

“Habits of Mercy”: Iowa farm animal welfare, 1900-1945

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Animals provided labor, friendship, milk and meat on Iowa farms. From 1900 to 1945, farms could not operate without the presence of animals. They were essential for farm survival, and human survival on the farm. Farmers, farm women, and farm children developed deep, emotional connections with some of their farm animals. Children befriended calves, women tended to dairy cows, and farmers bonded with horses. Animals that developed strong relationships with human caretakers received better welfare on the farm. Historical analysis of early twentieth century farms is utterly incomplete without taking into account the of animals and their relationships to humans.

The scene for this story is small, diversified Iowa farms, inhabited by people and animals. Their stories are not homogenous, and welfare of animals varied greatly between individual farms. However, by examining sources thoroughly, one finds that welfare of animals did seem to be a primary concern for farm families, and the animals themselves had a role to play in this relationship. Animals are omnipresent in the farm landscape, yet they are historically neglected because of the difficulty in documenting their condition. As historian Dorothee Brantz elucidates in the introduction to her edited volume, *Beastly Natures*, “the methodological difficulty of documenting animal lives is taken as evidence of an ontological problem inherent in animals themselves, and

hence as epistemological grounds for excluding animals from history.”¹ However, this does not justify the exclusion of animals in history as historical actors.

Animals on the farm had agency. Historian William H. Sewell states: “To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree.”² Some historians such as Ann Norton Greene argue, “It is inappropriate to impose a model of human agency upon another species, about whose cognition and consciousness we inevitably understand very little.”³ However, when one expands the scope of scholarship beyond the confines of the historical discipline, it becomes clear that scientific study of animal behavior, cognition, and consciousness is a rapidly developing field. Since our historical subjects do not leave evidence in the form of paper and pen, we must analyze their *behaviors* in a historical context, which requires scholars to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the study of animals throughout history.

Current scholarship and research in the field of animal science provides a wealth of information for historians wishing to examine animal roles throughout history.

Animal science researchers and animal welfare science researchers such as Raymond Anthony, Bernard Baars, Mark Bekoff, Catherine Bertenshaw, David Fraser, Paul

¹ Dorothee Brantz, *Beastly Natures: Animals, Humans, and the Study of History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 18.

² William Hamilton Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 147.

³ Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 8.

Hemsworth and Jeffrey Rushen, to name a few, contribute astonishing amounts of research related to animal cognition, consciousness, sentience, and their implications for welfare. In order to study animal behavior and animal welfare, researchers use scientific methods to study “subjective states of animals ranging from the one extreme of using objective physical measures to the other of using subjective human assessments of animal body language.”⁴ By utilizing scientific analyses and applying these findings to our historical animal subjects, one can reach a more nuanced understanding of the nature of animal roles on farms, farm animal welfare, human-animal relationships, and animal agency.

Concerns for animal welfare range from basic physical welfare to emotional welfare, all of which this study addresses. Because of the historical context, animal welfare will be defined through animal experiences in this analysis. Many animal welfare scientists, such as Clive Philips, use experiences to help determine the relative welfare of an animal. Scientists study experiences throughout the animal’s life, and then quantify them to determine welfare. It is important to look at the sum of life experiences in order to determine welfare. For example, if an animal welfare scientist relied on one event to determine the welfare of an animal, such as the procedure of castration, it would seem that the surgery brought only pain and agony to the animal. However, if they took into account the improved quality of life for a castrated animal in

⁴ Allstair Lawrence, “Applied Animal Behaviour Science: Past, Present and Future Prospects,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 115, no. 1–2 (December 15, 2008): 1–24.

the long term, the surgery actually improved the castrated animal's welfare in comparison to an uncastrated animal.⁵

It is important to understand that every animal “undergoes different types of good and bad experiences,” and in order to understand the welfare of animals, the quality and quantity of both types of experiences must be analyzed.⁶ Additionally, other concerns of welfare such as “naturalness,” or the degree to which the animal enjoys a natural state of living, will be addressed. In order to determine animal welfare in this study, I will compile experiences of animals and make assertions regarding welfare based on the quality and quantity of both good and bad experiences. Defining animal welfare through experiences is the most accessible avenue for historians to determine welfare because scholars rely on stories written or told by humans in order to understand the state of animals. Compiling numerous examples of experiences allows historians to make assertions regarding the general condition of animals in history. In this case, animals on early twentieth century Iowa farms generally enjoyed good physical and emotional welfare, but there were exceptions. Farms that did not take adequate care of their animals or mistreated them, generally did not fare well economically. During this period, treating animals well was the only way to get animals to produce high yields of meat, milk, and labor. In order to understand the complexity of animal welfare, historians must analyze numerous sources and weigh the varying experiences of animals in order to make assumptions regarding animal welfare.

⁵ C. J. C Phillips, *The Welfare of Animals the Silent Majority* (New York: Springer, 2009), 7–12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9–12.

Animals cannot speak and they cannot write, but they can communicate through human translators. Memoirs and diaries provide the crux of my resource base. I also utilize farm manuals from Iowa and surrounding states in order to understand experts' conceptions of appropriate animal care. Additionally, these manuals provide examples of typical advice given to farm families, and by combining advice literature with diaries and memoirs, a complete picture of farm animal welfare emerges. While the use of memoirs as a source can be problematic due to the potential romanticization of the past, they can also be extremely useful. Historian Pamela Riney-Kehrberg stated in her book, *Childhood on the Farm*, that memoirs and oral histories are a useful tool in studying childhood because they "help the researcher discover what adults believed was important about their past as farm children – information that helps us understand the place of rural childhood in our national mythology."⁷ Examining what people remember and why they remember it is sometimes more telling than day-to-day activities. Additionally, through retrospection of experiences and memories, people are often able to come to conclusions about humane or inhumane treatment of animals.

To say that all memoirs are romanticized is also simply not representative. For example, the first memory Bruce Plum recorded told of an adventure he embarked on with his dog, Towser. When Plum was four years old, he took the dog out to the fields and encouraged the rambunctious animal to chase calves. "I was yelling, 'Thick 'um Towery, thick 'um.' The obedient dog was chasing the calves through the fences and I

⁷ Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, *Childhood on the Farm: Work, Play, and Coming of Age in the Midwest* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 8–9.

was following behind, encouraging the unfortunate animal, as he became when my dad got him and beat him to within an inch of his life. It seems the wrong party received the beating.”⁸ Plum’s memoir represents an example of an adult looking back and making judgments of humane and inhumane. Plum’s memoir also makes it clear that humane treatment on farms was not ubiquitous. Treatment varied greatly, but by analyzing the spectrum of treatment, one can draw conclusions regarding how humans and animals navigated complex relationships with each other through intimacy, domestication, production, and agency.

All farm animals did not experience the same degrees of agency in the rural context. The amount of agency animals retained on early twentieth-century farms depended on three factors: species, human-animal bonds, and productive roles in farm operation. These factors of agency will provide a framework for the rest of this study. Influences on farm animal agency will be addressed in order -- species, human-animal bonds, and productive roles -- with supporting evidence, so the reader is able to develop an understanding of how farm animal agency played a crucial role in the development of animal welfare on farms.

Species, human-animal bond, and productive role on the farm determined the amount of agency an animal enjoyed in the rural context. Species was the most important factor affecting the amount of agency an animal exercised because it determined the two other factors. An animal’s species was pivotal because it dictated

⁸ Times-Citizen Communications, *Memories II: Life in Central Iowa* (Times-Citizen Communications, 2002), 22.

how domesticated the animal became and what role it filled in farm operation. For example, a horse had more agency than an ewe just because of its species. The horse could be trained to aid in farm production, and therefore had the potential to attain more agency simply based on the fact that it was a horse. An ewe, on the other hand, could only produce wool and meat. While this does give it a degree of agency, the horse's potential agency is much greater than that of the ewe.

Human-animal bonds were the second most important factor in determining agency for farm animals. Stronger bonds between humans and animals created a higher degree of agency for farm animals. This increased agency also has direct implications for animal welfare. Animal welfare scientists have studied human-animal bonds extensively. In *The ethical implications of the human-animal bond on the farm*, Raymond Anthony, professor of ethical theory and animal-environmental-food ethics, examines the implications of human-animal relationships on welfare. Anthony states, "For the animal, the bond modifies its behaviour such that it demonstrates a preference for the human individual with whom it has bonded. For the human being, this special discrimination affects her attitude and behaviour such that she takes a keen interest in how the animal fares." A relationship that is "reciprocal and persistent" provides humans with "a greater understanding and appreciation of the animal's cognitive capacities and emotional dispositions and may promote deeper caring for its needs."⁹ According to Anthony, close human-animal bonds directly affect animal welfare for farm

⁹ R. Anthony, "The Ethical Implications of the Human-animal Bond on the Farm," *Animal Welfare* 12, no. 4 (2003): 506.

animals.¹⁰ In this study, human-animal bonds will be discussed and analyzed at length. Farm families developed strong emotional relationships with some of their animals, and these relationships directly influenced animal welfare.

Philosopher René Descartes asserted that because animals do not have the capacity for verbal language, they cannot express consciousness and therefore this is proof that they are unconscious beings.¹¹ Descartes, however, failed to realize that animals possess a very complex and clear “language,” which is capable of transcending the species barrier, allowing it to communicate to both humans and other animals. If one limits communication to vocal cues, historians are correct in deeming nonhumans essentially “voiceless.” However, due to the fact that animals are practically “mute” in terms of human language, it makes them adept communicators of nonverbal language. Animal welfare scientist Linda Keeling and research ethologist Harold Gonyou discuss the importance of nonverbal communication in their book, *Social Behaviour in Farm Animals*. According to animal behaviorists Keeling and Gonyou, farm animals communicate through signals: “A signal is a way in which one individual (the ‘actor’) causes a response in another individual (the ‘reactor’ or receiver).”¹² An animal can therefore use nonverbal language to communicate with animals of other species, including humans. One can also argue that physical language, exhibited by animals, is at times more profound and effective than verbal language. Additionally, the nature of

¹⁰ Ibid., 507.

¹¹ René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason, and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (Chicago: The Open court Pub. Co., 1910), 62.

¹² Linda J. Keeling and Harold W. Gonyou, *Social Behaviour in Farm Animals* (Wallingford, UK: CABI, 2001), 47.

nonverbal language for communication requires a degree of closeness between communicator and listener. The closer an animal is to a human -- and hence a stronger human-animal bond -- the greater the opportunity for communication, and therefore agency. Agency was directly coupled with strong human-animal bonds. Stronger bonds between human and nonhuman resulted in improved farm animal welfare.

The third factor determining agency and welfare was the productive role the animal filled on the farm. Productive roles varied from providing food on the dinner table to providing playmates for children. The productive role an animal filled within the farm economy could also change over time. For instance, a calf could be a child's playmate when it was young, and then become a steak on the dinner table a year or two later. In both respects, the animal was filling a productive role on the farm, and therefore its welfare was a concern to farm families. Furthermore, animals that contributed to farm subsistence tended to receive better care than those produced for commercial gains. Animals intended to contribute to farm subsistence, where production focused on "the reproduction of daily life in the household through the production of food, clothing, shelter, and energy," generally received better care than those headed for distant markets.¹³

If an animal did not perform a productive role on the farm, it was replaceable or disposable. On the other hand, if an animal held an integral role in farm production, it was not dispensable and replacement was costly. For example, the pivotal role the

¹³ For a discussion on subsistence farming, see: Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions : Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 7.

horse filled in farm production ensured that the animal was not easily replaced without economic loss, and consequently developed closer, more intimate contact with humans. This generally allowed the horse more agency and consequently better welfare because it did not only provide meat; it provided labor. Additionally, any steer, hog, or chicken could be slaughtered, but a well-trained horse, which accepted domestication and human-animal bonds, had greater individual worth than other farm animals that did not labor. Here, we see all three factors contributing to farm animal agency merging. The horse's species allowed it to become extremely domesticated, form strong human-animal bonds and both species and human-animal bonds allowed the horse to fill a productive role on the farm. It should, however, be noted that meat producing animals also had a productive role on the farm, but this role was limited to nourishment of the farm family or farm revenue. Nonetheless, meat-producing animals did have agency, but the amount of agency was generally limited due to their restricted role in farm production and weaker human-animal bonds.

Animals were not passive receivers of welfare. In current scholarship, animals are often treated as powerless, inactive objects. Historian E.P. Thompson termed the omission of ascribing historical agency to the English working class as "the condescension of posterity."¹⁴ This paper attempts to remedy the condescension toward animals in rural history. Animals were actors, and as such helped determine their own welfare in the rural context. As Brantz asserts, in order to understand the complexity of human-animal relationships, one must understand that animals were not

¹⁴ E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 7th printing. (New York: Vintage, 1966), 8.

simply commodities, but also living, breathing creatures.¹⁵ This makes them different from other material resources on the farm, and as such they must be treated differently in historical analysis.

Several historians and authors of animal welfare diminish analysis of animal welfare to a Marxist framework, which measures production in terms of inputs and outputs, and neglects to take into account emotional relationships, otherwise termed “affective bonds.”¹⁶ Contemporary authors also cited capitalism as the root of exploitation for farm animals. Columnist Dick Dickinson published an article in the *Country Gentleman* in 1919 outlining farmers’ exploitation of their animals:

Animal husbandry is merely another name for exploiting our inferiors and crushing their natural rights. Domestication of animals is the crime of the ages, compared to which slavery and capitalism, even as seen by the reddest Bolshevik, are as nothing. The profits of the crime depend upon how thoroughly the farmer can hoodwink the exploited classes of animals into believing the whole system was designed by heaven for their benefit.¹⁷

In this statement, Dickinson was making the case that due to animal’s productive roles on the farm, farmers subjugated animals to cruel treatment and exploitation. This study, however, focuses on the connection between human and animal, and the implications of this bond on welfare. Just because farm families worked and ate their animals, did not imply that they did not care for them.

¹⁵ Brantz, *Beastly Natures*, 31.

¹⁶ See: Robert Garner, *The Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2005); Jason Hribal, “Animals, Agency, and Class: Writing the History of Animals from Below,” *Human Ecology Review* 14, no. 1 (2007): 101–112.

¹⁷ Dick Dickinson, “The Farm Menagerie: We Must Further Domesticate Our Wild Friends, the Cow, the Horse, and the Pig,” *The Country Gentleman*, November 15, 1918, 8.

Reform efforts experienced a broad range of ideology – some wished to simply ameliorate conditions of livestock and others called for complete liberation of domesticated servants – but reformers themselves were rarely farmers. They did not seem to grasp the reality of farm survival, and therefore the effectiveness of their efforts was quite limited. Farm families relied on their animals laboring and dying in order to survive. At times, there was a disconnect between organized animal rights efforts and concerns of farm families. Here, a distinction must be made between animal rights campaigns and animal welfare reform movements.

Animal rightists believe that no animal should be exploited for human gain. Rightists embody an ideology based on the argument that all animals are entitled to legal and social rights, and the denial of these rights is immoral.¹⁸ On the other hand, animal welfarists come to terms with and support the slaughter of animals. For example, animal scientist Temple Grandin designs humane livestock handling facilities. Currently, over half of the cattle processed in the United States and Canada are processed in systems that utilize her designs.¹⁹ She explains, “it is a sobering experience to have designed one of the world’s most efficient killing machines. Most people don’t realize that the slaughter plant is much gentler than nature.”²⁰ Grandin exemplifies the concerns of animal welfare activists. She is more concerned with humane treatment of livestock while they are still alive. She wants them to experience the least amount of

¹⁸ Diane Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 3–4.

¹⁹ Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*, 1st ed. (New York: Mariner Books, 2006), 7.

²⁰ Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures: And Other Reports from My Life with Autism* (New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2006), 234.

pain possible before reaching their ultimate fate, but she still understands the necessity of slaughter and does not condemn killing animals for purposes of food, clothing, or even animal welfare.

As historian Diane Beers points out, animal welfarists advocated anti-cruelty campaigns, but were not opposed to animals being disposed of humanely in the name of food or clothing. “This faction asserts human superiority and accepts the socially constructed hierarchies that rank all species but always place *Homo sapiens* at the top of the pyramid.” Furthermore, for welfarists, some animals were more worthy of ethical treatment than others. Due to the hierarchical makeup of welfare pyramid, a cat or dog was more entitled to humane treatment than a cow or pig. Animal rightists, on the other hand, “raise fundamental questions about those human-imposed hierarchies.”²¹

Even though our historical human subjects may not have defined their activism or actions in explicit terms, it is necessary to make such distinctions in historical analysis. It is important for historians to distinguish the difference between animal rights advocates and animal welfare proponents in order to accurately understand and analyze the humane treatment of animals throughout history. It is also imperative not to clump all ideologies together using a single term, such as animal advocacy, because the intentions and motivations of each group are inherently disparate. Most farm families, men, women, and children fell somewhere on the animal welfarist ideological continuum. While they may not have defined themselves under such strict phraseology, their primary concern was the welfare of their animals.

²¹ Beers, *Prevention of Cruelty*, 3–4.

Farmers, farm women, and farm children were very concerned with animal welfare on the farm, even though they did not define their motivations and actions so explicitly. The study of animal welfare movements in the first half of the twentieth century generally focuses on activist-driven campaigns located in cities. This urban-centric approach to the historical analysis of animal welfare is not only limited in scope, but also limited in representation. Farm animals intended for consumption were not raised in cities during this period. Therefore, the urban environment limits discussion of animal welfare to dogs, cats, horses, and animals imported to urban slaughter markets. The urban environment also fails to paint an accurate historical picture of animal welfare on a broad scale because of its location. Far removed from green pastures and a natural landscape, animals in the city coped with a foreign environment. Animals on small, diversified farms, enjoyed a more natural environment than those in the city.²²

Before large-scale specialization and commercialization of agriculture post-World War II, it was cheaper to feed animals off of pastureland rather than in feedlots. Additionally, innovations in technology and medicine – such as reliable road transport and penicillin – allowed for the emergence of animal confinements in the 1950s and 1960s.²³ Before World War II, many farmers lacked efficient tractors, which meant that grain production was limited, and therefore animal feed was expensive.²⁴ This meant

²² In the urban environment, animals were often treated solely as production units. This relationship is outlined in: Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 18.

²³ David Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 61–63.

²⁴ Robert K. Mills, *Implement & Tractor: Reflections on 100 Years of Farm Equipment* (Kansas City: Intertec Pub. Corp., 1986), 159.

that they fed their animals on pasture, supplemented by hay and grains in the winter months. The limitations of a farm were determined by limitations of pastureland.

Therefore, farms could not easily grow larger than what the land would support, and thus overcrowding livestock on a farm was simply economically impractical.

Additionally, it was more economically beneficial to have a diversified farm, with several types of livestock, rather than specializing in one species. Diversification guarded against a disease devastating an entire farm.²⁵ Having fewer livestock of various types also strengthened the individual worth of each animal.²⁶

Farm families raised a diverse array of livestock on Iowa farms. Most farms did not grow significantly in size until after World War II. For instance, in 1900, the average acreage per Iowa farm was 151.2 acres, and by 1945 the average acreage increased by only thirteen acres, to 164.9 acres per farm.²⁷ By 1969, the average acreage per farm skyrocketed to 262.9 acres.²⁸ Small farms meant that families kept several types of livestock. On Iowa farms, the total number of livestock ranged from thirty seven million in 1900 to forty eight million in 1945.

²⁵ Edward Loomis Davenport Seymour, *Farm Knowledge: a Complete Manual of Successful Farming Written by Recognized Authorities in All Parts of the Country; Based on Sound Principles and the Actual Experience of Real Farmers--"the Farmer's Own Cyclopedia,"* vol. II (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1919), 172.

²⁶ Anthony, "The Ethical Implications of the Human-animal Bond on the Farm," 507.

²⁷ United States Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1900*, 226.; United States. Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1945*, 8.

²⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1969*, 12.

	1900	1940	1945
Total Number of farms	228, 622	213,318	208,934
Average acreage per farm	151.2 acres	160.1	164.9
Number of cattle	5,367,630	4,213,010	5,431,636
Number of horses and colts	1,392,573	728,213	548,504
Number of mules and mule colts	55,747	45,680	23,025
Number of asses and burros	1,832	N/A	N/A
Number of swine	9,723,791	4,902,446	7,652,228
Number of sheep and lambs	1,066,718	1,203,408	1,353,992
Number of goats and kids	41,468	N/A	N/A
Number of poultry (all kinds)	20,043,843	26,830,852	33,218,764
Total number of animals	37,693,602	37,923,609	48,228,149

Table 1: Number of Farm animals on Iowa farms, 1900, 1940, and 1945.²⁹

The sheer number of animals this study addresses underlines the importance of analyzing the lives of farm animals. Historical events such as World War I, World War II, and the invention of the tractor affected the lives of animals considerably. For example, a significant downward trend in horse ownership is apparent when looking at census data. With widespread adoption of the tractor, the number of horses on Iowa farms fell by almost fifty percent from 1900 to 1940. In the next five years, numbers declined by twenty-five percent. On the other hand, as farms grew larger, they housed more animals intended for slaughter.³⁰ This meant that each animal carried less of an individual identity after the spike in farm size after World War II.

Individualization of animals on farms resulted in better welfare for those animals that received individual attention. Animals singled out by humans due to sickness, peculiarities, fostered strong human-animal bonds. They were not subsumed in a group identity, and therefore generally received better welfare. Animals homogenized

²⁹ United States Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1900*, 226, 234, 238–245.; United States Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1940*, 112, 113.; United States. Department of Agriculture, *Census of 1945*, 8,12.

³⁰ Ibid.

into a group identity tended to receive less customized care, and therefore did not experience the same degree of welfare as individualized animals.³¹

The story of animal welfare on small, diversified Iowa farms is extraordinarily complex. Historians must take into account the differences in animal welfare based on species, individuality, and productive roles in order to understand the role of animals on farms, as well as their relative treatment. One cannot make blanket assumptions about animal welfare on farms, because every individual farm was different, and every individual animal received varying amounts of care. However, utilizing the framework outlined in this study, one can assess the amount of care an animal received on Iowa farms prior commercialization of agriculture based on three key components: Species, human-animal bonds, and productive roles on farms. Farm animal lives cannot be reduced to a simple economic relationship between farmer and livestock. Emotional connections with animals also played a role in determining animal welfare on Iowa farms. Overall, animals on early twentieth century Iowa farms enjoyed proper care and played a pivotal role in the economic success of farms. In order for farm families to be successful, they needed to embrace an ethic of care when dealing with farm animals.

³¹ For more discussion on individualization of animals and implications on human animal bonds, see: Anthony, "The Ethical Implications of the Human-animal Bond on the Farm," 506–507.

Chapter 2: Farmers, Markets, and Emotional Relationships with Animals

At the turn of the century, most Iowa farms mirrored the Cedar County farm of Thomas Terrill. The Iowa farmer owned thirty-one head of cattle: twelve cows, seven heifers, eleven steers and one bull. He cultivated 240 acres of land, and alternated fields used for grazing cattle, growing hay, and cultivating corn. Utilizing crop rotation alongside intensive fertilization, he kept his precious ground as productive as possible. He repeatedly noted that he “cleaned the stable and hauled it to the field” in his meticulous, nearly daily record of farm management.³² Terrill employed the help of his seven surviving children and his wife, Lydia, in order to make the farm a success. He detailed community interactions involving cash exchange, produce, and labor trade, and clearly was a very economically minded individual. For instance, on several occasions, Terrill’s neighbors offered to buy livestock, but Terrill rejected the offers, feeling that the stock was worth more.³³

While Terrill was very concerned with the economic survival of the farm, he also had moments of intense compassion for animals he cared for. Generally, his diary entries manage three to four lines, at the most. If one looks past the brevity of his passages, however, it is clear that Terrill cared for his animals’ physical and emotional welfare, and was not only concerned with farm finances. For instance, on Wednesday,

³² Thomas Terrill, “Diary,” March 2, 1894, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

³³ Ibid., March 21, 1894

March 7, 1900, Terrill mentioned that he “turned calves and pigs out to sun.” He noted the emotional condition of the animals in his comment, “they enjoyed it.”³⁴ In describing the elation of the animals, it was clear that Terrill considered emotional well-being of livestock important. Even though he routinely commented on his livestock’s monetary worth, the inclusion of notations regarding animal emotion health showed that economics were not the only concern of an early 1900s farmer.

Most scholars focus on the rugged, stoic, individual farmer, hardened by the elements, severity of farm life, and the market revolution.³⁵ However, when one looks further, it is clear that these farmers were empathetic people with a strong concern for life. Of course, it was still necessary for animals to work and die on farms in order for the family to survive, but terminating analysis at this point leaves much unaccounted for in the historical record. The complexity of farm life was exemplified by farmers’ concerns for animals that did not fit traditional economic models, which generally focused on inputs and outputs. Farmers’ attention to group well-being went beyond emphasizing production of fat, healthy animals, which brought better prices at market; farmers invested themselves physically and emotionally in the welfare of their herds. One finds even more empathy in entries commenting on the welfare of individual animals separated from group identities. A continuation of the story of Thomas Terrill

³⁴ Ibid., March 7, 1894

³⁵ Bettye Burkhalter analyzes personification of farmers as rugged individuals in Bettye B. Burkhalter, *The Generation That Saved America: Surviving the Great Depression* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 13.

illustrates the complexity of farm animal welfare and the importance of human-animal bonds in determining farm animal care.

Thomas Terrill rarely connected his daily diary entries to one another. The fragmentation of entries may be considered by some to be a limitation of the source. However, when the general discord of daily diary entries was breeched, and one topic dominated daily entries for three weeks in March, 1901, it was clear that the issue was extremely important to the Terrill family, and Thomas, in particular. On March 5, 1901, the family's horse, Kate, fell ill.

On the cold March day, Terrill's son, Otis, went to Grand Junction to tell his father that Kate was sick. Otis rode Kate to school, and the mare fell sick while Otis did his bookwork. Terrill promptly called the veterinarian to come to Granger School from nearby Rippey, Iowa. Otis stayed with Kate all night at Granger school.³⁶ The next day, the vet came and advised an operation on Kate for "inflammation in the stomach." Thomas Terrill stayed all night with the sickly mare at the Granger school.³⁷ On March 7, Otis and Thomas stayed by the mare's side all day. They saw "but little change." Otis and Thomas Terrill "had no dinner."³⁸ Entries continued to mention Kate every day. Thomas Terrill often spent entire days at Granger High School, which was located about fifteen miles from the Terrill homestead. March of 1901 was windy, cold, blustery and roads were in poor condition. Terrill braved the elements and abandoned his duties at home to tend to the ailing horse. Thomas and Otis Terrill even brought supplies to

³⁶ Terrill, "Diary." March 5, 1901

³⁷ Ibid., March 6, 1901

³⁸ Ibid., March 7, 1901

Granger School in order to “build a shed over mare,” which they constructed “just in time to keep off snow.”³⁹ Since Kate was not well enough to make the trip home, the men traveled every day to see her, and even brought shelter to her. While it is probable that economic concern for Kate’s survival drove some of the care, the fact that the Terrills made a two-hour trek daily in order to tend to the horse, implies more than economic concern. Thomas Terrill had more than a monetary investment in Kate, he was emotionally attached to the mare as well.

Kate did represent significant cash value for the family. Horses were worth around one hundred dollars at the turn of the century, which was a sizeable amount of money. However, diary entries indicated that the bond between human and horse went further than dollars and cents. Typically, entries were unemotional, removed, and brief in the Terrill diary. However, Kate’s story dominated entries for nearly thirty days.⁴⁰ Otis even tended to Kate on his birthday.⁴¹ On March 29, 1901, Kate finally regained enough strength to make the trip home. The mare hobbled along the rutted roads a slow pace, and Otis and Thomas Terrill stopped at D.B. Johns two miles from home in order to have dinner and let Kate rest. It began to snow on the three of them when they were two hours from home. The group trudged on and finally arrived home at six that evening.⁴² In March, 1901, Thomas and Otis Terrill, a seasoned farmer and his adolescent son, labored for hours upon hours to tend to an ailing animal. They braved

³⁹ Ibid., March 9, 1901

⁴⁰ Ibid., March, 1901

⁴¹ Ibid., March 26, 1901

⁴² Ibid., March 29, 1901

the elements, stayed away from home, and even constructed shelter over the sick animal so that she would not have to move. While their concerns for the equine were partially economic, the nature of the diary entries and persistency of the men's care detailed an emotional human-animal bond.

A year later, Terrill sold Kate with her teammate, Fred. A buyer came to the farm and offered Terrill two hundred and fifty dollars for the team, and Terrill could not refuse the offer. The family was saddened by the loss of Fred and Kate, and took pictures before they left.⁴³ Nonetheless, economic necessity usurped the apparent emotional attachment detailed in the diary the year before. Farm profits were still important to farmers, but reducing farmer-animal relationships to an economic analysis falls short of a complete picture. Furthermore, a Marxist analysis, which defines animals as "products of nature" and "dominated by humans" due to capitalist influences, does not take into account the human-animal bonds that farmers developed with animals, and is therefore incomplete.⁴⁴ Capitalism, conversely, could facilitate better, more humane treatment of animals, which did not necessarily result in an exploitive relationship. Kate, for instance, represented farm income, but she was not exploited because of her economic worth, she was saved.

Animal welfare on Iowa farms in the early-twentieth century relied on three key components. The first factor determining farm animal welfare was species, which was generally the first determinant of the following two factors. Development of human-

⁴³ Ibid., March 6 – April 2, 1902

⁴⁴ For more on Marxism in animal welfare ideology, see: Garner, *The Political Theory of Animal Rights*, 107.

animal bonds was the second factor determining welfare. Forging strong human-animal bonds typically resulted in superior farm animal welfare. Furthermore, when these relationships were individualized, a heightened degree of animal welfare for an individual animal was apparent, although cases of group welfare also existed. Lastly, an animal's productive role on the farm determined how well the animal was treated. Productive roles came in several forms, from labor, to entertainment, to providing sustenance.

Some animals, due to their species, were limited in productive roles they could fulfill in the farm context. For example, hogs' primary contribution to farm production lay in their meat and lard. Hogs could not pull a plow and typically were not befriended by children. They also represented a danger to anyone who walked in their pen during feeding time.⁴⁵ Hogs did not forge strong human-animal bonds with their caretakers, and thus were identified in terms of the group, rather than as individuals. This homogenization of hogs into a passel could cause deterioration in their welfare.

For example, around 1940, Dwight Hoover, a teenager on a Mahaska county, Iowa farm, had a neighbor who was a man in need of some extra cash. Economic survival on Iowa farms was difficult, and at times necessitated that farmers resort to animal husbandry techniques that degraded animal welfare. Hoover's neighbor was no exception. Hoover recalled that the man bought some young boars that weighed about 150 pounds each. Traditionally, farmers castrated any male hogs headed to market at a young age. The tender meat of castrated barrow brought a much higher price than the

⁴⁵ Dwight W. Hoover, *A Good Day's Work: An Iowa Farm in the Great Depression* (Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 106.

tough, strong-tasting meat of an uncastrated boar. Hoover was able to purchase the newly acquired animals at a very fair price because the animals were not castrated. In an attempt to make a quick dollar, the man castrated the matured males, hoping “he could sell them at the highest price to an unsuspecting packer for nonstag prices.”⁴⁶ This process, however, was agonizing for the animal.

Castrating an intact, full-grown boar was a painful experience, both for the animal and the surgeon. Curtiss Harnack recalled the experience of castrating young, *unmatured* boars in his memoir of growing up on an Iowa farm during the Great Depression. He noted that his Uncle Jack was “embarrassed” by the task, and Harnack recalled that the boars would “yell murder and let the whole farm in on the secret outrage; the barnyard roosters became alarmed and screamed, the dog barked.”⁴⁷ The castration of young males threw the whole farm into a frenzy, but the procedure was necessary. The castration of mature boars, however, was even more painful than the operations Harnack witnessed.

The castration itself was excruciating, but the aftercare was just as agonizing considering the mature animals had much larger incisions than young animals.⁴⁸ Hoover’s neighbor resorted to an old – and cheap – method of disinfecting the boars’ wounds: kerosene. Hoover remembered: “As a result, I found myself observing the spectacle of a middle-aged man chasing hogs around his feed lot squirting kerosene

⁴⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁷ Curtiss Harnack, *We Have All Gone Away* (Ames: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973), 37.

⁴⁸ James McNutt, “Oral Interview”, February 20, 2012.

from an oil can on his squeeling victims.”⁴⁹ Kerosene burns the skin, causing intense pain when applied to the hogs’ fresh wounds.⁵⁰ The man’s efforts did prove fruitful, as he was able to sell the castrated hogs at a nonstag price.⁵¹ However, the man’s profits were a direct product of poor animal husbandry, resulting in the animals receiving an unnecessary procedure in order to deceive the purchasers. This is an example of capitalist markets causing the exploitation of animals, but every human-animal relationship was not reduced to an economic definition.

Iowa farmers balanced a fine line between animal welfare and production for markets. At times, the need for cash usurped animal welfare concerns on farms. Furthermore, the variance in animal welfare on farms is most apparent when comparing treatment of animals destined for distant markets and treatment of animals intended to contribute to farm subsistence. For example, horses sent to market or sales tended to receive less attention and care than those that stayed on the farm.⁵² The tradeoff between animal welfare and necessity of income was not the farmers’ first choice in most cases, but rather an inevitable reality of rural survival. Despite this paradox, one also finds that certain animals on the farm received far superior treatment compared to others. While these disparities can be explained through species, human-animal bonds, and productive roles on farms, there was an additional layer contributing to differences in treatment.

⁴⁹ Hoover, 27-28.

⁵⁰ *Western Druggist: A Journal of Pharmacy, Chemistry, and Allied Sciences*, vol. XVIII (Chicago: G.P. Engelhard & Co., 1896), 74.

⁵¹ Hoover, 27-28

⁵² Floyd Morse Hubbard, *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the States of Illinois, Colorado and California* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 11.

Individual animals separated out from groups because of illness, productive roles, or peculiarities tended to receive better treatment than those that were typical members of a larger group. Animals that were members of groups took on the group identity, whereas animals that farmers separated out from the group took on an individual identity. Care of group members dictated the welfare of the group, not the needs of the individual. For example, if some hogs had intestinal parasites, the farmer treated all hogs with medication, whether every animal required medication or not.⁵³ Animals that farmers referred to as individuals, conversely, received better, more individualized care, more attention, and ultimately enjoyed better lives than those that were members of large groups, which were generally sent to market. Here, an overlapping of concerns for welfare, individual versus group treatment, and production for market merge in a complex story of animal welfare on farms.

The individualization of the farmer-animal relationship is most apparent in farmers' relationships with horses, as evident in the opening story of this chapter. Horses provided the majority of productive labor on farms before widespread adoption of the tractor.⁵⁴ Henry C. Taylor in his memoir, *Tarpleywick: A century of Iowa farming*, noted, "In those days the power used on the farm was provided entirely by horses and was thus part of the self-sufficing economy."⁵⁵ Farmers spent long days in the fields with their horses, and thus developed strong human-animal bonds. The horses had to

⁵³ Herd treatment was common practice among farmers. The swine example is found in Terrill, "Diary." 11 June 1895

⁵⁴ Jerry Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s: Rural Reminiscence* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996), 146.

⁵⁵ Henry C. Taylor, *Tarpleywick: A Century of Iowa Farming*, 1st ed. (Iowa City: University Of Iowa Press, 1990), 72.

labor for a living, but they received individualized care and farmers considered their overall comfort important. For instance, Elmer Powers noted in his diary on June 6, 1933, "A fair wind was blowing and the horses appreciated this very much as well as our taking them from the field to the water tank frequently."⁵⁶ A year before, he stated, "the weather was cooler today and the horses were more comfortable."⁵⁷ Terrill also reported the comfort of his horses in the field on March 17, 1894, stating, "Warm. Plowed all day with three horses. Flora Fanny and Bettie. It was rather warm for Bettie. In fact it was a warm day."⁵⁸ Passages relating to farmers' concern for general comfort indicate that farmers had a vested interest in horse welfare. They required that the horses worked long hours, but exhibited genuine concern for the animals in adverse conditions.

Farmers were even concerned about flies biting the equines as they worked. Powers noted on June 22, 1933, "We made fly nets out of burlap sacks and put them on the horses this morning."⁵⁹ Farmers laid fly nets over the horse's backs. Long tassels moved as horses walked as they worked, shooing flies off their sensitive skin.

⁵⁶ Elmer Powers, *The Depression Diary of Elmer Powers, 1932-1933* (Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa, 2003), June 6, 1933.

⁵⁷ Ibid., July 9, 1932.

⁵⁸ Terrill, "Diary." March 17, 1894

⁵⁹ Powers, *The Depression Diary of Elmer Powers, 1932-1933*, lines June 22, 1933.

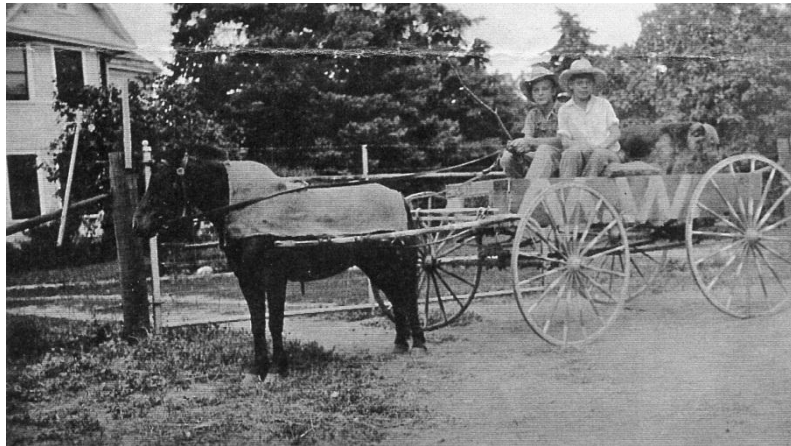


Image 1: An example of a homemade fly sheet, made out of burlap sacks.⁶⁰

While it may be argued that farmers were increasing horses' productive capacity by making them more comfortable, this action still improved welfare. Further concerns for welfare, which did not necessarily improve production were also common. For instance, Taylor remembered that when the family went to church, they hitched the horses to the hitching post and "if the weather were cold, would blanket the horses."⁶¹ Taylor's father was concerned for the horses' well-being even though they were not plowing a field. Transportation was a form of farm production, and therefore the animals received respectable treatment.

Concern for horse welfare went beyond notation of their relative condition, however. Farmers took extra care to make sure that their horses were comfortable, even though they labored all day. Farmers also created very strong personal bonds with horses they worked with. Jerry Twedt, who grew up on an Iowa farm in the 1940s, remembered:

⁶⁰ McNutt Family private collection.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Tarpleywick*, 94.

Even though a farmer spent the majority of his barn time with the cows, his favorite area was the horse stalls. There was a quiet majesty about those large, solid draft horses that most farmers found hard to resist. A well matched team of pulling horses was a source of pride and envy. Many contented hours were spent grooming and caring for the great beasts.⁶²

Strong human-animal bonds characterized farmers' relationship with horses. Farmers took pride in their work teams and consequently their horses received better care than animals that were limited in production capacity and incorporated into large groups. Twedt's father did not increase production potential for his horses by grooming them, but rather just enjoyed the presence of the animals. This denotes a reciprocal bond between human and horse. Horses benefited from strong human-animal bonds, but so did people.

Farmers were proud of their draft animals, and regretted separating from them. For example, Doris Baird Epps, who grew up on an Iowa farm in the 1930s, remembered that her father was "very patriotic," and when the army needed mules for the World War I war effort, he sold his mule team to the government. Epps recalled, "It must have been difficult for him, because he was proud of those mules. With heavy hearts we stood and watched as our Tom and Jerry went off to war."⁶³ Epps' father was saddened by the loss of his mules, because he developed strong bonds with them. Similarly, Elsie Eller remembered her father was "heartbroken . . . when all of the horses died in the

⁶² Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s*, 145.

⁶³ Doris Baird Epps, *Child of the Thirties: Growing Up on a Farm in Iowa During the Great Depression and World War II* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Eagle Book Bindery, 2007), 145–146.

summer of 1936 due to a widespread horse illness.”⁶⁴ Farmers created strong bonds with their draft teams because of the productive role they filled on the farm. They spent long, lonely days laboring with them in the fields. However, their relationship with the animals went much deeper than a partnership between producer and machine. The strong relationships created between farmer and horse elevated welfare of horses on Iowa farms in the first half of the twentieth century.

The importance and degree of farmer-horse bonds is best exemplified by analyzing farmer sentiment for horses and mules after they lost their productive capacity. Mildred Armstrong Kalish, who grew up on an eastern Iowa farm during the Great Depression, recalled the use of horses on the farm repeatedly throughout her memoir. Her grandfather illustrated how important horses were, even after they could no longer pull a plow or take the family to town. Old Mike, an elderly draft horse, lived out an easy life of retirement after his plow-pulling days passed. “He’d become a family pet; his only real job was to take my mother in a surrey to the rural school where she was teaching.” Old Mike died at the age of twenty-nine during the cold winter of 1912. Kalish’s grandfather skinned old Mike, and sent his hide to the tanner to make into a blanket. Kalish’s grandfather paid fifteen dollars – a significant sum in 1912 - to have the hide converted into a blanket. Old Mike went on to warm the family for sixty years, until his poor hide lost its dark brown hairs and Kalish “finally had to abandon Old

⁶⁴ Times-Citizen Communications., *Memories II : Life in Central Iowa*. (Iowa Falls, IA: Times-Citizen Communications, 2002), 82.

Mike.”⁶⁵ By converting Old Mike into a blanket, Kalish’s grandfather showed sentimental attachment to the animal. This exemplifies the degree of closeness between farmer and horse during this period.

Tractors gradually replaced horses in field production. However, many farmers kept their favorite horses around for “sentimental reasons.” Twedt remembered that his Uncle Leonard “had horses that went years without feeling a harness.” He, like many farmers, was reluctant to sell them because “the only place buying pulling horses was the glue factory.”⁶⁶ Twedt then recalled:

The passing of the draft horse was a true crossroad in agriculture. Thousands of years of cooperation between man and animal abruptly ended. Many older farmers quietly mourned. For them, much of the joy of farming was gone. As for the barn it was never again the same. There was always something missing. The barn had lost its soul.⁶⁷

Twedt’s Uncle Leonard demonstrated the importance of human-animal bonds in determining animal welfare. Even though horses lost their productive capacity on the farm, the farmer kept them because he shared such strong emotional bonds with his horses that he could not stand letting them go to slaughter. The horses undoubtedly cost Uncle Leonard a good deal of money in their years of retirement, but he kept them anyway. The horses that Uncle Leonard kept were actors in the relationship as well. They were his favorites, and actively sought out strong human bonds and fulfilled their

⁶⁵ Mildred Armstrong Kalish, *Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Great Depression* (New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2008), 90.

⁶⁶ Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s*, 146–147.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

productive roles when necessary. Profits were not the only concern for farmers; they had an emotional investment in their animals as well.

Not all animals were as central to farm production as the horse, and therefore they received less attentive care by farmers. However, farmers had a vested interest in animal welfare because strong, healthy, well-nourished animals provided more food for farm family subsistence and commercial sales. Therefore, proper animal husbandry practices were of utmost importance. This relationship, however, was bidirectional. In return for good care, the animals provided meat, milk, wool, and labor. In 1913, professor of agriculture, Thomas Forsyth Hunt, and editor of the *American Agriculturist*, Charles William Burkett, described the bidirectional relationship as a contract:

Man's contract with animals. – Since some animals have responded to domestication, a sort of contract is implied in their consent. In return for the services they render to mankind they are entitled to protection from cold, heat, storms and annoying enemies; to suitable food for their nourishment; to sanitary quarters for their health and comfort; and to humane treatment for their physical and mental happiness. On farms where these attentions are bestowed the best service is rendered the owner. On the other hand, if farm animals are abused, poorly nourished, or improperly housed, they return less wool, less milk, less pork, less beef and less labor than on neighboring farms where these fundamentals are neither neglected nor ignored.⁶⁸

In this passage, Hunt and Burkett noted that proper husbandry techniques and good welfare resulted in higher productive yields from farm animals. Therefore, it was in farmers' best interest to consider their animals' welfare as a primary concern on the farm. This bidirectional relationship is prevalent in period sources. The most important

⁶⁸ Thomas Forsyth Hunt and Charles William Burkett, *Farm Animals: Covering the General Field of Animal Industry* (New York: Orange Judd company, 1914), 32.

aspect of livestock care was nutrition. Feeding animals in the first half of the twentieth century relied on crop field rotation, grazing and haymaking.

Terrill's diary provides an excellent example of farmers utilizing every resource in order to gain maximum output from the land. Terrill's concentration on economic survival meant that he grazed his livestock on his own fields. During this chapter in American history, it was cheaper to feed animals off the land rather than purchase processed feeds. Farmers stored grains and hay for winter months, but tried to sustain their animals on pastureland during the spring, summer and fall. Terrill turned his animals out to the meadow in the spring, weather permitting, where they enjoyed ample pasture space. He noted in his diary, "Cattle are doing well on grass."⁶⁹ During the summer months, he rotated pastures to prevent overgrazing and took measures to ensure the cattle received proper care. On August 1, 1894, Terrill noted, "Otis raked till I got done then I raked while he watered the cattle. It is so dry and the pasture is so poor that we have to give them plenty of water."⁷⁰ It was more work for farmers to care for animals in pasture, but pastured animals were healthier than those living in feedlots. Pastured animals also experienced better welfare than confined animals because they were able to perform natural behaviors such as foraging, rooting, and interaction with

⁶⁹ Terrill, "Diary." April 24, 1894

⁷⁰ Ibid., August 1, 1894

other animals.⁷¹ Husbandry practices that emphasized pasture feeding resulted in better animal welfare than commercialized farms, which developed after World War II.

Farmers generally preferred to keep livestock in pastures because it was more cost effective and the animals fertilized the meadows as they grazed. Sometimes, however, it was necessary to keep animals close to the barn and shelters due to poor weather conditions. Although it was more expensive to keep livestock in lots close to shelter, farmers such as Terrill did so on repeated occasions when mother nature proved volatile. On snowy, rainy, and stormy days, Terrill “kept the stock in the barn except when out to water.”⁷² He also brought piglets into the house on a cold, rainy day in May of 1901.⁷³ While Terrill’s livestock probably could have endured the elements, he still herded the animals into the barn, and even brought them into the home. Terrill may have been worried about the animals’ health if they were left out in the weather, and concerned about the consequent cost of treatment, but his diary entries detail something more complex than a simple economic explanation for exemplary animal care.

Farmers tended to animals during times of need. In her memoir of growing up in the 1930s, Kalish recalled:

The domestic animals were almost like people to us, and we treated them with respect. Their welfare was always our prime concern. If there was a blizzard or a thunderstorm brewing, or if there was a heat wave

⁷¹ For more information on husbandry methods’ relationship to animal welfare and the importance of “natural” behaviors, see: Bonney Roland James, “Farm Animal Welfare at Work,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 100, no. 1–2 (October 2006): 140–147.

⁷² Terrill, “Diary.” February 15, 1900

⁷³ Ibid., May 5, 1901

about to envelop the county, which often happened during those hot, dry summers of the thirties, we saw the needs of the animals first. At times this concern was carried to extremes as far as Grandma was concerned, especially on those cruelly cold nights when Grandpa would stuff large gunnysacks in the oven of the kitchen range to take out to the henhouse to warm the feet of the biddy hens.⁷⁴

In this passage, Kalish described a close human-animal bond between her grandfather and his animals. This bond even went to extremes at times, according to Kalish's grandmother. Kalish's grandfather clearly cared for his animals comfort as well as their basic care. He did not want chickens' feet to get cold, and brought all of his livestock into the warm barn on chilly nights. Kalish also noted that her grandfather had a love for all animals. From crows, to bees, to cows, Kalish's grandfather cared meticulously for all animal life.

Kalish recalled that her grandfather had a pet crow as a young, newly married man. Much to Kalish's grandmother's dismay, the pet crow frequently found mud holes, and then reveled in the delight of walking across her freshly laundered sheets hanging on the line, "all the while looking behind him and commenting admiringly on the muddy tracks he left on the sheets."⁷⁵ Kalish's grandfather enjoyed the bird and his avian antics that drove his young wife mad. In keeping pets, especially unconventional ones, Kalish's grandfather exemplified how farmers valued the presence of animals, not just their productive capacity.

Farmers elude a simple explanation for their treatment of animals on farms. They were driven by economic concerns, but an economic analysis fails to account for

⁷⁴ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 250.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

the complexities of farm-animal relationships. Farmers cared for their animals, from birth until death. They produced animals to make money and feed their families, but also enjoyed animals' presence and companionship. Animals that were central to farm production tended to receive better welfare because of the close relationships forged with farmers. Farmers cared for the animals, worked them, fed them, loved them, and killed them. However, the ultimate fate of the animal does not diminish the quality of the care the animal received while alive.

Chapter 3: The Feminization of Welfare: farm women, education, and maternal animals

In the 1930s, Mildred Armstrong Kalish grew up on an Iowa farm. Kalish, her mother, two brothers, and younger sister moved to her grandparent's farm when her father abandoned them. One of Kalish's strongest enduring memories occurred on a bitter cold day in the family kitchen. Kalish's mother had a pet canary that she cherished deeply. She regularly let the bright yellow bird fly around the kitchen while she cleaned its cage. On this cold winter day, the canary, named Chicky, flew down and landed on the hot stove lid. Kalish remembered that he "emitted one single, terrible scream that I can hear to this day." Kalish's mother acted quickly. Realizing that the burn mortally wounded Chicky, she grabbed the stove lid handle and with a quick swoop of the hand, cast the bird into the fire. Then, she looked directly at her daughter and said, "Don't think of yourself. Think of Chicky." This event profoundly influenced Kalish. She said, "I never forgot this heroic example of unselfishness, and have used it to sustain me in making painful decisions . . . Don't keep an animal alive because you can't bear to suffer the pangs of bereavement. Think of the animal."⁷⁶

Farm women were farmers, wives, mothers, and educators on Iowa farms between 1900 and 1945. Their duties were diverse and multifaceted. Along with farm production, one of the primary concerns of farm women was to provide "spiritual,

⁷⁶ Ibid., 21.

ethical and moral education” to their children.⁷⁷ Farm women did this in numerous ways. Significant opportunities for moral and ethical education lay in lessons surrounding animals. Additionally, women needed to educate their children about animal husbandry, in order for them to be successful farmers and farm wives in the future. Farm women taught children about the ethical treatment of animals, the craft of animal husbandry, and the economics of farm production. Women often headed poultry operations and helped with dairy production.⁷⁸ They also gardened, drove horses or tractors, and helped with traditional “men’s work” when necessary.⁷⁹ Consequently, women were not only central to the farm economy, but also homemakers, which entailed childhood education, maintenance of the household, and control of subsistence production.⁸⁰

Although women were rarely labeled “farmers,” they bridged the gap between the male, public sphere, and the female, domestic sphere on a regular basis.⁸¹ As historian Marilyn Irvin Holt noted, “Victorian gender roles had limited applications in a world where distinctions between male and female labor often failed.”⁸² One farm woman candidly described the breakdown of gendered labor roles, stating, “Well, I’ve had equal rights all of my life, and I don’t think much of it. I said if a woman wants to

⁷⁷ United States. Dept. of Agriculture, *Reports: Needs of Farm Women* (Government printing office, 1915), 129.

⁷⁸ Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 139.

⁷⁹ Deborah Fink, *Open Country Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986), 62.

⁸⁰ Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 3.

⁸¹ Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 72.

⁸² Holt, *Linoleum*, 17.

get out and work like a man, that's all right, but I had to do it whether I wanted to or not. I worked in the fields. I plowed. I cultivated. I disked. I done everything a man does, I wasn't enjoying it one bit."⁸³ Nonetheless, according to Nancy Grey Osterud, "Women voluntarily participated in the most labor-intensive and highly valued work and nurtured an ethic of mutuality in work and decision making between husbands and wives." Women saw themselves as integral to the farm economy and their roles in poultry and dairy production meant that women were "defined in relation to men rather than distinct from them."⁸⁴ Rejecting the ideal of urban Victorian womanhood, farm women were intimately involved with production, consumption and the commercial economy.⁸⁵ Many, such as Iowa farm woman Clara Ackerman, kept detailed accounts of market conditions, showing women's concern for economic success.⁸⁶ Farm women refused confinement to the domestic sphere of the home, and consequently were active participants in commercial farm production through animals. This drive for financial success led women to adopt techniques that in turn maximized production and led to better care.

Women also used animals as a medium to educate children about ethics, morality, and the importance of a strong work ethic, which also resulted in better care of farm animals. Period literature on child education often stressed the importance of

⁸³ As quoted in: Holt, *Linoleum*, 16–17.

⁸⁴ Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2.

⁸⁵ Holt, *Linoleum*, 18.

⁸⁶ Clara Ackerman, "The Depression Diary of Mrs. Clara Ackerman! 1932-1933" (Cedar Falls: University of Northern Iowa, 2004), http://www.uni.edu/iowahist/Social_Economic/Clara_Ackerman/clara_ackerman_diary.htm. February 7, 1932.

“mercy” towards non-humans. It was essential for the whole family to accept “habits of mercy,” but it was largely the duty of the farm woman to instill respect for nonhumans in her children. For instance, Thomas Hunt and Charles Burkett wrote a book in 1914 covering all aspects of animal industry, but noted that animals were important to human “spiritual welfare.” Whether kept as pets or intended for consumption, animals taught “habits of care and responsibility,” and indoctrinated “habits in mercy.” Furthermore, from the very young to the very old, animals had “an elevating and civilizing influence upon the human race.”⁸⁷ This type of rhetoric was common in instructional manuals for farming and child education in the first half of the twentieth century. This literature also implied a sense of reciprocity between human and animal. It was not only important for people to take good care of animals and have compassion for them, but it also elevated human emotional well-being to have positive contact with animals. Farm women instilled values of compassion and responsibility in their children, using the animals as teachers. The opening story of Kalish’s mother euthanizing her beloved canary because he was suffering exemplified farm women’s role in humane education. Animals were also used to teach children about proper social behavior, which was part of the “civilizing influence” Burkett advocated.

Animals were central to farm life on early twentieth century Iowa farms. As such, women used animals to teach children about responsibility and ethics, but also used animals as examples for teaching children about gender roles. For instance, Kalish’s grandmother disliked it when Kalish whistled, because whistling was something

⁸⁷ Hunt and Burkett, *Farm Animals*, 29.

men did. Her grandmother often said, “Whistling girls and crowing hens will always come to some bad end.” Kalish’s grandmother wanted her to “act like a lady,” and used hens crossing into rooster behavior as an example.⁸⁸ Farm animals generally did not cross into the opposite genders’ behavioral roles, and as such, they were examples to children of the importance of maintaining appropriate gender behaviors. Conversely, farm animals also often necessitated the merging of gender labor roles because keeping farm animals was extremely labor intensive. Some families did not allow their young girls to participate in male activities, but other families that were short on labor, found it necessary to employ the work of girls and boys equally.⁸⁹ Although animal care often necessitated a bridging of gender roles and the breakdown of separate sphere ideology, farm women still found it important to instill lessons of femininity in girls and masculinity in boys, and used animals as models for appropriate behavior.

Farm women educated children on the virtues of morality, and imparted a good work ethic in children through farm animals. In *Farm Children: An Investigation of rural child life in areas of Iowa*, reformers reported, “Beyond the joy derived from this companionship [with animals] the children doubtlessly gained in sympathy and responsibility as they cared for their animals.”⁹⁰ Reform researchers such as Bird

⁸⁸ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 53.

⁸⁹ For more information on gender labor roles of children, see Chapter 3.

⁹⁰ Bird Thomas Baldwin et al., *Farm Children: An Investigation of Rural Child Life in Selected Areas of Iowa* (New York: Appleton, 1930), 152.

Baldwin also thought that farm children were better off than their urban counterparts because of the numerous responsibilities they undertook on the farm.⁹¹

The importance of keeping children on the farm, and the prevention of farm outmigration was a primary concern of reformers, especially after World War I. Baldwin interviewed school-aged children in order to pinpoint reasons cited by children for wanting live on the farm when grown. A second grade girl wrote:

I want to live on a farm because I thank (sic) that the sunshine is good for you. And raise our [own] little chinchens. And raise our [own] little pigs to. And we would have a lots of cows to milk already. So we can sell our cream. But I would cep (separate) some chream so I could chron some butter. And we would have 5 horses to. And it would be nice to see the little pigs a running a round in the paster to. And that is the rezen I like to live on a farm.⁹²

Young farm children cited livestock as the primary reason for wanting to continuing farming in nearly all of Baldwin's interviews. In this passage, it was clear that the young girl of seven or eight was trained in animal husbandry. Her mother had already taught her how to raise chickens and pigs, milk cows, separate cream and make butter. In order for a farm to be successful, it was essential for women to fill these roles in order to produce food for farm subsistence, as well as bring in additional income. To be successful in this endeavor, a strong understanding of animal husbandry was essential.

Furthermore, animals produced more product – whether it be milk, meat, offspring or productive work – when they were well cared for.⁹³ Farm women were aware of this, and educated their children in proper care of livestock. They also

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 154.

⁹³ X. Boivin et al., "Stockmanship and Farm Animal Welfare," *Animal Welfare* 12, no. 4 (2003): 479.

encouraged children to participate in extension programs that focused on educating children about respectable animal husbandry, such as 4-H and FFA.⁹⁴ Farm women's role in educating children on the importance of animal husbandry and ethical treatment elevated animal welfare on Iowa farms.

Additionally, farm women's own relationships with animals and knowledge of proper care techniques generally improved farm animal welfare. However, the animals were actors in these relationships, and if an animal violated the relationship between human and animal, therefore weakening the human-animal bond, deterioration in welfare resulted. Species, individuality, and an animal's productive role on the farm determined the strength of the bond between human and animal. Women had stronger bonds with certain species. For example, women bonded less with chickens than they did with dairy cows. This was because chickens lived in large flocks, had limited productive potential on the farm, and exhibited unpleasant behaviors. The limited potential for women to bond with individual birds restricted the scope of poultry welfare to proper husbandry and providing natural living conditions.

Women were the primary caregivers of poultry, which meant they had intimate contact with birds, and as such were the determiners of poultry welfare on farms prior to 1945. Men rarely involved themselves in poultry production on small pre-1945 farms.⁹⁵ Carrie Ohlen opined in *Poultry*, an advice journal:

Poultry and women belong together. A woman who doesn't love pets and like to have things dependent on her is hard to find and when she is found she is not a

⁹⁴ Holt, *Linoleum*, 171.

⁹⁵ Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 136.

thing of beauty. Poultry requires just the deftness that comes natural to women in order to do its level best.⁹⁶

In this statement, Ohlen was reiterating the importance of female poultry production. She alluded to the fact that that women who did not delight in caring for dependent creatures were characteristically unfeminine. Here, Ohlen emphasized gender values in production, but women's profits from poultry production also took them out of the private, domestic sphere and into the public sphere of commerce. This dichotomy resulted in a merging of private and public spheres. Through examination of gendered animal husbandry practices, it is clear that there was a greying of sphere ideology, yet public concerns for retaining traits of femininity and masculinity remained.

Raising chickens, turkeys and other types of fowl was the duty of the farm woman, often aided by children. Farm women became experts on raising chickens. County extension agents gave demonstrations on poultry production and offered advice for farm women. Primary concerns were keeping the henhouse clean and preventing the infestation of lice and other parasites.⁹⁷ Women allowed chickens to roam free during the day, scratching for grains and seeds. This free-range production method was the most economical way to raise birds before World War II, and it facilitated maintaining a healthy stock.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Carrie Ohlen, "Poultry Keeping a Woman's Business," *Poultry* (September 1905): 22.

⁹⁷ Holt, *Linoleum*, 60.

⁹⁸ In present day agriculture, there is a movement back to free range systems. Advocates for free range systems often describe them as more "natural" for chickens, and thus benefit the emotional and physical welfare of broiler chickens and laying hens. David Fraser notes the importance of natural living conditions in: Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare*. While farm women did not intentionally create poultry production systems with animal emotional and physical health in mind, their traditional husbandry

Raising chicks, gathering eggs, and caring for chickens was a hard chore. The flock required attention all year long.⁹⁹ In the spring, farm women either hatched eggs or raised chicks. In the early twentieth century, it was common for women to hatch their own chicks, but by the 1920s, women mail ordered chicks from hatching facilities.¹⁰⁰ They then kept eggs and young chicks in incubators in kitchens or basements.¹⁰¹ In order to keep the young birds alive, it was necessary to keep them at a constant, warm temperature. Aided by a kerosene heater or stove, women monitored the temperature of eggs and chicks to increase survival rates.¹⁰² Doris Baird Epps remembered her mother receiving a shipment of chicks. “As each one was taken from the box, Mother dipped their little beaks into a solution of water and some kind of purple medicine. She tipped their head back to make sure the solution trickled down their throat. This was supposed to keep them healthy.”¹⁰³ Epps’ mother took measures to prevent a common respiratory disease in poultry, coccidiosis.¹⁰⁴ Early care was critical to the survival of chicks. Women were in charge of ensuring that the young stock received good care. Farm women had a vested economic interest in good care, because poultry production provided eggs and broilers to trade for groceries or sell for profit.¹⁰⁵

methods concurred with present day scientific research. Before World War II, free range production systems were the cheapest and least labor-intensive method of raising poultry.

⁹⁹ Taylor, *Tarpleywick*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 49–50.

¹⁰¹ Times-Citizen Communications., *Memories II*, 64.

¹⁰² Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 49–50.

¹⁰³ Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ American Veterinary Medical Association, *Journal*, 1913, 501.

¹⁰⁵ Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 114.

Once the chicks were large enough, women let them outside to forage and grow.¹⁰⁶ They brought chickens into the henhouse at night in order to protect them from predators, such as fox and raccoons.¹⁰⁷ Farm women also took measures to protect chickens during inclement weather, shooing them into the henhouse when dark clouds threatened the farm. An Iowa farmer, Hans, remembered that the threat of storms often forced them to stay home from church, because his wife, Sharon, was concerned about the chickens. "I know Sharon felt pretty bad about that sometimes," but Hans recalled the necessity of staying home, stating, "You did all that work and had them that far and then you'd lose them."¹⁰⁸ Chickens represented commercial profit as well as farm family survival, which meant that it was in farm women's best interest to take good care of their flocks.¹⁰⁹

Women's poultry production sustained many Iowa farms through hard times. Women's sales of poultry, eggs, and dairy products, "provided considerable income for the family."¹¹⁰ In early years, farm families relied on the barter system in order to get basic goods such as flour and sugar, which they needed for baking. At times, eggs and chickens were the only products the family had to offer. Thomas Terrill wrote in his diary on March 13, 1894, that his wife "took butter and eggs and traded for goods. Eggs 8¢ per doz and butter 13¢ per lb. I had no money to spend." At this time, Terrill had no currency to spend in town, but his wife's egg money provided the family with basic

¹⁰⁶ Hoover, *A Good Day's Work*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 22.

¹⁰⁸ As quoted in: Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 50.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, *Tarpleywick*, 43.

¹¹⁰ Fink, Deborah and Dorothy Schwieder, "Plains Women: Rural Life in the 1930s," *Great Plains Quarterly* 8, no. 2: 80.

necessities. Thirty-five years later, during the Great Depression, families relied on women's egg money to survive.¹¹¹ During the 1930s, women sold eggs, poultry, and dairy in order to pay bills.¹¹² For instance, Iowa farm woman Clara Ackerman used money earned from raising poultry in order to pay down a doctor's bill in 1932. She wrote in her diary, "I made one five dollar payment once this spring when I did some custom hatching and added enough 'egg money' to that to make five dollars. The Doctor was pleased, needless to say, and told me if everyone would pay in installments he would fare better."¹¹³ During difficult economic times, businesses considered it better to receive payment in products or produce than to not collect compensation due to the depressed economic condition of most families. Consequently, women held responsibility for sustaining the family when grain prices fell and the farmer's income was insignificant or nonexistent. Women, therefore, took it upon themselves to improve chicken husbandry techniques in order to produce the best birds and the most eggs. Farm women did not have the term "welfare" in mind when adopting new, more productive poultry raising techniques, yet their efforts to raise better birds directly reflected principles of welfare.

Farm women balanced a fine line when coping with the complexities of raising fowl. Various breeds required different feeding regimes. Additionally, if given the opportunity, birds overate, causing complications such as infertility, digestive problems,

¹¹¹ Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 36.

¹¹² Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 114.

¹¹³ Ackerman, "Diary" July 7, 1932.

and death.¹¹⁴ Raising flocks was not as simple as putting out feed, gathering eggs, and letting chickens into the henhouse at night.¹¹⁵ Farm women became experts in poultry production. Prescriptive literature educated women on appropriate husbandry techniques. A poultry journal, for example, stated:

There is not the least doubt that hens can be made so fat that they will cease to lay more than a few eggs. . . This is not simply because the hens are very fat, for a well-fattened hen will lay regularly if she is in the proper condition otherwise. A hen may be given a large quantity of feed without becoming over fat, if she is at the same time given vigorous exercise. The trouble with the fat hens which do not lay is that they get their feed without working for it.¹¹⁶

Consequently, women needed to ensure that their hens received proper nutrition and exercise. This often meant controlling their morning grain intake so that they had to scavenge for the rest of their food. Scavenging caused them to be more active throughout the day, and subsequently better layers.¹¹⁷ Women read journals and attended meetings, where extension service agents demonstrated effective husbandry techniques. These techniques resulted in better welfare for the fowl.

¹¹⁴ Herbert Winslow Collingwood, *The Business Hen (the Latest Hatch)* (New York: Rural Pub. Co., 1910), 135.

¹¹⁵ "Overfat Hens - A Common Source of Loss," *Poultry* (September 1906): 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

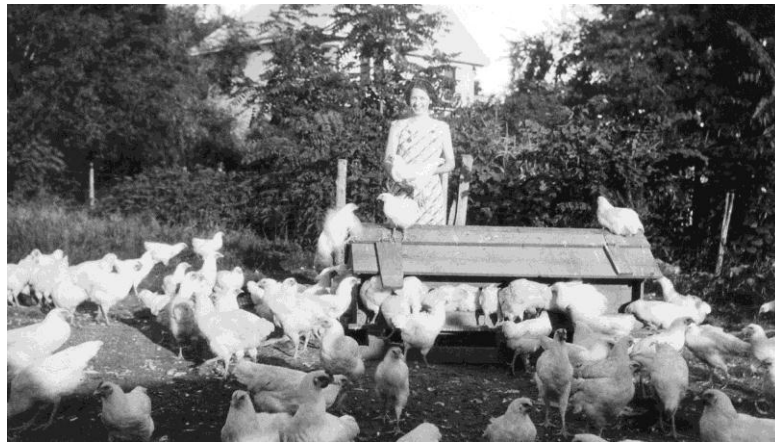


Image 2: Iowa farm woman, Mary McNutt, with her flock. An example of a typical poultry system which was free range and allowed birds to forage. ca. 1940¹¹⁸

Women concerned themselves with poultry welfare because chickens were raised to be consumed or sold. Better welfare equated better products; more eggs, more meat, and more stock. Women had little emotional attachment to chickens and other types of fowl. The birds' species dictated that they were destined to be eaten. Ohlen, for instance, did not wish to create emotional bonds with her chickens. She stated:

A plain business like arrangement with the hens is good enough for me. I feed them properly . . . and all I ask in return is a substantial showing in the production of eggs. The minute a hen gets too old to pay her way I have some customers who are ready to welcome her, minus head and feathers, at a price which makes me glad. I did not allow my personal affections for the departed to stand in the way of separating my patron from her money.¹¹⁹

Ohlen stressed the importance of maintaining an emotional distance from her flock. She focused on the economics of poultry production. This meant that she considered profit the central concern of poultry raising, which generated concerns for welfare based on nutrition, housing, and management. Emotional attachment to birds was

¹¹⁸ McNutt Family Private Collection.

¹¹⁹ Ohlen, "Poultry Keeping a Woman's Business," 22.

uncommon and did not dictate welfare. The distaste for close relationships with fowl generally rested on the fact that birds were unpleasant. Ohlen stated, “Hens are ‘not’ all particular about wiping their feet when they fly on ones shoulder and their claws are likely to dig sections of cuticle out of ones hands and arms.”¹²⁰ Unpleasant avian behavior, natural to them due to their species, ensured Ohlen’s distaste for affective bonds with birds.

Women and children often did not like the chickens and other types of fowl. They were “broody” and pecked egg collectors’ hands.¹²¹ Due to fowls’ temperamental nature, some farm women and children detested the animals, and had no trouble killing them. For example, Epps’ mother decided to raise turkeys one year for Thanksgiving. Epps recalled:

The Tom turkey strutted around the chicken yard, dragging his wings and spreading his tail feathers into a large fan. The yard was his domain. He chased after us, flapping his wings, and gobbling and pecking at us whenever we were near. Sarah Ann (Epps’ younger sister) seemed to be his favorite target, probably because she was so small. She hated that turkey. One day, Mother was hanging clothes on the line when the turkey charged at her, doing his flapping and gobbling routine. She picked up a small stick to defend herself and threw it at him, accidentally hitting him in the head. Tom dropped dead on the spot.¹²²

In this case, Tom the Turkey rejected all human-animal bonds, which ultimately cost him his life. While the killing of Tom was an accident and a result of self-defense, the family felt no remorse for the mean bird. Sarah Ann, Tom’s primary child victim said, “At last I

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Times-Citizen Communications., *Memories II*, 76.

¹²² Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 105.

have my revenge,” as she ate her “archenemy.”¹²³ Tom was an actor in this relationship. His overt aggression, failure to accept human contact, and refusal to adhere to the human-animal hierarchy contributed to the deterioration of his welfare. No one cared emotionally for Tom. He did not develop the relationships necessary to ensure his wellbeing, and therefore he met a tragic end. Turkeys, chickens, ducks, and geese often rejected human bonds. Therefore, humans fostered fewer affective bonds with fowl than they did other animals that reciprocated emotions, such as dairy cows.

There was little potential for human-animal bonds with chickens and other types of fowl because of their volatile nature. Additionally, the fact that they thrived in large groups resulted in limited potential for individuality within a flock. Because flocks generally had several hundred birds, it was quite easy for a farm woman to go out and select a bird for dinner. At times, however, farm women singled out birds that required extra care because they were unusual or sick. Kalish remembered when an old hen, Old Biddy, laid eggs too late in the year, and all of her chicks except one died. She recollected, “Old Biddy’s pitiful plight and her lone chick aroused our sympathy.” The family generally did not allow chickens in the yard because of droppings, but pitied the pair and let them take up residence under the porch. They named the chick Buddy.

Kalish recalled:

We loved looking under the porch at night, or under the lilac bush in the afternoon when they had siesta. There the two of them would be: Biddy standing up; Buddy with his head under her wing. Under Biddy’s excessive care, Buddy developed into a huge and handsome fellow with soft and bounteous black and white barred feathers and an enormous

¹²³ Ibid.

bright red comb. Only he had grown so large that his head under her wing lifted her foot way off the ground and she would be balancing precariously on one leg. It was a ludicrous sight – a clear case of arrested development on his part and overprotective mothering on hers.¹²⁴

When the Kalish family singled out the two birds because they felt sorry them, those birds received extra care and additional attention. Being an odd sight, the birds provided amusement to the family. The peculiar pair enjoyed more individual attention and consequently better care than the rest of the birds subsumed in the group. The individualization of specific animals led to them receiving superior care compared to the rest of the flock. However, this did not change the fact that the birds probably ended up “in a tasty chicken and dumpling stew.”¹²⁵

According to historian Marilyn Holt, “Knowing how to raise healthy chickens was as important as knowing how to cook them.”¹²⁶ Some women carried out the task of actually killing the bird, and others left the slaughter to men. Some families considered slaughtering birds a “masculine” endeavor, while others had no concerns with women slaughtering fowl. Dwight Hoover, for instance, remembered that his Aunt Fern slaughtered chickens regularly. He stated, “She had no children and crossed the line between masculine and feminine into male territory more than anyone I knew.”¹²⁷ Other farm families did not consider killing birds an inappropriate task for women. When Epps’ mother needed a bird for dinner, she went out to select broiler or an old

¹²⁴ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 257.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Holt, *Linoleum*, 44.

¹²⁷ Hoover, *A Good Day’s Work*, 17.

hen, snatched up the bird, laid it on its side and then would, “stomp on its head and yank.” Other women used hatchets to decapitate birds or wringed their necks.¹²⁸ Farm women did not anguish over killing birds. From the time the animals were small chicks, women intended to feed their families with the fowl or sell them for profit.

Poultry’s productive role on farms was limited to consumption; they could not pull a plow, take the family to town and were rarely playmates. Birds’ species dictated that they would not be able to fill any productive role on farms other than provide eggs and meat. Furthermore, because flocks tended to be large, and birds were temperamental, farm families rarely bonded with birds and consequently had little sentimental attachment to fowl. This narrowed the scope of animal welfare to concerns of proper care and husbandry, and left limited room for emotional enrichment of birds, outside the fact that they were allowed to roam free and enjoy natural behaviors. Relationships with other farm animals differed due to their species, number of animals on the farm, and productive potential. Animals such as dairy cows demanded proper nutrition, care, and shelter, and kind treatment. Dairy cows, unlike chickens, required gentle treatment in order to be productive.¹²⁹

Cows needed to be well nourished, able to exercise, and be in a comfortable emotional state in order to produce high quality milk. Both women and men milked cows, but usually women and children performed milking. Processing dairy products

¹²⁸ Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 21.

¹²⁹ “How to Keep Stock Healthy,” *The Farm Journal: Devoted to the Farm, Orchard, Garden, Poultry, and Household Economy* XLII, no. 1 (1918): 187.

was almost always the farm woman's chore.¹³⁰ Therefore, women considered high-quality dairy production to be essential, because the profits gained from the sale of milk, cream, butter, and cheese went towards their "pin money," which enabled women to buy groceries, household necessities, and contribute to the farm income. Consequently, women concerned themselves with dairy cow welfare because they had a vested interest in the profits gained from ample milk production. Kindness, rather than coercion, was the only way to milk a cow successfully. According to *The Farm Journal*, if a cow "held up" her milk, only "a gentle, expert scientific milker," could bring her back to normal production. The advice manual also stated, "It is certain that brutality will have the opposite effect."¹³¹ Milk cows generally received better care on farms than chickens because of three factors. Factors that determined a cow's welfare were individual identity, strong human-animal bonds, and productive role on the farm.

First, labor availability limited the number of cows that one farm could support. Typical Iowa farms supported between three and ten cattle, depending on the number of hands available for milking and acres of pastureland.¹³² It took about seven minutes for experienced hands to milk one cow, so six cows took almost an hour to milk.¹³³ Labor and pasture limits reduced the size of the overall herd, and therefore farmers and farm women did not identify dairy cows as a members of a group, but rather as individuals. Almost all Iowa dairy cows had names, and farmers and farm women could

¹³⁰ Fink, *Open Country Iowa*, 51.

¹³¹ "How to Keep Stock Healthy," 187.

¹³² McNutt, "Oral Interview."

¹³³ Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds : Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 96.

explain each cow's personality in detail.¹³⁴ Animals that carried an individual identity on the farm tended to receive better treatment than those subsumed in a group identity.¹³⁵

The second factor that determined welfare centered on the fact that dairy cows created a strong human-animal bond with caretakers. Milk cows were very particular about who milked them and how handlers behaved. If a cow was uncomfortable with her milker, she would refuse to "let down" her milk, or even kick her handler.¹³⁶ This was an overt example of animal agency. Professor Joseph Carter, in an address to the Illinois Farmers Institute in 1908, said, "Now, I suppose there is no place among the animals we use where kindness counts so much as with the dairy cow. The dairy cow is even more responsive to kindness and quicker shows the effects of kindness or unkindness than any other farm animals."¹³⁷ Milk cows demanded kind treatment; if a stockperson handled a dairy cow roughly, she produced little milk of poor quality. Whether a farm woman preformed the milking or processed dairy products, her interest in profit resulted in better animal welfare. Here, a reciprocal relationship is present; farm women concerned themselves with the welfare of dairy cows, and dairy cows in return produced more product for home consumption or commercial sale. Furthermore, an emotional bidirectional relationship was present due to the intimate

¹³⁴ McNutt, "Oral Interview."

¹³⁵ Katherine Bayne affirms this in the context of laboratory animal care. She notes the relationship between individualization of laboratory animals and animal well-being in a research setting. See: Katherine Bayne, "Development of the Human-Research Animal Bond and Its Impact on Animal Well-being," *Institute for Laboratory Animal Research* 43, no. 1 (2002).

¹³⁶ The term "let down" appears frequently in advice manuals. When a cow refuses to "let down," it means that she retains her milk in her udder and cannot be milked.

¹³⁷ Joseph Carter, "Kindness to Animals - Its Money Value," *Annual Report of the Illinois Farmers' Institute* (1908): 140.

contact between handler and animal. Milkers developed emotional attachments to individual dairy cows, and cows created bonds with milkers. Humans who had calm, caring personalities were more likely to foster human-animal bonds, and hence have higher producing cows.¹³⁸

Some period literature suggested, “Intelligent women would make better milkers than is possible for men” due to their docile and caring natures.¹³⁹ Conversely, the Illinois Farmers’ institute *Annual Report* stated, “You have sometimes heard that women ought to milk. Well, she can’t. Her hands and arms are not strong enough.”¹⁴⁰ However, this does not appear to be a valid criticism of female milking. In her study of dairying in the mid-Atlantic region from 1750-1850, Joan Jensen stated, “women certainly performed at least most of the milking chores.”¹⁴¹ Women’s ability to perform most of the milking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries implies that they were capable of mustering up the strength for the chore in the early twentieth century. If men did the milking, manuals advised, “Speak to a cow as you would to a lady” because the most successful dairy farmer was a “gentle man as well as a gentleman.”¹⁴² This type of reverence for dairy cows resulted in an elevated condition of welfare. Proper care of dairy cows was necessary for ample production, and instruction manuals often utilized this type of gendered language to describe the appropriate treatment of dairy

¹³⁸ Hannah, Sneddon and Beattie confirm relationships between human personality and dairy cow production in research on present-day dairy production. See: D. Hannah, A. Sneddon, and V.E. Beattie, “The Relationship Between the Stockperson’s Personality and Attitudes and the Productivity of Dairy Cows,” *Animal* 3, no. 05 (2009): 737–743.

¹³⁹ Frederick Lowell Houghton, *Holstein-Friesian Register*, 1903, 132.

¹⁴⁰ Carter, “Kindness to Animals - Its Money Value,” 140.

¹⁴¹ Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds*, 93.

¹⁴² Houghton, *Holstein-Friesian Register*, 132.

cows. Gendered language was common in period literature, which referred to cows as “mothers” and “homebuilders.”¹⁴³ Secretion of milk was the ultimate feminine form of production, and as such, cows were not only central to farm profits, but farmers and farm wives also had a reverence for the animals because they epitomized femininity and motherhood. Consequently, dairy cows received exceptionally good care on the farm.

The third factor in determining welfare was animals’ productive role on farms. Cows used their productive role as a lever for kind treatment and proper care.¹⁴⁴ If the cow did not receive adequate nutrition, her milk was of poor quality. Furthermore, if the cow experienced stress from mishandling, she either failed to produce milk or produced a mediocre product.¹⁴⁵ Farmers used gendered language both in describing dairy cow behavior and her productive role. In a 1916 publication of the *Farm Journal*, dairy cows took on human female identities:

As might be expected, this home-creating creature is feminine in gender. Being womanlike she has her tricks and her ways. As a rule she is docile, patient, generous and obedient. At times she becomes nervous, petulant, ‘uncertain, coy and hard to please.’ It depends largely on the handling. Kindly treated she is full of milk and kindness; once spoiled she is spoiled forever.¹⁴⁶

This advice journal advocated kind treatment towards dairy cows because of their feminine nature. It instructed farmers on how to handle dairy cows through descriptions of “womanlike” behaviors. Additionally, the use of the word “spoil” in this

¹⁴³ Ibid., “The Home-Making Animal,” *Farm Journal* 40 (1916): 7.

¹⁴⁴ Expresses that of all farm animals, dairy cows responded quickest to kindness, and the use of harsh language or actions decreased milk flow significantly. See: “Encouraging Persistency of Large Milk Flow,” *Circular: Iowa State College. Experiment Station*. (1912): 22.

¹⁴⁵ F.W. Woll and R.T. Harris, “The Wisconsin Dairy Cow Competition,” *Wisconsin Dairy Cow* 226 (1912): 31.

¹⁴⁶ “The Home-Making Animal,” 7.

passage referred to unkind treatment, not superfluous coddling. These analogies were quite frequent in period literature.¹⁴⁷

If men did the milking, they needed to respect their cow as though she were a lady. Furthermore, the dairy cow was a mother, which meant that men were required to protect and respect her because of her maternal productive capacity. At the Annual Meeting of the North Dakota State Dairyman's Association, A.J. O'Keefe advised:

The dairy cow is a mother. The man who doesn't go up to that animal with his hat off and with profound respect for motherhood, is never to be entrusted with the destiny of a dairy cow. You are making merchandise with her motherhood. You are selling it by the pound. Therefore, you must understand the laws which govern maternity.¹⁴⁸

Men often referred to dairy cows as "mothers" or "ladies." Gendered language in period literature reiterated the importance of care, compassion and respect for dairy cows because of their matronly roles. Furthermore, the production of milk was the ultimate in feminine productive capacity, and therefore farmers respected their dairy cows. Farm women also valued cows for their feminine traits. As historian Laurie Winn Carlson notes in her study of cows from ancient Egypt to present-day, "Women are attracted to dairy animals that signify the female, the domestic, the mother of all."¹⁴⁹ Dairy cows' identity as feminine, matronly animals, that refused to produce milk when faced with adverse conditions, entitled them to superior treatment on the farm. This drive for welfare was not constrained solely to economic terms, limiting the application

¹⁴⁷ See: Iowa State Agricultural Society, *Annual Report of the Iowa State Agricultural Society*, 1898, 558; Woll and Harris, "The Wisconsin Dairy Cow Competition," 31; A.J. O'Keefe, "Evening Session of Annual Meeting," *North Dakota State Dairyman's Association, North Dakota Department of Agriculture* (1891): 18; Houghton, *Holstein-Friesian Register*, 132; "The Home-Making Animal," 7.

¹⁴⁸ O'Keefe, "Evening Session of Annual Meeting," 18.

¹⁴⁹ Laurie M Carlson, *Cattle: An Informal Social History* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 47.

of a Marxian framework. Farmers and farm women cared for dairy cows because they were individualized, formed strong human-animal bonds, produced more with kind treatment, and were idolized as homemakers and mothers of the farm.

The feminization of animal welfare is a broad, complex topic, which ranges from women educating their children of proper gender roles to humane care for matronly cows. Historians closely link femininity and animal welfare, but an exploration of the role of animals as exemplars of gender ideals remains a topic of further interest.¹⁵⁰

Women also were integral in the farm and commercial economy in their caring for poultry and dairy. Both men and women cared for dairy cows, but cows received superior treatment to poultry because they were individualized models of femininity and motherhood, held important productive roles on the farm, and created strong human-animal bonds, in which the cow actively demanded kind treatment in exchange for production.

¹⁵⁰ See: Emily Gaarder, *Women and the Animal Rights Movement* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

Chapter 4: Children and Animals: Playmates, educators, and food

Jerry L. Twedt of Roland, Iowa was the son of a poor tenant farmer in the early 1940s. At age ten, Twedt wanted a horse more than anything in the world. His father could not afford to buy him a full-grown, trained horse, but instead purchased an unborn foal for Twedt to raise. Early one morning, Twedt's father called out, "Jerry, Bonnie's had her colt." The small boy bolted out of bed and ran through the thick fog to the pasture. He could hardly see the wobbly newborn through the heavy blanket of mist, but there he was. The young boy finally had a horse.¹⁵¹

Twedt spent hours upon hours with the colt, and the young creature took to taking long naps near the child while the boy sat in the grass. Twedt remembered: "At times, he even put his head in my lap. It did not happen often, but I felt most privileged when it did. . . I also discovered that little colts snore."¹⁵² Eventually, the colt named Raven grew into a large, impressive stallion. Twedt went to great lengths to for and train the handsome equine. He spent hours upon hours with Raven, and the horse became a close friend to him. The young stallion was kind and gentle, and Twedt remembered that he was the only horse to ever stop when Jerry fell off, lowering his head and to make sure the young boy was unharmed.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s*, 95–97.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 99.

Several years later, when Twedt was sixteen, his father approached him with unfortunate news. The family was experiencing serious financial hardship, which necessitated selling the families' three horses, including Raven. The announcement saddened the adolescent boy, but he understood the situation. The horses went to a horse trader at a rock bottom price. Twedt remembered: "In stories and movies, the Black Stallion always wins the race, Big Red prevails, and Lassie comes home. Not so in real life." Knowing the fate of his beloved pet was probably the slaughterhouse, Twedt mourned, "These animals deserved better. They gave countless hours of pleasure and provided memories, which, fifty years later, remain vibrantly alive. I humbly thank them."¹⁵⁴

Twedt's experience exemplified the constant contradiction between compassion and reality on the farm. Even though the boy had cared for Raven since birth and considered him a close friend, he still understood harsh truth of farm life; animals were meant to be worked, sold, slaughtered, and eaten. However, Twedt's story also represented the potential intimacy between human and nonhuman. For Jerry, this closeness with an animal meant that he cared meticulously for the creature. He developed a relationship that went much further than a simple economic bond between farmer and workhorse. He appreciated the equine and developed an emotional connection with the domesticated animal. This closeness and the horse's productive role in Jerry's life ensured the humane treatment of the animal while on the farm.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 103–104.

This chapter examines the relationship between human and nonhuman on Iowa farms through the eyes of children. Sources written by children provide a fascinating lens for the investigation of Iowa farm animal welfare in the first half of the twentieth century. Children loved their animals unabashedly and generally without significant concern for economic worth. By focusing on relationships rather than economics, sources composed by children provide historians rich material for examining the nature of the human-animal bond on farms. To children, a calf was a playmate, not just a future cow that would nourish the family or provide income.¹⁵⁵ For children in 4-H, a calf was a project. They were responsible for the care, rearing, and training of the animal. They did not complete livestock 4-H projects for the paltry income gained at the end of the project when the calf was sold, but rather for the sense of pride and accomplishment.¹⁵⁶ Some children dealt with the ultimate sale of their projects better than others, but all farm children had to face the reality that livestock on the farm had a finite amount of time.¹⁵⁷ Awareness of mortality did not seem to dampen children's relationships with farm animals, however. Children played with them, worked with them, cared for them, and then watched them die.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Riney-Kehrberg, *Childhood on the Farm*, 119–120.

¹⁵⁶ L.C. Myers, "Address to 4-H Girls.", 1937, 4, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

¹⁵⁷ "Baby Beef Clubs: Results in Terms of Demonstrations," *4-H Boys' Club Annual Report* (1926).

¹⁵⁸ Riney-Kehrberg, *Childhood on the Farm*, 138–139.



Image 3: Boy proud of 4-H steer. This steer was docile and accepted human bonds. It was also in excellent condition because the boy raised the cow for 4-H exhibition. ca. 1930

By examining welfare through the eyes of children, one sees that utilizing a Marxist framework - which defines animals by their productive labor and argues that capitalist systems necessarily exploit animals - offers an incomplete analysis.¹⁵⁹ Children did not think of animals in terms of production or as commodities, they thought of them as playmates, best friends, and confidants. Furthermore, since children often were the primary caregivers for animals on the farm, animal welfare often lay in their hands. Children understood the realities of farm life that necessitated death of some of the animals, but children still developed strong bonds with farm animals and did not see them as economic units. Disregard for economic concern complicates historical analysis of farm animal welfare. For instance, while species typically was either a barricade or gateway to improved animal welfare on farms, children allowed animals to transcend the species barrier.

¹⁵⁹ For more on the exploitation of animals in a capitalist society see: George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (1st World Publishing, 2004); Jason Hribal, "'Animals Are Part of the Working Class': a Challenge to Labor History," *Labor History* 44, no. 4 (November 2003): 435–453.

At times, animals used relationships with children to overcome the species barrier and procured more agency. For instance, Mildred Armstrong Kalish and her siblings domesticated raccoons, squirrels and an opossum during the Great Depression. One day, while stacking wood, they found an opossum den. They tried to befriend the opossum, but were disenchanted with the wild animal because “the moment we tried to entertain him or interact in any way, he would simply play dead. Lying limp on his side, he would close his eyes, open his mouth slightly, allow saliva to drip out, and reveal an incredible number of jagged teeth.”¹⁶⁰ The opossum came close to overcoming the species barrier, but its natural instincts inhibited it from becoming completely domesticated.

Historian Stephen Budiansky’s influential book, *The Covenant of the Wild: Why animals chose domestication*, helps us understand why the opossum rejected domestication. According to Budiansky, evolution dictated animal domestication. Historically, animals were active players in the process of domestication; they chose to either accept or reject human contact. This analysis discredits previous conceptions of man’s domination over animals and resulting domestication. Some animals chose domestication, others did not. Those that chose domestication eventually retained neotonic traits, or juvenile traits (immature appearance, docility, and tranquility), through adulthood. According to Budiansky, these animals realized it was in their best interest to be in close contact with the human species, and therefore evolved to

¹⁶⁰ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 259.

become tame.¹⁶¹ The Kalish family's opossum, however, had no evolutionary reason to accept human contact. Ultimately, the children forgot about the opossum playing dead one day and left him in the grass. He made a hasty escape, and according to Kalish, "we were not grieved by his disappearance."¹⁶² Kalish contrasted her disappointing experience with the opossum to the lively raccoons the family took in as pets.

Raccoons, in the Kalish household, were able to overcome the species barrier, create close human-animal bonds, and therefore gain agency and special treatment. This can be explained evolutionarily, because raccoons found it in their best interest to come into close contact with humans – they feasted on leftovers left in convenient metal serving bowls outside the kitchen door. Mildred Kalish noted, "Raccoons became attached to us in the same way the dogs and cats did." As the animals became more domesticated and created stronger human-animal bonds, they went further than crossing the species barrier and stepped into the household. The raccoons learned that the doting children would feed them from the table. Kalish's mother vehemently opposed having the four-legged forest dwellers in the house during dinner, so she nailed a board up on the screen, which should have prevented the raccoons from letting themselves in. The adept creatures stuck their small fingers in the crevice and managed to get "in the kitchen in a trice." Once in the house, the raccoons were extremely quiet, and snuck underneath the table. "None of us kids thought anything of taking a bite of buttered bread, then lowering it so a raccoon could have a bite. Share and share alike

¹⁶¹ Stephen Budiansky, *The Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Chose Domestication*, 1st ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 89.

¹⁶² Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 260.

was our motto.”¹⁶³ While most animals’ species dictated their potential for close human-animal bonds and domestication, the raccoons overcame this barrier and used intimacy with the children to their advantage.

The devious and stealthy animals would even go a step further than entering the home; they climbed into the children’s beds. Much to her mother’s dismay, Kalish invited the domesticated wild animals into her bedroom. “One of the smallest raccoons chose to sleep curled up under my chin and another, along with a kitten, shared a spaced down by my feet.”¹⁶⁴ Sleeping with animals represented the epitome of domestication and close human-animal bonds. According to animal behaviorist Cesar Millan, “sleeping with an animal or a human is the most intimate act you can share, even more intimate than sex. That’s because for two animals to sleep together, both must have total trust.”¹⁶⁵ Allowing wild animals to enter the private space of sleeping quarters implied an extremely strong emotional bond between human and animal. Additionally, the animals in this case actively sought out companionship with the human in order obtain what they desired; a warm bed to sleep in. While in this instance an animal stepped beyond the species barrier, this transcendence was uncommon. Generally, animals’ species limited their degree of domestication and productive roles in farm life. Additionally, it should also be noted that eventually all of the raccoons

¹⁶³ Ibid., 260, 265.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 266.

¹⁶⁵ Cesar Millan, *A Member of the Family: The Ultimate Guide to Living with a Happy, Healthy Dog* (New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), 60.

returned to the woods, reverting to a wild state.¹⁶⁶ When the children left the farm for the winter and the raccoons were no longer receiving treats and companionship, it was no longer in their best interest to stay on the farm. The raccoons made an active choice to return to their wild state previous home.

Development of strong human-animal bonds increased farm animal welfare. Furthermore, acceptance of domestication was closely linked to development of human-animal bonds. Animals that developed strong bonds with people and accepted ideals of domestication received better treatment and acquired more agency than those that rejected human contact and the hierarchical relationship of domestication. For example, on rural early-twentieth century farms, domesticated dogs had more agency than feral dogs because they allowed humans to touch them. Dwight H. Hoover recalled in his memoir the problem of feral dogs when he was a child. Packs of wild dogs were especially prevalent during hard times when owners would simply release the dogs in the country. Feral dog packs preyed on domesticated animals since they were an easy target. Hoover recalled getting news that dogs were in the sheep again one night, and grabbed his .22 rifle. He remembered, "Because the sheep provided some of our livelihood, I would not hesitate to shoot these wild creatures even though I loved animals, especially dogs."¹⁶⁷ In this case, the dogs were not domesticated, and therefore refused to conform to the social structures dictated by humans, who would only provide dogs with care if they accepted human contact.

¹⁶⁶ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 267.

¹⁶⁷ Hoover, *A Good Day's Work*, 81–82.

Agency of dogs depended on an animal conforming to social norms delineated by humans, which placed humans at the hierarchical apex of the human-animal power pyramid. Historian Harriet Ritvo applied this to human-animal relationships in nineteenth century Britain, stating “the best animals were those that displayed the qualities of an industrious, docile, and willing human servants, the worst not only declined to serve, but dared to challenge human supremacy.”¹⁶⁸ However, not all animals complied with this code of conduct, but still remained domesticated creatures.

Hoover discovered that animal agency was not limited to animal acceptance of human ideals. He remembered an instance when he saw a young mule kick his father in the face when he approached the animal with a halter. “After this experience, I haltered the mule with great care.”¹⁶⁹ This animal did accept domestication, but on its own terms. The mule demanded respect from its human caretakers, and the incident frightened Hoover into treating the animal with deference. While animals needed to accept domestication in order to gain agency in relationships with human beings, agency also allowed animals to negotiate those relationships in order to gain influence. Historian Jason Hribal outlines this form of agency in “Animals, Agency, and Class: Writing the History of Animals from Below.” Hribal defines this type of agency as “a product of an unspoken negotiation.” When discussing forms of resistance by animals – refusal to work, ignoring commands, direct confrontation – Hribal quoted

¹⁶⁸ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 17.

¹⁶⁹ Hoover, Dwight. *A Good Day's Work*. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007) p. 146

anthropologist James Scott, terming resistance “weapons of the weak.”¹⁷⁰ In the case of Dwight Hoover’s mule, direct confrontation implied not only that the mule was an actor, negotiating relationships with human beings, but was also using a form of a communication.

Sometimes, animals rejected closeness and domestication. Several sources note the potentially dangerous behavioral tendencies of uncastrated male animals. Hoover remembered, “These males were aggressive, prone to protecting their females, and likely to attack with or without provocation.”¹⁷¹ Doris Baird Epps noted a similar relationship with intact males on the farm: “Farm animals could be a threat, especially coming face to face with an angry bull.”¹⁷² Children learned to respect uncastrated males on the farm due to their unpredictable behavior. The animals, in this case, were in control of the relationship. They dictated the degree of closeness in the human-animal relationship. People often imposed rough treatment on uncastrated males due to the animals’ defensive nature. For example, Hoover came to blows one day with a Shropshire ram. While loading lambs, the ram charged Hoover at the knees and the young teenager fell to the ground. Hoover recalled, “Irate, I swung the tailgate at him with considerable force and hit him squarely on the head. I feared I had killed him, a grand champion ram at the Iowa State Fair, but he seemed not to have been

¹⁷⁰ Hribal, “‘Animals Are Part of the Working Class.’”

¹⁷¹ Hoover, *A Good Day’s Work*, 22.

¹⁷² Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 15.

affected.”¹⁷³ In general, animals that accepted closeness of humans and domestication received more humane and kind treatment from caretakers.

At times, farm animals surprised farm children. Young Bill Johnson grew to be fearful of cows with young calves. Normally, the protective mothers communicated distrust in humans for several weeks after giving birth. Mothers ran children off whenever they came too close to their offspring. But one night, Johnson went out to the cow pasture during an unexpected spring storm. He was concerned about the young calves in the freezing cold rain. He accounted for all twelve calves he knew to be on the ground during his evening check. As Johnson began to walk back to the warm house, he noticed one of the cows heading away from the others. He followed the mother and found a half-dead newborn calf lying on the cold, wet ground. “His mama would normally chase me away, but she just watched as if asking for help,” Johnson remembered. He took the young calf into the house and put him in a warm bath. “It didn’t take long until he shook his head and said something, I don’t know what, but it was a welcome sign.” After the calf recovered, Johnson pinned a number thirteen on his ear.¹⁷⁴ Johnson cared for the animal and saved its life, but this act of kindness did not change the fact that the animal was still a number. It would still be slaughtered once it grew large enough. The calf and mother forged a human-animal bond, which saved the calf’s life. Nonetheless, the calf’s species limited the possibilities for further

¹⁷³ Hoover, *A Good Day’s Work*, 23.

¹⁷⁴ Bill Johnson and Karen Johnson, *Once Upon a Farm: How to Look, Listen, Laugh, and Survive* (Ames, IA: Sigler Printing & Publishing, 1993), 40–41.

closeness with humans, and Johnson returned the young animal to its mother and the cow was eventually slaughtered.

Other heroic efforts to save young calves illustrated how an animal's species limited human-animal bonds, but acceptance of human contact still resulted in improved welfare. For example, in a memoir of growing up during the Great Depression in Iowa, Curtis Harnack described finding a half-dead baby calf, huddled next to its mother in the snow, "encasing them in a womb of winter." Harnack's uncle swiftly scooped the young bovine into his arms and handed it to Harnack's sister, Ruthie. She climbed into the car, "calf on her lap big as a dog, blue eyes blinking." Ruthie caressed the frigid animal, curling its hair in her fingers and holding it close. Harnack recalled, "Though born here in the wilderness, he now knew domesticity was his true circumstance; he needed us in order to live. But I didn't carry it further: that his eventual death in the slaughterhouse in Sioux City was to be his inevitable fate, so that we could make our living."¹⁷⁵ Harnack illustrated the dichotomy between welfare and reality on the farm and the limitations based on species. However, he also helped define farm animal welfare, which did not always coincide with reformer's definitions of humane treatment.

Urban anti-cruelty reformers generally limited discussion of animal welfare to "isolated cases of out-and-out brutality."¹⁷⁶ Farms, however, redefined animal welfare to include proper care and nutrition, while keeping in mind that animals must fill a

¹⁷⁵ Harnack, *We Have All Gone Away*, 84–85.

¹⁷⁶ *Veterinary Medicine* (American Veterinary Pub. Co., 1920), 451.

productive role on the farm. Animals received care, but they still worked for their keep, fed the family, and provided commercial profits. For instance, even though Harnack's calf was going to be eaten one day, Uncle Jack still wanted to save it. To Uncle Jack, the calf represented economic gain for the farm. However, in placing the young, fragile animal in the arms of Ruthie, Uncle Jack implied that the animal was not limited to economic worth. Young Ruthie saw the animal as a baby in need of care, warmth and intimacy. The animal could have just as easily been taken back to the barn, but instead it was put in a young girl's lap in the car. Children often bridged the gap between economic concern for animal survival and emotional investment in animal survival. This domestication of the animal implied a higher degree of care for the animal, and the movement of the animal from outdoors to indoors, facilitated by actions of a child, increased the closeness and intimacy the animal had with people. It should be noted that this was not an anomalous case.

Livestock's entrance into the home happened quite frequently when infant animals were in need of extra care. In an oral interview with Dr. James McNutt, DVM, he recalled his mother bringing young cows into the house and placing them in the bathtub under warm water when they were born too early in the spring. McNutt and his mother fed the calf whiskey and milk – Dr. McNutt noted that today it would not be advisable veterinary practice to give a young animal alcohol – and waited for the calf to regain enough strength before taking it back outdoors. In its time of need, the animal

crossed the barrier between livestock and companion animal.¹⁷⁷ Once healed, it inevitably returned to its natural circumstance outdoors. Livestock, because of their species (and size), could not permanently cross the divide between outdoors and indoors. Children often instigated dissolving the barrier between companion animal and livestock. Children, furthermore, were often the caretakers of young animals, and their care was not based on notions of financial profit, but rather simply to nurture something that needed guardianship. They characterized these animals as friends and playmates. To children, animals that provided entertainment served a productive role on the farm. Production, in the eyes of children, was not confined to field work, crop cultivation, and nourishment.

For children, some animals were entertaining playmates. However, adults also appreciated children's contact with animals. Parents often relied on child labor to care for animals. For example, if the family did not have enough resources for adequate fencing, parents "substituted children's time and efforts for wire and posts."¹⁷⁸ Additionally, children gained satisfaction from their work with farm animals. Children gained a sense of pride, accomplishment and sometimes even monetary compensation for their efforts.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, 4-H provided a way for children to develop animal husbandry skills, as well as "industrious habits at the most receptive age of the child, thus avoiding the evils that accompany idleness."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ James McNutt, "Oral Interview," Oral, August 8, 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Riney-Kehrberg, *Childhood on the Farm*, 52.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 55–56.

¹⁸⁰ "Baby Beef Clubs."

The purpose of 4-H was “to teach and to demonstrate to rural boys and girls methods designed to improve practices in agriculture and homemaking, to the end that farm incomes may be increased, standards of living improved, and satisfactions of farm life enhanced.”¹⁸¹ Boys and girls participated in 4-H, and both engaged in livestock projects.¹⁸² Proper animal husbandry skills were essential in order to be successful in 4-H. Hoover recalled his 4-H experiences fondly, noting that one of the primary goals was “to win at the 4-H fair.”¹⁸³ Generally, children showed feeder animals as most farmers could not afford purebreds. Therefore, it was most important to develop a high quality specimen through nutrition and training. Advice manuals instructed children on the appropriate treatment of animals. 4-H manuals stressed the importance of individual care for 4-H club animal projects. The individualization of an animal initially subsumed in a group resulted in better care for that animal. For instance, the *Farm Boys and Girls Leader*, printed a play manuscript written by 4-H children, which emphasized the importance of individualized care described by characters Alice and Malina:

Fred – Say, Alice, is that your lamb out there? I do declare if it isn’t nearly as large as my rutabaga.

Alice – Yes, that’s my lamb alright. I have had so much fun raising it. Dad told me if I took care of it I could have it for our club. I had to feed it from a bottle for quite a long time. When he became larger he would sometimes bite the nipple off the bottle and spill the milk. But every time I fed him he grew an inch. We called him “Puggy,” because he had such a short puggy nose. He used to follow me all over the farm. . . .

Lizim – Here comes Malina with her pig. Say, but she’s a whopper. . .

¹⁸¹ Gertrude L. Warren, *Organization of 4-H Club Work: a Guide for Local Leaders* (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1938), 2.

¹⁸² Holt, *Linoleum*, 174.

¹⁸³ Hoover, *A Good Day’s Work*, 143.

Malina – Yes, I made him a parlor of branches and straw, so he could have a cool place during the hot summer days – and, say, he surely does eat like a pig. I feed him plenty of milk, ground feed, oats and corn.
Alice – He certainly doesn't look starved.¹⁸⁴

Developing animals to “maturity” was an extremely important component to winning at the fair. Hoover recalled, “The show ring was the end of a long process that involved considerable effort. . . . animals needed to be fat . . . but not too fat. They had to have enough fat to give them a firm and attractive appearance with no sight of that fat limiting their activity.”¹⁸⁵ Hoovers sister, Alice, also showed livestock. Hoover recalled, “This proved unfortunate for me since she always beat me in the show ring with her lambs.” At the Iowa State Fair, Alice won with her lambs three years in a row. At that time, a three year winning streak was unprecedented in the showing of lambs.¹⁸⁶ Girls often outpaced boys in livestock competitions. In the 1926 Iowa Mississippi Valley Fair, girls took the top three placings in the Baby Beef division.¹⁸⁷ In Hoover's case, his sister beat him because she meticulously cared for her animals, while Hoover failed to attend to the animals during critical times. For instance, one year Hoover lost his lamb because it died from overheating.¹⁸⁸ The individualization of animals strengthened the human-animal bond and generally resulted in animals receiving better care.

It is clear that animals were not the only beneficiaries of strong human-animal bonds. Animals also enriched childhood experience. Extensive stories and memoirs

¹⁸⁴ “Our Summer Work,” *Des Moines Farm Boys and Girls Leader* (January 1921): 119.

¹⁸⁵ Hoover, *A Good Day's Work*, 145–146.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁸⁷ “4-H Boys' Club Annual Report: Exhibitors 1926 Club Show. Mississippi Valley Fair and Exposition”, 1926, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

¹⁸⁸ Hoover, *A Good Day's Work*, 145.

that include animals exemplify this. Repeatedly, individuals who were raised on farms before World War II were able to rehearse the names of all of the cattle, horses, and dogs they took care of. This was because “children and animals were a natural combination, and one of the great joys of farm living.”¹⁸⁹ Ultimately, however, species dictated the time an animal could fill the role of playmate; calves became cows and lambs became ewes. Ultimately, production in an economic sense determined the final fate of the animal in most cases. However, animals were capable of fulfilling productive roles outside the parameters of economic worth as well.

An animal could fill more than one productive role on the farm, and this role could change over time. Productive roles, moreover, were not limited to contributions of labor and sustenance. Productivity could also take on much more nebulous forms. For instance, a goat was not only a source of milk and meat, but also a playmate for children. When the goat befriended the child, it filled a productive role on the farm. Many children had goat carts and harnessed their charges for hours upon hours of entertainment. If children trained a goat to a cart, it was less likely to be sold or slaughtered. Furthermore, animals not only served as playmates but also as educators.¹⁹⁰

Child-life reformer William Byron Forbush asserted in his *Manual of Play*, published in 1914, that children learned from their play with animals, especially those that need training such as goats used for pulling carts. He stated that the child began to

¹⁸⁹ Riney-Kehrberg, *Childhood on the Farm*, 138.

¹⁹⁰ William Byron Forbush, *Manual of Play* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co. Publishers, 1914), 151.

act as the parent of the animal, which was “splendid training in unselfishness and an important aid in the development of parental instinct.” Furthermore, “As the child trains his pet to obey, he himself learns the importance of obedience.”¹⁹¹ The goat’s acceptance of domestication, development of human-animal bonds and productive role on the farm as a playmate and educator ensured a higher degree of welfare and ultimately survival. Additionally, by singling out one goat as a playmate, children ensured the survival and care of that particular goat. Children also befriended calves on several occasions. Similarly, calves that became children’s playmates also received more care and attention than animals that did not fill the productive role of babysitter. Children’s companionship with animals exemplifies why a Marxian analysis – defining animals through productive labor and as commodities – does not hold up. Children’s relationships with animals were much more complex than a simple economic bond. Children fell in love with their animals, and this emotive element prevented one from defining human-animal relationships in such black and white terms.

Children did not define animals through labor or as economic units; they saw them as sources of entertainment. For example, in her diary, Belle Robinson recorded that she went on a long buggy ride with her family one afternoon. She stated that it was “a very pleasant drive. We did not get home until 6 p.m.”¹⁹² For Robinson and her family, the horse pulling the buggy was a form of entertainment. The horse thus filled a productive role on the farm, even though the buggy ride was not contributing to

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Belle Robinson, “Diary of Belle Robinson,” August 14, 1875, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

economic gain or sustenance on the farm. Horses crossed the divide between productive livestock and human companion often. Their size and trainability made them very suitable for farm work, but their acceptance of domesticity meant that they also filled several productive roles of the farm, from draft animal to babysitter.



Image 4: Two young children on a pony. The pony fulfilled role as babysitter and playmate.

Mildred Armstrong Kalish remembered growing up with horses and explained children being extremely important in the domestication of young colts. Kalish and her siblings discovered that young horses enjoyed eating oat-egg pies, and soon they were bribing the young steeds with the treats. Then, the children would hang from a branch, and slowly drop down onto the horses' backs. Since they had already begun to earn the young animal's trust with oat-egg pies, the horses were completely unfazed by the process. She remembered "many oat-pies later they would tolerate two of us kids at a time on each back." Later, when their Uncle Earnest went to break the young animals, he was astonished by the docile nature of the colts. The children kept their mouths shut about their past summer excursions on the backs of the animals, because they knew the parents would be incredibly angry knowing that they made dangerous, valuable young

animals their playmates. The children, in this case, turned the horse into a pet, removing it from economical productivity and placing it in an affectionate role.

Traditional pets such as cats and dogs also provided playmates and babysitters for young children. As historian Kathleen Grier points out in her book, *Pets in America*, “Pet keeping is the only one-on-one relationship with animals left to most of us, and I wonder what the long-term impact of this enhanced recognition of animals as individuals will eventually be.”¹⁹³ Noting that pets were individuals was extremely important in understanding their productive role on a farm. Dogs and cats controlled pests on farms and protected livestock, but they also served as playmates for children. For instance, Gertrude Mary Cox recalled her parents leaving her alone on the farm when she was four years old, with only the dog to look after her.¹⁹⁴ Epps also remembered pets filling the role of babysitters and playmates when she was left alone as a young girl.¹⁹⁵ If an animal became a pet, and willingly accepted strong human-animal bonds with children, it fulfilled yet another productive role within the familial unit and therefore was entitled, in general, to better welfare.

Epps provided further examples of this when she discussed the role of cats in children’s play in her memoir of growing up in the thirties. “We played with our cats as if they were dolls, dressing them in doll clothes and wheeling them around in doll buggies. We named them exotic, outlandish names . . . my personal favorite was called

¹⁹³ Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007), 17.

¹⁹⁴ Gertrude Mary Cox, “Cox Hall Dedication Speech,” Gertrude Mary Cox Papers, Special Collections, D. H. Hill Library, North Carolina State University.

¹⁹⁵ Epps, *Child of the Thirties*, 3.

‘Evelyn Madeline Gwendolyn Van Schuyler.’”¹⁹⁶ For Epps, the cats not only served the practical purpose of pest control, but also were also living, breathing playthings. The cats that accepted Epps and her siblings’ amusement in adorning them with doll’s clothing, were ultimately better cared for and received superior treatment.

One specific example that emerges repeatedly throughout sources is cats begging for milk during milkings. Cats that accepted human contact and negotiated relationships with humans received more milk at feeding time. For example, Kalish remembered that one of their cats named Cleopatra would park herself on the ledge near the milk cow and open up her mouth. The person milking would appease her solicitation for milk by squirting milk directly from the teat into her mouth. Kalish stated, “The milk that didn’t make it into her mouth soaked her from head to toe, but we all swore that she wore a big smile on her face.”¹⁹⁷ Here, the cat used her agency with human beings to gain what she desired. She provided amusement to milkers and in return received a squirt of fresh, warm milk.

Children provide a unique lens to study animal welfare on farms. They formed strong emotional bonds with their four-legged subjects quickly, and did not hesitate to personify them in their writings. Children cared for the animals not because they symbolized profit or sustenance, but rather because of a deep psychological tie with the creatures. The closer children were to animals, the more they cared about them. They did not want to see them suffer and experience pain, and therefore animals that

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁹⁷ Kalish, *Little Heathens*, 152.

accepted domestication and fulfillment of productive roles had better options in terms of welfare. Jerry L. Twedt, who opened this chapter, perhaps provided the best explanation of the complicated bond between child and animal growing up on an early twentieth century farm:

A horse was much more to a farm boy than just something to ride. He was a partner in countless hold-ups and shoot-outs, one's only means of escape from bloody Indian raids, and the winner of hundreds of Kentucky Derbies. He had a chameleon-like ability, no matter what size or color, to become Trigger, Champion, Topper, or even the great horse, Silver. A horse was also a confidant of one's deepest secrets and wildest dreams, and a friend who dribbled water on ones head when sharing a drink. He was a cunning adversary who caused tears of frustration to flow when he would not allow himself to be bridled. And, perhaps, most of all, he was a means of escaping the farm yard and breaking free of parental restraint. He, in short, was an indispensable colleague in those blurred years of reality and fantasy we call childhood.¹⁹⁸

For Tewdt, his horse was a confidant and friend. He may have even valued the relationship with his animal more than relationships with other children. This underscores the importance of incorporating animals into the story of rural childhood. At times, children spent more time with animals than they did with other children. Many times these mammalian playmates acted as a child's best friend—even if the animal's ultimate fate was slaughter. In the first half of the twentieth century, animals were friends, confidants, sources of entertainment, sources of education, and sources of food for farm children. Animals and children negotiated relationships with each other to achieve the most individual gain from the partnership, and this agency was a direct reflection on the welfare of the animal.

¹⁹⁸ Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s*, 60.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Jerry Twedt grew up with cows, chickens, sheep, hogs, dogs and horses. In his memoir, he reminisced about growing up in the early 40s and recalled the lessons animals taught him during his younger years. One of the best teachers of Twedt's childhood was Tony the pony. Tony was a stubborn Shetland pony with a knack for getting out of work. However, Twedt recalled, "All of his life, Tony was a reluctant, yet patient teacher. Because of his size, he was constantly introducing young children to the joys of riding."¹⁹⁹ Tony was not just a pony, he was an educator, and as such he held a special place in Twedt's heart.

When the family moved to a new farm in 1952, Twedt's father sold all of the horses except for Tony. The little pony filled a productive role on the farm by teaching children about riding and life. When Tony refused to move forward, Twedt had to figure out a way to urge the obstinate little creature onward, and learned about persistence. When the pony refused to be caught, Twedt learned that sometimes patience was the only way to get what he wanted. Tony was not just a pony, he was a playmate, an educator, and a friend. Tony's final days reveal more about the importance of his life on the farm than the countless stories Twedt recalled about his days of riding.

On an August day in 1956, Tony contracted sleeping sickness. Twedt's father made a bed for him in the barn and tried to make the twenty-eight year old pony as

¹⁹⁹ Jerry Twedt, *Growing up in the 40s: Rural Reminiscence* (Iowa State University Press, 1996), 78.

comfortable as possible. A few days later, the old friend passed away. Generally, when animals died on the farm, farmers called a rendering truck to take away the carcass. However, Twedt could not summon a rendering truck for his beloved friend Tony. He recalled, “As a child, I had made Tony a promise that he would be buried.” By 1952, Twedt was a young man, far removed from the farm. Nonetheless, he returned to Tony’s side one last time. He selected a gravesite among a shady row of elms. Twedt began to dig his childhood friend’s grave. After a few minutes, Twedt’s father picked up a shovel and assisted Twedt with the sorrowful task. Once the grave was finished, they rolled Tony into the grave. As Twedt went to cover up Tony, one shovelful of dirt at a time, tears came to his eyes and the stoic young man broke down and began to cry. “Inside the twenty-one year old man, I was still a five year old boy,” Twedt recalled. “Also, I suddenly realized I was burying more than a pony. I was burying my childhood.”²⁰⁰

Animals on farms in the first half of the twentieth century were more than sources of food and labor. Some animals were also companions, confidants and playmates. The entire farm family created emotional connections with some animals on the farm. Their relationships with these animals were far more complex than a simple economic relationship. Animals were not only valued by their meat, milk, and muscles. Some animals created relationships with humans based on mutuality and reciprocity. Tony the pony provides an excellent example of this. Tony was a valuable member of

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 78–79.

the family farm. He entertained and educated many children during his long life. His fostered relationships with people based on cooperation, but this did not mean that he was always amiable. Tony trained the children as much as they trained him. He trained them to be patient and persistent, and demanded respect from his young caretakers. Tony was not a perfect, agreeable mount, and the children toppled to the ground frequently. But in the end, Tony was kind, and never hurt the children. The children loved Tony and Tony loved the children. This reciprocal relationship led to Tony being a lifelong member of the farm family, and as such he enjoyed better welfare than most farm animals.

Tony the pony also exemplifies the fact that economics did not determine welfare in every case. Certain animals that fostered strong relationships with humans created emotional bonds that transcended economic concerns. If the Twedt family saw Tony as an economic asset, he would have been sold long before his eventual death in 1952. Instead, the family kept Tony around, long after his useful days, because of the service he provided the family in his younger years. The Twedts did not see Tony in terms of dollars and cents, they saw him as a member of the family.

Exceptionally strong emotional relationships such as those between Tony and the Twedts were rare on Iowa farms in the early twentieth century. Few animals nurtured strong enough affective bonds with humans to be considered a member of the family. Tony, however, represents one end of the animal welfare continuum on the farm. The spectrum of animal welfare on Iowa farms was broad, and animals usually fell

in the middle, receiving adequate food, care, and shelter. However, animals were also able to move up and down on the farm animal welfare continuum through their relationships with humans. If animals rejected strong human-animal bonds, they generally received less individualized care and their welfare was not at the same level as those that accepted human contact. Furthermore, animals that created emotional attachments with people generally received more individualized care than those that were subsumed in a group with little direct human contact. Through contact with humans, animals gained agency in their relationships with their caretakers. These relationships created mobility on the animal welfare continuum.

Direct contact with humans became less possible after widespread commercialization of agriculture after 1945. As farms grew larger, the distance between human and animal became greater. Electricity, antibiotics, and factory technology enabled the transformation of agriculture after World War II.²⁰¹ With larger numbers and specialized production, farmers related less to individuals and perceived animals as a group. While the physical welfare of the animals did not necessarily deteriorate, animals did not receive as much individualized care and their emotional welfare often fell by the wayside. For example, when dairy farms commercialized farm families no longer hand milked cows, and instead utilized milk machines. This allowed farmers to milk large numbers of cows in a short amount of time. Additionally, the use of antibiotics and other medications increased production of each animal. The large

²⁰¹ Paul K. Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture Since 1929*, 1st ed. (The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 119.

numbers of cows and production gained by medicating animals meant that individual treatment affected production less than prior to commercialization. Before commercialization, it was necessary to treat cows well in order to get the most production out of each individual cow. After commercialization, however, production potential was less dependent on emotional welfare and more dependent on medication and machinery.²⁰²

Furthermore, with the emergence of confinements, animals received less personal space and freedom to perform natural behaviors, resulting in a deterioration of emotional welfare of animals. In confinements, hens could not scavenge for food and hogs could not root and perform other natural behaviors. Henry Taylor, in his memoir *Tarpleywick*, directly challenged the unnatural condition of chickens in confinements in comparison to his pre-1945 farm: “This was before the great development of specialization in production of fryers or of eggs in large production units, where fryers are produced by the hundreds of thousands in one plant, where the chickens’ feet never touch the ground, and where hens are kept in cages with thousands under one management.”²⁰³ The confinement of animals caused a deterioration in emotional welfare of animals, a topic that is only recently garnering attention of animal welfare

²⁰² For a complete discussion of commercial dairy welfare and the implications of positive treatment see: Catherine Bertenshaw et al., “The Effect of Different Degrees of ‘positive’ Human–animal Interaction During Rearing on the Welfare and Subsequent Production of Commercial Dairy Heifers,” *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 114, no. 1–2 (November 2008): 65–75.

²⁰³ Henry C. Taylor, *Tarpleywick: A Century of Iowa Farming*, 1st ed. (University Of Iowa Press, 1990), 115.

scientists and the general public.²⁰⁴ As the space between human and animal increased, there was less potential for animals to interact with humans. The lack of direct interaction between humans and specific animals deteriorated animal welfare, and meant less potential for animals to acquire agency in the human-animal relationship.²⁰⁵

Early confinements also “multiplied disease and injury.” These establishments were usually poorly ventilated and inadequately sanitized.²⁰⁶ The condition of early confinement animals deteriorated because of the lack of space and poor living conditions. Disease spread quickly in these conditions and widespread outbreaks were common. In early confinements in particular, the physical welfare of animals was mediocre at best. Medical and technological advancements gradually improved the condition of confinement animals. Regardless, distance separated animals from humans and therefore animals could not negotiate relationships in order to receive better welfare.

The living conditions of animals on Iowa farms in the first half of the twentieth century was not perfect. Some farmers abused, neglected, and misused farm animals. However, due to the close relationship with humans and animals on the farm, farm animals and their caretakers were able to navigate relationships with each other. This provided mobility on the animal welfare continuum on Iowa farms. Furthermore,

²⁰⁴ David Fraser, *Understanding Animal Welfare: The Science in Its Cultural Context* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 183–190.

²⁰⁵ R. Anthony, “The Ethical Implications of the Human-animal Bond on the Farm,” *Animal Welfare* 12, no. 4 (2003): 506–509.

²⁰⁶ Dwight W. Hoover, *A Good Day's Work: An Iowa Farm in the Great Depression* (Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 83.

because there were far fewer animals per farm prior to 1945, each individual animal held greater worth in the farm economy. The loss of a single hog on a small Iowa farm was a direct blow to the farm's income, whereas the loss of a hog in a confinement was not unusual, and would not significantly affect farm finances. On early twentieth century Iowa farms, every animal had a place in the farm economy. Animals filled multiple productive roles on the farm. Families cared for them, played with them, labored with them, loved them and ate them. Farm families created intimate bonds with their farm animals, which elevated the welfare of the animals. In the first half of the twentieth century, Iowa farm animals filled roles ranging from companions to food on the table. Even if animals' ultimate fate was the dinner plate, close relationships with the farm family compelled human guardians to provide high quality care. Because, after all, the welfare of the farm depended on the welfare of all its residents.

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