

Stand By Me: A Holistic Handbook for Animals, Their People, and the Lives They Share Together
By: Douglas E. Knueven, D.V.M.
ARE Press

Reviewed by: Gina Mazza

With Americans spending a record \$29.5 billion on their pets in 2002, it appears that our priorities have gone to the dogs. . . and cats. But I beg to differ.

Maybe we should be rewarded – a nice T-bone, perhaps? -- for good behavior. After all, pets are “part of the family.” Is it not our imperative, as human parents, to raise up Fido and Felix to be healthy, well-adjusted animal citizens?

Stand By Me aids in this endeavor by educating us on the ways of canines and cats, with emphasis on the whole animal---body, mind and soul. Loosely drawing on wisdom from the late Edgar Cayce, 20th century’s most documented medical intuitive, the author imparts insights on consciousness, spirituality and holistic living, and applies them to the animal world.

Knueven knows of what he speaks. As a 16-year veterinarian, certified animal acupuncturist, self-proclaimed pet lover, owner of Beaver Animal Clinic, and member of the Cayce-inspired Association for Research and Enlightenment, his formal training and personal experiences with both animals and alternative therapies led him to intermingle the two. On matters ranging from basic litter-box training to mapping an animal’s “energy system”, Knueven cites Cayce’s spiritual acumen but does not pander to him, oftentimes overlaying his own informed opinions. The Cayce readings indicate, for instance, that animals lack free will. “I have a hard time swallowing the idea myself,” the author admits. “My personal experience tells me that there are many strong-willed individuals in the animal kingdom . . . accounts abound of animals who risk their own lives to save their masters.”

The beginning chapters explore the intricacies of the “pet connection”, broaching such topics as animal intuition and the inimitable human-companion bond. Can Spot reincarnate as Spot-redux? Does Morris have a soul? What’s the purpose of Rex’s dreams? Knueven leaves no bone

unturned, aptly digging into 20-plus years of research studies that bear out the health benefits of sharing life with four-legged creatures.

The book is at its best when discussing the larger questions, like our pets' place in the cosmic scheme of things. "Creatures of the earth have meaning with or without us," the author philosophizes. "They are developing spiritually and evolving toward their sacred destiny with the rest of creation."

Knueven lends this sacred touch to the practical aspects of pet ownership. On choosing a compatible pet: "If we consciously enter the pet selection process, holding a loving intention, we spiritualize our bonds." He encourages us to use "spiritual guidance techniques" that help us intuitively match ourselves with the perfect Siamese pedigree or pound mutt. These techniques are certainly not animal specific---rather, they're fundamental practices used by us in the human kingdom: meditation, dream analysis, prayer and an awareness of synchronicity.

Stand By Me then discusses animal communication *a la* Sonia Fitzpatrick, Animal Planet's resident « Pet Psychic. » To walk in her lofty shoes, the book suggests we shed the idea of pets as little people and instead « think like a dog », a world in which sense of smell is several times stronger than eyesight, and a bark can mean anything from "play with me" to "back off, Jack". At this point, we're introduced to three "animal communicators" who answer questions about attuning to an animal's psyche. Among the advice: 1) "talk to your pets as if they understand. . . They can hear your thoughts even though you cannot hear theirs"; 2) "believe you can communicate with your pet; ask him 'is there anything you want to tell me' and trust the impressions you receive through inner feeling"; 3) use "clicker" obedience training because "it allows for more precise communication and shaping of the pet's behavior."

Holistic pet care is covered next, again applying Cayce's take on human healthy living (honoring the body's ability to heal itself) to our furry friends. The alternative therapy most readily adaptable to pets is traditional Chinese medicine; specifically, acupuncture---the commonest holistic therapy utilized by vets, and the oldest: "Acupuncture has been used on animals for 2,500 years...the

world's first veterinarians were Chinese acupuncturists." Everyday pet health concerns are addressed in this section. Knueven weighs in on commercial versus home-prepared diets, supplements, and the ever-controversial topic of vaccinations. No cat and mouse game here. Knueven tells us straight which vaccines are needed, and which are of dubious usefulness (overuse can assault an animal's immune system).

The final chapters tackle pet death, and how to console both grieving children and other pets after Rover cozies into that Great Big lap in the sky. When Knueven speaks of euthanasia, his obvious compassion for animals shines through, making a difficult subject more palatable.

It's true, America's pets have it pretty good. But the meaning they bring to our lives is immeasurable. Aside from the joy of companionship, relating holistically with our animal friends allows us to better understand our human nature, which, in turn, widens our pathway to enlightenment.

Stand By Me stands out as an insightful guide toward this end. If you've got a pet and care about his whole being, go fetch this book.

Originally printed in Point of Light Magazine.