not just as wildlife residents but as partners in restoration—faithful collaborators who have transformed once-degraded farm streams into thriving wetlands. Their work has been visionary: more than twenty dams, a web of ponds, canals, and beaver meadows that have reshaped the landscape.

The current matriarch and patriarch—thirteen-year-old Tippy and her mate, GenLo—are the grandchildren of the original pair, Morton and Sarah, who founded the colony here more than a quarter century ago. Over the decades, we've come

to know these beavers as individuals—each with a distinct personality, skillset, and role within the family.

Beavers are remarkably trusting animals—among the easiest wildlife species to befriend. That trust is extraordinary given their problematic history with people. Beavers had been exterminated from the northeastern United States during the colonial fur trade, North America's first major industry. Yet despite that legacy of exploitation, they hold no grudge. They treat each human as an individual, not as a threat passed down through generations. In turn, we who study and care for them have learned to see each beaver as a unique being—sentient, emotional, and profoundly social.

Though beavers are famously nocturnal, the Spring Farm colony often works confidently in daylight. It's not uncommon to encounter one calmly ambling along a footpath hundreds of yards from the ponds, taking an overland shortcut or foraging. Their ease reflects their comfort with us. Within this sanctuary, their world unfolds openly before us—their engineering, their relationships, their quiet rituals of daily life.

Still, one great mystery remained: what happens inside the lodge.

A beaver lodge is a fortress of mud, branches, and stone, with no above-water entrances. Its only access points are underwater tunnels called plunge holes, leading up through the floor of the chambers. Inside, the central dramas of beaver life unfold. It is here that kits are born and nursed, where families sleep, groom, and keep

warm through winter, and where stored food from the underwater cache is brought up to eat when the pond is sealed in ice.

For most of our years together, I could only imagine that inner world. From outside the lodge, I'd listen to the voices within—the high-pitched mews of kits, the lower calls of adults, the splash of a beaver diving down a plunge hole. This past July, I deduced that there were four new kits in the colony by counting the distinct high voices coming from within. Later, I confirmed it when a yearling named Sweet Gum was seen ferrying treats into the lodge—only to have each one instantly snatched by unseen mouths. Four treats lost, four eager kits inside.



Looking at the camera



Mutual grooming inside the lodge

Then, this summer, something extraordinary happened. The beavers left a hole in the lodge wall—an irregular opening, like a window. In all my years observing them, I'd never seen this. Was it intentional? Perhaps a way to increase airflow in extreme summer heat, when a mud-sealed lodge packed with nine thickly furred beavers might grow uncomfortably warm? Whatever the reason, I couldn't resist the opportunity. Carefully, I placed a trail camera into the opening, allowing us for the first time to glimpse life inside a beaver home.

To my amazement, the beavers tolerated it. They were in the chamber as I positioned the camera—watching, curious but unalarmed—and allowed me to finish without retreating.

What the footage revealed was both endearing and illuminating. During the day, beavers spend much of their time resting, grooming, and napping—a sharp contrast to their tireless nocturnal labor: dam repairs, lodge maintenance, and food cache construction. Inside, they recline together in a tangle of overlapping bodies, often with one beaver remaining half awake, stretching or yawning. (I had never seen a beaver yawn before—it's a grand, theatrical gesture, head thrown back, arms outstretched. One kit yawned ten times in fifteen minutes, as though perfecting the art.)



Beaver doing tail grooming

Grooming, it turns out, is constant. They groom themselves, one another, parents and kits alike, until the lodge hums with quiet affection. Amid this coziness, there's also housekeeping: replacing bedding of leaves and wood chips, gnawing at protruding branch ends, tidying the lodge walls. By mid-afternoon, the family begins to stir, bringing in greenery or an occasional snack. The kits grow lively—galloping about, frolicking, and playing beaver-tag.

One of the biggest surprises was discovering muskrats sharing the space. I had assumed the muskrats that



Beaver Sleeping

cohabit the lodge occupied their own chambers. But the footage showed them waddling freely through the beavers' living quarters, lounging near the plunge hole, grooming, or nibbling vegetation. Young muskrats were especially bold, mingling comfortably with their giant hosts.

The camera also caught smaller companions: frogs, insects, spiders—even fish visible in the plunge-hole water. One afternoon, two green frogs sat serenely on the chamber floor, waiting for insects just as they might along a pond bank.

Eventually, the beavers decided they had indulged enough human curiosity. One confronted the camera, pushed it over with muddy paws, and soon afterward the family sealed the hole completely—plastering it from outside with mud and branches. Interestingly, it was the only part of the lodge they repaired. Message received.

Beavers are deeply social—cooperative, affectionate, and peaceable. Watching them in the half-lit lodge, nestled together in warmth and trust, I was struck by how much their success depends not just on engineering brilliance but on the calm rhythm of shared care. In the heart of their fortress, they model a kind of harmony rare in the modern world: industrious yet gentle, pragmatic yet deeply connected.



Beavers starting to wake up

Perhaps that's their greatest lesson for us. Whether repairing a dam or raising a family, the beavers remind us that restoration begins with relationship—with one another, with our surroundings, and with the quiet, enduring bonds that make a place into a shared home.



Beaver stretching

Holiday Daily Animal Messages

by Dawn Hayman

For over 20 years, it has been our tradition from Thanksgiving through New Year's to post a message of gratitude from one of our animals. This started as a private tradition when we were just starting out on this mission and times were really hard. The first few years were really a struggle to survive but not only did we make it through surviving, we moved into thriving. All of that was thanks to you who have supported us through all these years. What started out as just the two of us stating one thing to be grateful for each day ended up with Bonnie asking me to have the animals participate as well. And what a treasure we found when we did so.

The gratitude messages from the animals are humbling and eye-opening to sometimes the most simplest of things that we humans can forget to be grateful for. The animals remind us through their wisdom, their unconditional love, and their humor to stop for a moment each day and just be grateful for one simple thing.

This year from November 27 - December 31st we are posting an animal message each day. These messages and their presentation have grown enormously. Last year we began adding video with me reading the message that I got from each animal. We also have a pdf available for each message in a nice poster with the animal's photo as we had many people tell us they print the messages up and share them with family and friends. And now, our Community Outreach Coordinator, Becca Laurenzo, had taken it to a whole new level with her video presentation for each animal and their message.

You can find them daily on Facebook, our YouTube channel, and on our website blog. On YouTube and the website blog you can also find the archived messages of years past as well. Just use the links below to follow along with the animals each day. We hope you enjoy! We are including a couple of examples in this issue to share with you what the animals who you have helped are most grateful for in their lives.

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From Chico: "Oh, I know what I am grateful for! I'm so glad you picked me this year. I am grateful for a sense of humor. Oh my goodness you humans get so serious sometimes. I won't allow that around me. I will do something to make you laugh. And when you don't seem to get the humor, I will make myself very obnoxious until I break you out of your slump. It's time to wake up people! We need to bring more laughter and lightness to the world. Please try to hear my message today and find one thing (or more if you get on a roll) to laugh at. If you cannot find that, then just look in the mirror and give yourself a little smile. We all deserve a smile. And when we can't find it from others, we need to create it for ourselves. I love humans. I just want to see you enjoy life more."



From Fluff: "What a year this has been for me. I went from terrified to happy all in a few months. Something happened to my human caretaker and I don't really understand it. I saw all the boxes and packing things up and I knew we were moving. That had happened before. But this time was different. They left, and without understanding why, they put me outside and drove away without me. I thought for sure they would come back so I stayed at the door. But after days went by, I was hungry and so I went next door and banged at their door. They gave me food. But I had nowhere to go. Nowhere to sleep. That very kind person found help for me after I was on the street for a while in really bad condition. As an older gentleman, I found this very hard to take. So, when I tell you that I am happy now, it is with sheer joy and gratitude that I say this. Thank you to everyone who made it happen for me to find a new home. I am with lots of other cats now who also call this home. And we stick together. We will never walk away from one another. Yes, what a year it has been. One filled with gratitude in the end."



From Peter: "Aren't I a handsome duck? I think I am probably the luckiest duck ever to have made it here to this farm. There is nothing I don't like here and not a thing I take for granted. I am part of a family that is part of a bigger family that is part of a bigger mission. I embrace it all and cherish every second I get to be here. I wish for every human to be able to remember your connections to one another. You really need that. You need to feel the important role you play in the heart of humanity. You are all fragmented but we can see you start to put the pieces back together again. I am just a simple duck. But I am connected to a deeper mission. So are each one of you."

About TattleTails & Tidbits

TattleTails & Tidbits is a free bi-monthly journal of Spring Farm CARES Animal & Nature Sanctuary. We have an amazingly talented group of Directors and Staff and we started this journal to share both creative writing, inspirational stories of the farm, educational articles, and artwork just to name a few. The purpose of our journal is to give you helpful information and to touch your heart and stir your soul.

There will be stories shared through animal communication with the many animal teacher residents of the farm as well. We hope that each issue gives you a variety of topics from both our animal and nature sanctuaries.

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