



What the Animals Taught Me: Stories of Love and Healing from a Farm Animal Sanctuary

Stephanie Marohn

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In this engaging, enlightening, personal collection of stories, Stephanie Marohn demonstrates the power of connecting with animals—in this case, a menagerie of farm denizens including a miniature horse, donkey, sheep, and chickens. An astute and sensitive observer, Marohn writes about her experiences learning to care for and understand these animals, many of whom had been neglected or abused before they found their way into her care.

Marohn did not initially seek out these animals. She was already busy with her career as a freelance writer and medical journalist at her home in northern California. Instead, these creatures appear, one by one, to choose her and, over time, transform her. Today, inspired by these experiences, she operates Animal Messenger Sanctuary in Sonoma and provides a healing practice for animals.

Each chapter focuses on a different animal or group of animals, starting with a miniature white horse that captures Marohn's heart and imagination when it literally wanders into her yard. Marohn's description of this prancing, graceful creature (soon to be named Pegasus) immediately engages the reader, and Marohn is equally adept in conveying the unique spirit of each of the other animals that comes under her care: the serene sheep, Charlotte; the cautious but ultimately trusting donkey, Gabriel; and the frolicking hens rescued from a commercial egg farm. In the beginning, Marohn turns to veterinarians, ranchers, groomers, and other experts to learn how to care for her brood, but over time she also learns to trust her own instincts, drawing from a background in natural healing.

Each chapter is followed by an Unconditional Love Lesson, where Marohn describes the insights she gains from caring for these animals. From Pegasus, for instance, she learns about "letting go of control." Similarly, healing a seriously ill Charlotte helps her be more loving and patient with her own mother's illness. These sections are often thought-provoking, though sometimes less engaging than the vivid portions where she describes the animals themselves.

Given Marohn's focus on natural healing and Earth-based spirituality, this book will appeal to a narrower audience than, say, James Herriott's classics or *Marley and Me*. But her compassionate, perceptive portrayals of these animal spirits and her candid descriptions of the lessons she learns will touch and enlighten readers who share her passion for the natural world.

KRISTEN RABE (Spring 2012)

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