

ANIMALS MAKE US HUMAN

To treat animals right, including pets, farm animals, wildlife abroad and in zoos, Temple Grandin insists we need to recognize and respond to their core emotions – fear, rage, panic, seeking, and others, all shared with humans.

In *Animals Make Us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals* (342 pp, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), she tells us how.

For starts, carefully observe the animals' behavior, driven by one of the inborn core emotions, as well as their surroundings and the actions of humans handling them. Then you can modify these to improve the animals' lives.

For example, seeking: as a core emotion it involves curiosity, anticipation of rewards, looking forward, and is, along with care and play, almost always good to stimulate. Avoid triggering rage, caused by animals feeling constraint, frustration or confinement. The same is true for fear, when their physical, mental or social survival feels threatened, and panic – often caused by extreme separation anxiety.

If you observe stereotypies (abnormal repetitive or self-injurious behavior) – picture a dolphin endlessly swimming exactly repeated figure eights, or a chicken pecking out its breast feathers – some emotional need is not being met.

So far as you can, engineer their surroundings to improve animal welfare. Build chutes that cows will enter and move through calmly, arrange horse stalls so they can groom one another, provide boxes where laying hens can feel hidden and safe, build high perches for primates, for their security.

Predatory and prey animals – think cats and cattle – have different needs, the first often featuring seeking, the

second, fear of predation. So stimulate seeking for predators – chase games for dogs, simulated prey distress sounds for confined tigers, etc.

And avoid evolutionarily built in threats to prey animals (all the domesticated food producers, among others) – like suddenly looming over them, yelling, fast, jerky, or unexpected movements, strange (especially bright, moving) objects.

Roundup scenes in Western movies epitomize everything one should not do to herd animals. The cowboys are acting like predators and in the melee the animals soon go from fear to panic and possibly to rage. Many will die of stress.

So train handlers, stock people and pet owners to be calm and gentle. Manage the handlers' emotions and behavior – treat them humanely – and they're less likely to abuse animals.

Teach them to use clicker training, where a click means a reward, and positive reinforcement (you did it right, so get a treat) rather than negative (I'll stop pressuring you because you did what I wanted.)

Let the training be sensory-oriented (sight, touch, taste, sound) not verbal. Build in financial rewards and punishments for trainers' gentle or rough handling.

Remove cattle prods – but keep them handy lest workers use worse weapons. Never hit or beat animals, drag them or drive them on top of each other, or slam gates on them. And after training, perform constant audits.

Grandin may change your ideas about dogs and cats somewhat. Dogs are descended from wolves, who live in families, not packs. So humans have become dogs' "parents," and must provide the companionship they need.

Cats, less domesticated and less social, remain “little tigers,” stalking in our living rooms.

We put down a distressingly high number of horses every year for bad behavior or being “unmanageable” – that is, improperly trained. This can clearly be remedied.

Pigs have big brains and need constant novelty, yet are often shut up for life.

Chickens are the worst treated of all farm animals. Yet even a string hanging in a cage can stimulate their seeking system and give them some quality of life.

Grandin works for the meat industry, and keeps Golden retrievers.

Her message: learn to read your animals’ emotions, then respect them.