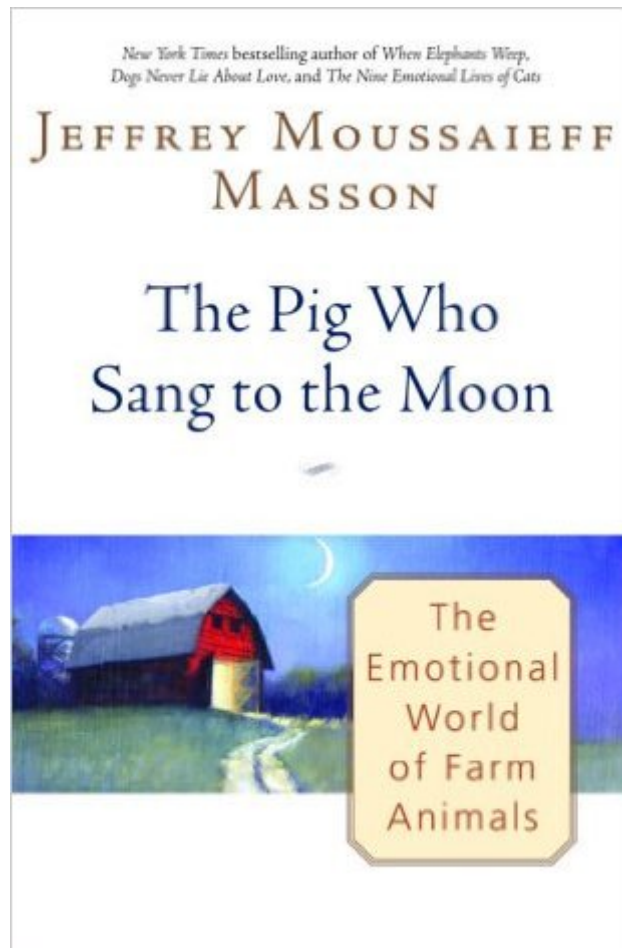


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# The Pig Who Sang To The Moon: The Emotional World Of Farm Animals



## Synopsis

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's groundbreaking bestseller, *When Elephants Weep*, was the first book since Darwin's time to explore emotions in the animal kingdom, particularly from animals in the wild. Now, he focuses exclusively on the contained world of the farm animal, revealing startling, irrefutable evidence that barnyard creatures have feelings too, even consciousness. Weaving history, literature, anecdotes, scientific studies, and Masson's own vivid experiences observing pigs, cows, sheep, goats, and chickens over the course of five years, this important book at last gives voice, meaning, and dignity to these gentle beasts that are bred to be milked, shorn, butchered, and eaten. Can we ever know what makes an animal happy? Many animal behaviorists say no. But Jeffrey Masson has a different view: An animal is happy if it can live according to its own nature. Farm animals suffer greatly in this regard. Chickens, for instance, like to perch in trees at night, to avoid predators and to nestle with friends. The obvious conclusion: They cannot be happy when confined to a cage. From field and barn, to pen and coop, Masson bears witness to the emotions and intelligence of these remarkable farm animals, each unique with distinct qualities. Curious, intelligent, self-reliant "many will find it hard to believe that these attributes describe a pig. In fact, there is much that humans share with pigs. They dream, know their names, and can see colors. Mother cows mourn the loss of their calves when their babies are taken away to slaughter. Given a choice between food that is nutritious or lacking in minerals, sheep will select the former, balancing their diet and correcting the deficiency. Goats display quite a sense of humor, dignity, and fearlessness (Indian goats have been known to kill leopards). Chickens are naturally sociable "they will gather around a human companion and stand there serenely preening themselves or sit quietly on the ground beside someone they trust. For far too long farm animals have been denigrated and treated merely as creatures of instinct rather than as sentient beings. Shattering the abhorrent myth of the "dumb animal without feelings," Jeffrey Masson has written a revolutionary book that is sure to stir human emotions far and wide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Scholar and prolific author Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson burst on the scene as one of the foremost contemporary writers about animals with the publication of "When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals" in 1995. "Elephants" was groundbreaking, showing that non-humans of all shapes and sizes lead complex emotional lives. The book became a New York Times bestseller. Masson has since published three books about cats or dogs. All were fine works and fun reads, yet, as each focused solely on one species, none captured Masson's affinity to bring the reader onto the printed page as did his first animal book. While his dog and cat books touched your heart, "Elephants" seeped into your soul. With the publication of "The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional Lives of Farm Animals," Masson makes a grand return to his previous lofty accomplishment. Like "Elephants," "Pig" focuses on beings in addition to the chosen one who gets a mention in the title. Sharing with the reader the emotional complexities of many animals is one of Masson's greatest strengths; certainly no writer today is his superior. When he writes, "Farm animals-perhaps because of the fate that invariably awaits them-seem able to feel something I cannot," it makes you wonder if he's being too modest, while questioning whether you, the reader, can feel what he, the author, does. In "Pig," Masson covers all of the modern-day farmed animals, devoting chapters to pigs, chickens, sheep and goats, cows, and ducks and geese. His research is superb; whether you are a long-time ethical vegan or a committed carnivore you will discover something you did not know about each of these beings. Are you aware that a pig is easier to house train than a dog?

"The Pig Who Sang to the Moon" chronicles the plight of farm animals, particularly those in mass-market farms in the United States and New Zealand, though the author also is careful to discuss farming procedures and techniques from all over the world. The book is written from the pro-vegan point of view and is genuinely disturbing and eye-opening. I find myself in a conundrum in evaluating this book, and find myself agreeing with the vegan reviewer from Ontario that while the book is well written and heart-rending, it is not academically ground breaking other than in collecting

the information in a species-specific chapter format. The author tends to rely on conjecture of animal feelings, preferences, and emotions to a degree that sometimes strain credibility, though the writing is generally excellent. He frequently dismisses anthropomorphism in others, but seems to engage in it frequently himself, and frequently engages in arguments and rhetorical questions that are tenuous at best, as on page 231 where he posits "If we kill animals with so little concern, what is to stop us from hurting one another?" Of course this is never addressed or discussed further, and I believe shows that while the author genuinely attempts to tell a factually accurate, yet moving, story, his biases are so prevalent as to call into question some of his conclusions. I don't believe that all farmers are evil (I am not involved with the agricultural industry, by the way), nor do I believe that all employees of companies like Cargill and ADM are evil. Some of the chapters are better than others, and I particularly found the chapters of chicken, turkeys, ducks, and geese enlightening.

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