

Causes and Consequences of Intuitive Animal Communication: A Case Study at Panthera Africa

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Abstract : Since its origins, mankind has been dreaming of communicating directly with other animals. Past civilizations interacted on different levels with other species and recognized them in their rituals and daily activities. However, recent scientific developments have limited the ability of humans to consider deeper levels of interaction beyond observation and/or physical behavior. In recent years, animal caretakers and facilities such as sanctuaries or rescue centers have been introducing new techniques based on intuition. Most of those initiatives are related to specific cases, such as the incapacity to understand an animal's behavior. Respected organizations also include intuitive animal communication (IAC) sessions to follow up on past interventions with their animals. Despite the lack of credibility of this discipline, some animal caring structures have opted to integrate IAC into their daily routines and approaches to animal welfare. At this stage, animal communication will be generally defined as the ability of humans to communicate with animals on an intuitive level. The trend in the field remains to be explored. The lack of theory and previous research urges the scientific community to improve the description of the phenomenon and its consequences. Considering the current scenario, qualitative approaches may become a suitable pathway to explore this topic. The purpose of this case study is to explore the beliefs behind and the consequences of an approach based on intuitive animal communication techniques for Panthera Africa (PA), an ethical sanctuary located in South Africa. Due to their personal experience, the Sanctuary's founders have developed a philosophy based on IAC while respecting the world's highest standards for big cat welfare. Their dual approach is reflected in their rescues, daily activities, and healing animals' trauma. The case study's main research questions will be: (i) Why do they choose to apply IAC in their work? (ii) What consequences to their activities do IAC bring? (iii) What effects do IAC techniques bring in their interactions with the outside world? Data collection will be gathered on-site via: (i) Complete participation (field notes); (ii) Semi-structured interviews (audio transcriptions); (iii) Document analysis (internal procedures and policies); (iv) Audio-visual material (communication with third parties). The main researcher shall become an active member of the Sanctuary during a 30-day period and have full access to the site. Access to documents and audio-visual materials will be granted on a request basis. Interviews are expected to be held with PA founders and staff members and with IAC practitioners related to the facility. The information gathered shall enable the researcher to provide an extended description of the phenomenon and explore its internal and external consequences for Panthera Africa.

Keywords : animal welfare, intuitive animal communication, Panthera Africa, rescue

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