



CRITTER CHATTER

EVER THOUGHT FIDO HAS SOMETHING TO CONFIDE? THESE MODERN-DAY DOCTOR DOLITTLES LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG ON USING INNATE PSYCHIC ABILITY TO TALK TO THE ANIMALS

STORY BEVERLEY HADGRAFT ILLUSTRATION DAVID TAZZYMAN

Say I saw a mosquito hanging about in a purposeful manner, I'd presume it was after my blood and squish it. However, if animal communicator Billie Dean saw it, she'd ask it, "Do you have a message for me?"

And what would the mosquito reply? "It would depend on the individual mosquito," she says. "Different animals have different specialities: some understand healing, some are psychic and some remember ancient teachings."

I can't imagine having a deep and meaningful conversation with a bug, and chuckle at the thought. In fact, when I began my research into animal communicators and psychics, I expected to have a very big chuckle. But that was before. Now I believe not all of it is necessarily piffle.

One of the best-known animal communicators in Australia is Amanda De Warren. Her first conversation was with a German shepherd who told her he hated his chicken dinners, was sorry for chewing up a white rug and would like more walks. De Warren passed the message on to the dog's owner, whose jaw dropped.

Since then, she's barely stopped talking to animals. There was Mohan, the white tiger at Dreamworld who told her he loved chocolate milk. "I thought, that can't be right," she recalls, "but his trainer said that when he takes Mohan for a walk around the amusement park, the girls in the cafe give him chocolate milk."

Then there was the time she went on *The Kyle and Jackie O Show*. "Kyle was meant to be on a diet, but his dog told me he was sneaking off to Maccas. Kyle said, 'I can't believe my dog dobbed me in on radio!'"

And then there were the hermit crabs. "They were hilarious," De Warren laughs. They belonged to a girl who was a big Barbie fan. Since Barbie is the doll who has everything, the girl decided she might as well have hermit crabs, too. The critters told De Warren that being a Barbie accessory was rather wearisome.

This is all entertaining, but just as I'm wondering if this Doctor Dolittle-esque gift could be more useful, she reveals this is already the case. "I help find missing pets and diagnose illness. I've been working with police after a guard dog witnessed a crime, but I can't tell you

any more about that. I also work on behavioural issues. I tell the animal when their behaviour is unacceptable. Often they're really surprised. They say, 'Oh, I didn't know I couldn't dig a six-foot hole in the garden. I'm just being a dog.'"

Among De Warren's clients is a family of equestrians near Melbourne. Olympian Amanda Ross and her mum, Annie Sedgwick, have consulted the communicator on a number of occasions. When I ask Sedgwick why she'd turn to an animal psychic, she agrees there are some grey areas in De Warren's readings – a lot of horses tell her they want to be Olympians and most dogs request a diet change – but says she's been blown away by the medium's observations, particularly in regards to animal health.

"One recent reading that was most impressive involved an eventer," says Sedgwick. "The previous owner couldn't understand why he kept stopping and knocking down jumps. Then Amanda told them, 'He has an eye injury – it's like a film of Vaseline blurring his vision.'" A visit to an equine eye specialist confirmed the problem was exactly that. >

Similarly, when one of Sedgwick's dogs developed a suspicious lump on its shoulder, she immediately feared it was cancer. Then De Warren made a closer inspection. "It's nothing to worry about. It's a watery mass," she told her. "Although it does appear to have leaves or a stick embedded in there."

The lump was removed by the vet who, afterwards, reported back: "It's good news. No cancer, just a watery mass. It was rather strange actually – a bit of stick came out of it."

De Warren explains she also talks to her international clientele's deceased pets. I feel we're on rather wobbly terrain as she gaily tells me how she passed on piscatorial kisses from Ginger, a dead goldfish. There must be thousands of dead goldfish souls floating about and I can't help wondering how she knows she's passing on messages from the right pets.

"I validate with the owner," she says, "and I guess my guides send me to the right animal."

She's quite definite there are no mistakes but, still, communicating with dead animals? I can't resist another chuckle. "You must find the meat aisle at Coles traumatic."

De Warren doesn't chuckle back. "I do," she replies. "I've had to become a vegetarian. Other people see a tray of lamb cutlets; I hear a little lamb running around in a paddock."

Dean is the same and even her dogs are vegetarian, thanks to her feelings of pain and despair when opening a tin of pet food. "I see young horses milling around an abattoir, terrified by the smell of death and wondering if this is their fate when they're so young," she says. "I see older horses, heads bowed, resigned... I won't eat the beings I talk with."

Communication with deceased pets is a forte of Tasmanian-based animal psychic Leonora Faferko, who says it began with her dog Mitzy.

"When she passed away, I was grief-stricken. Two days later, I was going through some crystals in a glass bowl in the lounge when I said to my husband, 'I wish Mitzy were here.' I went over to the window, returned to the bowl and found a feather in there. Well, of course, we don't have birds flying through our lounge."

A few days later, a photo of Mitzy started glowing pink and, after that, Faferko started communicating with her. Mitzy revealed she wanted to "come back for the cuddles" and has now returned as Mitzy 2, a dog Faferko rescued from a pound. "I can tell it's her by the eyes," she says. "They all bring their eyes back with them."

Faferko, incidentally, isn't vegetarian. "I asked the guides about it and they said every animal knows its purpose, just as we do. Some come for the sustenance of man, some for the balance of nature and some for loving companionship, but every animal knows its path and I accept that."

The communicators all say they use pictures and feelings to talk to animals. "It's telepathy," says Dean. "The language of all living things."

She explains she's had the ability since childhood, when her dog, horse and cats would send her images and feelings about where they wanted to go or what they wanted to eat. After leaving school, she read *Kinship with All Life* by J Allen Boone, about his time looking after 1920s Hollywood canine star, Strongheart. The German shepherd let him know it wanted to correspond, so Boone focused on communicating back. Before long, he was receiving pictures.

"He realised he could communicate with all life and there was no stopping him. After I read that book, there was no stopping me, either," says Dean, who soon moved on to complicated exchanges such as "What it's like to be a dog?"

TALK TO THE ANIMALS

Billie Dean's advice on practising telepathic communication with animals:

- **Mentally call them to you. When you call an animal by their name, it grabs their attention. A cat or dog may appear asleep when you're communicating, but they can still converse in the silent language.**
- Practise sending one question with your intent. It can be as simple as "Hello, how are you?" or "What would you like for dinner?"
- **Write answers in a communication journal. The secret is not to think about it, just write the first thing that enters your mind.**
- Understand your strengths. Telepathy can be received in the form of images, feelings, words and intuitive knowing. Don't be alarmed if you don't receive words at first.

So, what is it like?

"Each dog is different – I can't generalise."

But what's something that might surprise us about how dogs think?

"They crave live, green things such as wheatgrass or spirulina, which are blood-building," Dean replies. "A lot of them want their people to see alternative health practitioners and to turn off the TV and stop watching bad news and crime shows because they put out a lot of negative energy."

I wouldn't have imagined a dog would even know alternative health practitioners existed.

"Dogs," she says, "know far more than we think they know."

Dean – who runs courses, has made a film on the subject and written a book, *Secret Animal Business* – says anyone can connect telepathically with animals if they focus on it, and they'll enjoy a happier, more balanced life as a result. But before you start trying, be aware it can be hard work, not to mention expensive.

At a horse dealer's yard one day, Dean was so appalled at the conditions, she sent a message to the horses: "Who wants to come home with me?" Three replied and it cost her \$600 to transport each horse to her animal sanctuary in Braidwood NSW.

"Another couple of horses kept telling me I had to pick them up from their home," she says. "They were so insistent, I had to fetch them. Three days later, their paddocks burned in the 2003 Canberra bushfires. The woman who'd owned them was blown away."

Dean and her husband now have 27 horses, eight dogs, cats, geese, alpacas, goats, a sheep, budgies and a duck – and she talks to them all.

Over the next few weeks, I tell a few people about my interviews with the animal psychics. Like me, they laugh over the hilarious hermit crabs, but they're less cynical about the communication. I also discover a bewildering number of well-researched books that confirm animal conversation is possible.

In *Communicating with Animals*, former *Washington Post* journalist and self-confessed sceptic Arthur Myers looks at hundreds of case studies to provide evidence of meaningful, non-verbal exchanges between humans and animals.

For *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home and Other Unexpected Powers of Animals*, British biologist Rupert Sheldrake interviewed 1000 vets, zookeepers and pet-shop owners to prove his theory that animals can communicate telepathically with people with whom they have emotional bonds.

So should we take animal communicators seriously? I ask the three Aussie experts for a reading on my Hungarian vizsla, Arcos.

De Warren tells me she wants to eat more fresh food (here we go again, although she has been unusually fussy about her food lately). Dean says Arcos wants a massage, acupuncture, some celery and carrot juice, and to let me know her left shoulder is sore. (Interestingly, she injures it the next day.) Faferko tells me Arcos calls me her beloved and thinks I work too hard. (I am feeling a bit tired, so I find this comforting – until I read a remarkably similar reading Faferko did on another dog.)

If Arcos has been busy channelling, I don't want to ignore her, so I give her a massage and serve a dinner of fresh roo mince with a rocket garnish, which she sniffs suspiciously. "Dogs apparently want green food, Arcos," I tell her.

She gives me a strange look, so I concentrate harder. "I sense disdain, Arcos..." The rest of her message eludes me. Is it perhaps, "I stipulated celery juice, not your leftover salad" or "Why are you feeding me rabbit food?" I don't know, but I'll keep trying. **SM**