The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding Our Compassion Footprint
By Marc Bekoff, PhD
New World Library, 272 pp., 2010; $14.95
Reviewed by Dr. Michael W. Fox

I see The Animal Manifesto as a must-read for all high school students, especially in the social sciences and ethics, and for all who keep animals and work with them. It is also a book to be treasured by animal lovers and those concerned about animal suffering and social justice. I know readers of Bark will love this book since, like the magazine, it embraces the vision of a deeper and more mutually enhancing relationship between humans and other animals. I’d even go so far as to suggest that they buy extra copies to give to those who do not understand how we dog lovers grieve so deeply when we lose a beloved animal because they have not yet experienced the blessing of animal communion. Those who have had such communion with animals wild and tame will enjoy the affirmation of kindred spirits cited in this book—people whose lives were changed, enriched, inspired, by a being other than a human.

Bekoff, a self-proclaimed optimist, lays out with convincing clarity why it is ultimately in our best self-interest to treat all animals, especially those raised for our consumption, with compassion. As a realist (some would say pessimist), I believe that people will not change after being shown the “big picture” of climate change, species extinction, and the suffering of farmed, circus, zoo and laboratory animals until they understand the deep links between action and consequence.

How well we treat animals and the living Earth determines, ultimately, how well we are in body, mind and spirit. This book tackles the task of breaking through anthropocentrism—with its attendant arrogance, ignorance, denial, rationalizations and pathology—to enable us to see that the way of compassion, rather than the way of domination and exploitation, is the only route to a viable future and a sane society. Enlightened dog trainers have, of course, known this for decades; in applying the rule of love over the rule of law, they teach people how to best communicate and achieve a mutually enhancing, interspecies symbiosis. At the other extreme is the invasive research being done in Tanzania on wild dogs, who are fitted with radio collars, given vaccinations that have killed them, and even captured and translocated. Such activities, undertaken by scientists claiming to be conservation-oriented and working on behalf of the animals, are in reality ways to advance their careers at the expense of one more endangered species. This is a book for them!

Bekoff’s book is, in many ways, a synthesis of some of his earlier publications, combining scientific data with his vivid personal observations of animal consciousness, empathy and intelligence; accounts of how animals continue to be misunderstood and mistreated; and why and how we can make changes for the good of animals, both domesticated and wild. You will read of battles in which he has engaged to help protect the last of the wild, and you’ll enjoy insights into his life with the late Jethro, a dog who participated in his metamorphosis from a scientist into a philosopher-activist—a transformation so clearly reflected in this easy-to-read, important book.

Michael W. Fox, PhD, BVet Med, is the author of Not Fit for a Dog and Dog Body, Dog Mind, among numerous other books. twobitdog.com/DrFox

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**One Good Dog**
By Susan Wilson
St. Martin's Press, 320 pp., 2010; $22.99
Reviewed by Alison Pace

Adam March is having a bad time of life. So is an initially nameless Pit Bull mix sentenced to a life of dog-fighting. *One Good Dog* by Susan Wilson is the touching and wonderfully well-crafted story of how these two characters come together in the midst of their own respective worst of times.

Adam is living a life filled with the trappings of financial success: a high-powered job, expensive homes, a socially prominent wife and an equestrian daughter. That is, until a memory from his troubled past sets off a series of events that result in his carefully planned life crashing around him. At the same time that Adam is coping with living in a seedy one-bedroom apartment and serving court-ordered community service, the Pit Bull who will turn out to be the best part of this destiny is escaping from his own cage-bound existence. Through a realistic and suspenseful turn of events, the two at last meet, and Adam reluctantly becomes enamored of the dog he names, all too fittingly, Chance. At which point, let the healing begin.

The story is told through the alternating viewpoints of Chance and Adam, and the prologue to the novel includes a thoroughly charming bait-and-switch that instantly put a smile on my face and made me feel certain I was in excellent storytelling hands. Skillfully done, the chapters narrated by Chance never give way to cutesy or cloying. While some of the scenes in which the dog describes the squalid conditions of his young life and his training as a fighter are truly heartbreaking, Chance's strong, clear-eyed way of looking at the world is perfectly conveyed in the way he tells his story. That’s not to say that Chance’s recounting is not above fun or whimsy. For example, Chance does not regard his vocalizations merely as barking. He *yarks*. When he endeavors to explain extreme intelligence, he does not cite rocket scientists nor brain surgeons but rather, Standard Poodles.

As the novel progresses, Wilson significantly ratchets up both the pace and the stakes with several new developments, including an especially tear-inducing arc involving Chance. Have tissues on hand and don’t say you weren’t warned. Ultimately, what *One Good Dog* manages to do so well is to create a reading journey that closely mirrors the path of its two resilient narrators: it comes *this close* to breaking your heart but then, at the last moment, fills it up with not only hope but also love. It’s a finely wrought story of second chances and also of the power of the human/canine bond, the amazing and myriad ways in which dogs can touch and make better people’s lives. As Chance himself so aptly puts it, “What else could I have done? I’m only canine, I had to help.”

Alison Pace is the author of four novels, including, *Pug Hill* and *City Dog*. 

**Low Stress Handling, Restraint and Behavior Modification of Dogs and Cats**
By Sophia Yin, DVM, MS
Cattle Dog Publishing, 470 pp., 2009; $148.95
DVD included
Reviewed by Pat Miller

In the veterinary profession, there’s a refreshing interest in learning about behavior—a subject that has long been overlooked in the vet-school curriculum. Many dog owners have been given inappropriate behavioral advice by their veterinarians, and many dogs have been subjected to manhandling by veterinary clinic staff, from receptionists to vet techs to the veterinarians themselves. Countless dogs have developed behavior problems as a result, and existing problems have been exacerbated by this inappropriate handling. Dog-behavior professionals worldwide
have bemoaned this state of affairs as they’ve worked to repair damage done by vet-prescribed alpha rolls or other old-fashioned dominance-based handling and advice.

Thankfully, this is changing. In January 2010, the North American Veterinary Conference, host to more than 14,000 veterinarians from around the world, included a two-and-a-half day behavioral track for the first time ever. It was well attended and well received by veterinarians eager to learn.

In the forefront of this exciting trend is Dr. Sophia Yin, a veterinary behaviorist dedicated to helping members of her profession learn more appropriate and humane handling techniques. Yin’s latest offering, *Low Stress Handling*, is packed to the gills with excellent practical advice for veterinarians and crammed with marvelous color photos (1,600 of them) that clearly illustrate her points. If that wasn’t enough, the package includes a DVD with three-and-a-half hours of live footage to support her text and photos. Wow!

The book is divided into five sections, addressing early behavior problem recognition; the science of behavior and learning; modifying the clinic environment to reduce stress for canine and feline clients; humane and effective handling and restraint techniques; and problem behavior prevention and reversal.

“Wait!” you may say, “I’m not a veterinarian!” That matters not—you can still find incredibly useful information in this book, information that will help turn your next veterinary visit into an enjoyable outing rather than a stress-laden horror show.

For example, in chapter 18, “Counterconditioning Protocols for Dogs and Cats,” Yin discusses how to condition a dog to love a muzzle and enjoy having her teeth brushed and ears cleaned, as well as a multitude of other handling procedures. Chapter 19, “Preventive Behavioral Health for Puppies,” offers useful puppy-raising information on topics such as grooming, nail trimming and early socialization.
The book will also arm you with information to help you determine whether your vet and her staff are handling your dog appropriately, and will empower you to be a critical thinker about any training and handling advice your veterinarian offers. In fact, you can double the impact of this valuable resource by sharing it with your veterinarian after you’ve fully absorbed its contents.

I do have one concern about the Low Stress package. A good training and behavior program avoids eliciting or reinforcing inappropriate behavior; hence, it can be a challenge to get video appropriate for educational purposes. In her mission to document her points with relevant video, Yin, in my opinion, exposes some of her canine subjects to undue stress; I understand the trade-off and appreciate the educational value, yet still flinch at some of the footage, especially that of dogs in a panic over head halters.

That concern aside, this package is a priceless resource for serious dog lovers and their dogs’ (and cats’) veterinary professionals. My own veterinarian is well versed in the scientific principles of behavior and learning and consistently handles her four-footed clients humanely and effectively. I plan to share my copy with my local animal shelter, whose staff is faced daily with the challenge of handling difficult animals.

To preview (or order) this book, go to nerdbook.com.

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC, has four books to her credit. peaceablepaws.com

**Saving Gracie**

By Carol Bradley

Wiley & Sons, 256 pp., 2010; $21.99
Reviewed by Susan Tasaki

Even the words make those who love dogs cringe: puppy mills, places where living, breathing creatures are treated like machines, where adult female dogs give birth to litter after litter of pups who will be sold through pet stores or to unsuspecting consumers. What happens when their breeding days are over?

If they’re exceptionally fortunate, they share Gracie’s experience: rescue, rehabilitation and adoption. In *Saving Gracie*, Bradley chronicles the story of a tiny Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was removed—along with more than 300 other small-breed dogs, both adults and puppies—from a ghastly kennel operation by the Chester County (Pa.) SPCA in 2006. Known first as Dog 132, then Wilma, and finally Gracie, the six-year-old was born in and confined to a crate her entire life. She had multiple and persistent health problems but, of more concern, she was emotionally shut down; rescuers wondered if she’d ever recover.

Bradley profiles all the players in this drama, among them, the CCSPCA humane police officers who initiated the rescue; the shelter workers and volunteers who tirelessly fed, bathed and cared for the dogs; the attorneys who tried the case against the kennel owners; and even the kennel owners themselves.

Set within this account is another touching story, that of Linda Jackson, the woman who eventually adopted Gracie. Jackson had always liked animals—cats more than dogs, truth be told—but this adoption galvanized her. She became passionate about not only saving and improving Gracie’s life, but also the lives of puppy mill dogs everywhere.

It’s impossible to read this book without being moved; the picture it paints of both puppy mill conditions and what they do to the dogs who are unfortunate enough to be confined to them is grim, though presented in a non-sensational way. On the other hand, those who advocate for the dogs are utterly inspiring. And the best part is, for Gracie, the story has a happy ending.

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