

Do Animals Have Feelings?

Quickbit...

People in the United States keep 78 million dogs and 86 million cats as pets.

When you come home from school, does your pet dog run to you barking and wagging its tail? Does your cat purr when you pet it? Many pet owners believe that tail wagging and purring are signs that pets are happy.

Most scientists are not sure that animals feel emotions. They say animals never feel happy or sad. In fact, they say, animals probably don't feel love, anger, hate or other emotions either.

Scientist Joseph LeDoux studied rats to find out whether the rodents have emotions. He found that rats do feel at least one emotion--fear. He also found the part of the brain that seems to control fear in rats. In humans, that part of the brain controls fear and some other emotions.

Even though LeDoux says rats feel fear, he doubts that other animals have emotions in the way humans and other primates do. "A whale may behave as if it's in love," he said, "but you can't prove what it's feeling, if anything."

Feelings

A number of scientists say animals do have a range of emotions. Some scientists who have studied such animals as dogs, cats, elephants, lions, and whales say those animals feel emotions. Scientist Joyce Poole studies elephants. She has written that pachyderms often show grief when a relative dies. She says elephants have "deep emotions."

Having Fun

Jane Goodall, studies chimpanzees. She says she has seen chimps playing and chasing one another for fun. Goodall also says chimps feel grief. After Flo, a 50-year-old chimp, died, one of her sons, Flint, refused to eat food. Flint's brothers and sisters tried to get him to eat, but they couldn't. Three weeks later, Flint died. Goodall says Flint "died of grief."

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Non-fiction: Do Animals Have Feelings?

More recently, scientist Marc Bekoff watched an elk run back and forth through a patch of snow, jumping into the air as it completed each back- and-forth pass. Bekoff said the animal was feeling the "joy of life."

Bekoff said he can't prove that animals have feelings, because animals can't talk. But, he said, animals can communicate feelings in other ways. "I can't prove that another human being is feeling

happy or sad," he said, "but I can [guess] how [he or she is] feeling through body language and facial expressions." Both people and animals use *body language*-- gestures and movements--to communicate without words.