

Do Animals Have Feelings?

Quickbit...

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

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

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

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

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

Feelings

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

Having Fun

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

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

Bekoff said he can't prove that animals have feelings, because animals can't talk. But, he said, animals can communicate feelings in other ways. "I can't prove that another human being is feeling happy or sad," he said, "but I can [guess] how [he or she is] feeling through body language and facial expressions." Both people and animals use *body language*-- gestures and movements--to communicate without words.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the passage, a rodent can feel which of the following emotions?

- A anger
- B love
- C fear
- D happiness

2. This passage presents two sides of an argument about whether or not animals have feelings. Why does Marc Bekoff believe animals do have feelings?

- A Bekoff saw a chimpanzee die of grief.
- B Bekoff saw a rat that was afraid.
- C Bekoff saw an elephant grieving for a dead relative.
- D Bekoff saw an elk jumping in the air with joy.

3. Based on the passage, how might scientists most likely figure out whether or not animals have feelings?

- A by writing about how the animals feel
- B by asking the animals directly how they feel
- C by watching the body language and facial expressions of animals
- D by watching how much animals eat at various times during the day

4. Read the following sentences: "Scientist Joyce Poole studies elephants. She has written that pachyderms often show grief when a relative dies."

As used in the passage, **pachyderms** means

- A lions
- B elephants
- C chimpanzees
- D cats

5. This passage is mostly about

- A Joyce Poole's studies of how elephants grieve
- B scientists who are debating whether or not animals feel grief
- C Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees
- D scientists debating whether or not animals have feelings

6. How do people and animals communicate without words?

7. If a dog wagged its tail, would scientist Joseph LeDoux think that the dog feels happy? Why or why not?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Scientists can't prove that animals have feelings, _____ animals can communicate their feelings in other ways.

- A though
- B but
- C before
- D so

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In the past, Joyce Poole has written that pachyderms can feel sad because she has seen elephants show grief when a relative dies.

Who? Joyce Poole

(has) What? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

Directions: Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: **emotion** (e·mo·tion): a feeling.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word **emotion**.

1. Scientists think elephants can feel an emotion like sadness, because they have seen these animals stop eating after someone they love dies.
2. Jane Goodall also found that chimpanzees had many different emotions like happiness, love, and grief.
3. I cried and laughed during the movie because it made me feel many different emotions.
4. Even though she knew he was angry, his voice did not have any emotion because he spoke very quietly.
5. She does not like to show any emotion, so she will not cry in front of people when she is sad.

10b. Which person is displaying a strong emotion?



11. What emotion may someone have after they have lost their favorite toy? Why?

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 870

Featured Text Structure: Argumentative – the writer presents evidence for both sides of an argument

Passage Summary: This passage describes an argument between scientists. Some scientists think that animals do not have feelings, while others think that animals do have feelings. This passage describes some studies that have found some animals, like elephants, chimpanzees, and elk feel emotions including grief and joy.

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6. How do people and animals communicate without words?

Suggested answer: Both people and animals can use body language like gestures and movements to communicate without words. [paragraph 8]

7. If a dog wagged its tail, would scientist Joseph LeDoux think that the dog feels happy? Why or why not?

Suggested answer: Joseph LeDoux would not think that the dog feels happy, because the passage states that LeDoux doubts, or does not believe, that animals feel emotions like humans and other primates. [paragraph 3]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Scientists can't prove that animals have feelings, _____ animals can communicate their feelings in other ways.

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- B **but**
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- D so

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Who? Joyce Poole

(has) What? **has written that pachyderms can feel sad**

When? **in the past**

Why? **because she has seen elephants show grief when a relative dies**

To the Teacher: ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

Vocabulary Word: **emotion** (e-mo-tion): a feeling.

Step 1: Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (e-mo-tion)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is emotion. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "emotion."]

Step 2: Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Emotion is a feeling."

- b. Teacher says: "The passage debates whether or not animals can have emotions, or feelings. Some scientists think that many animals can feel emotion, including happiness, sadness, anger, and love."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "emotion."]

Step 3: Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the first sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

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Step 4: Check for student understanding

To the Teacher: This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

10b. Which person is displaying a strong emotion?



11. What emotion may someone have after they have lost their favorite toy? Why?

Suggested answer: That person may feel sadness because they have lost their favorite toy.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: range, grief, refused, communicate, facial, expressions