

# Animals Find Comfort in Music

by Kim Ogden-Avrutik



**M**ounting research reveals that animals not only respond physically and emotionally to music, like us, they even have musical preferences! Happy, beautiful, harmonious music seems to help everyone, whatever our species.

For instance, when poultry producers routinely played easy listening music to their flocks, 96 percent of study participants reported that it calmed the chickens. Also, 52 percent noted that their chickens became less aggressive. No such results were found with heavy metal music.

When 1,000 dairy cows in the United Kingdom tuned into classical and easy listening music, such as Beethoven's "Pastorale" and Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge over Troubled Waters", farmers realized an overall increase in milk production. When these cows listened to songs like "Pumping on Your Stereo" by Supergrass, no such milk increase occurred.

In *The Man who Talks to Whales: The Art of Interspecies Communication*, musician Jim Nollman tells how he's played his guitar to whales through underwater speakers. Scales played in

the key of D met with no response. But Nollman observed that when he played the same scales in the key of C sharp, he and an Orca settled upon a conversational form of dialogue. Each would wait until the other had finished vocalizing before starting in again. Their conversation continued for more than an hour.

How does this translate to the well-being of our beloved animal friends at home? A 2002 article published in the journal *Animal Welfare* states that dogs clearly spent more time in a relaxed state when they were exposed to classical music, as opposed to pop or rock. They not only rested more, but barked less.

While research for the *Songs to Make Dogs Happy* CD was being conducted, music producer Skip Haynes of the Laurel Canyon Animal Company discovered that the dogs prefer Sambas. Haynes reports that "Sambas came out in the highest percent, with classical, Celtic and smooth jazz following. What surprised us the most, however, was that the dogs understood lyrics. When

our songs used the terms 'You're a good dog', 'Cookies', 'Food' or 'I'll be back', the dogs acted happier and less stressed." Haynes advises that his company, the only one devoted solely to producing music about and for animals, has received hundreds of emails from owners testifying to this conclusion.

Janet Marlow's specialty is producing acoustic guitar music for cats. She always eliminates certain especially high and low sound frequencies, which she discerns cause stress for felines.

Experts, backed by many animal lovers, suggest that we try the following approaches for sharing music with our animal friends:

- Easy-to-listen-to music, such as classical, samba and soft folk, plus acoustic guitar and harp music.
- Only happy, positive and uplifting lyrics.
- No drum rimshots, which some musicians suggest could be interpreted by animals as gun shots (especially bad for some rescue animals).
- A homemade CD or personal song that incorporates the animal's name, which many find to be a treat that animals really enjoy.

If these suggestions sound equally appealing to some readers, it may be possible that as creatures of this one, song "uni-verse", we all share the same vibrating spiritual path. Perhaps inspirational and uplifting music connects us all with the happiness, beauty and harmony of being that comprise our higher selves.

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