

### **Episode 8 – Sixth Sense Farming**

It was our big night out on the town, our chance to escape for an evening! In the old days of high style and high consumption, we used to attend society balls dressed in sophisticated attire. Now we were just thrilled to be going to an action packed movie at the local cinema without our muddy boots!

The on screen fury of fists should have been all consuming, but a pinprick of concern was growing in my mind. Something was wrong, I could feel it. Darn, an animal was in trouble! I whispered to Ernest we must check the goats when we got home. I waited impatiently for the movie to end, so insistent was the inner voice telling me I was needed at the farm.

It was midnight when we returned, mist and rain encompassing everything in its damp embrace. “Drive along the road beside the fence, would you?” I asked Ernest, the car’s high beams shining into the field as we crawled along peering into the night. Nothing could be seen, all was quiet. I expected to feel relieved, glad that my sixth sense was wrong, but the uneasiness continued. Grabbing the flashlight, I walked out into the wet night.

The strong beam of light picked out the goat herd standing like statues in the dark rain, staring towards me, their eyes glittering yellow. There was a sense of expectancy emanating from them as their gaze fixed upon me. Goats hate the rain with a capital “H”, yet here they stood so strange, waiting and watching. I swept the light further down the fence line and beheld two glittering reflections separate from the herd. Something was indeed amiss!

There she was, the goat in trouble, hanging by her neck high in the fence. She had been stretching up to nibble some greenery on the other side, and had wiggled her head and horns through a small opening in the page wire with no way of backing out. She was literally strangling herself as she was losing her ability to support her weight with her small hooves perched on a wire. She had been hanging there for hours, her bruised throat preventing calls for help.

A quick assessment confirmed the impossibility of releasing her by manipulating her horns. “Just hang in there, goaty gal, I’ll be right back!” I reassured her before running off to find wire cutters. Branch loppers left beside the apple tree did the trick, and she fell to the ground in a daze as the wire gave way. Goat family members crowded around curiously while I massaged her neck; soon she was bleating hoarsely and up on her feet.

Sitting in the barn being soothed by sounds of rain drumming on the metal roof and goats lying peacefully about, I contemplated the enormity of this deep connection between man and animal, where a message of thought from a distressed goat could reach me so perfectly. I felt a deep sadness for all the creatures who have so much to say, but cannot make themselves heard.

What if our planet as a whole respected these sentient beings and honored interspecies communication? How would farming change? How would our world change if we really believed animals, birds and bees had the ability to communicate important information and we listened, understood and acted in their best interests? What would happen if we truly integrated the concept that nature is the greatest gift of all, and that we ignore our role of empathic stewardship to a whole range of magnificent and complex sentient beings at our unparalleled peril?

What. If. We. Could. Feel. Their. Pain?

With these grand thoughts in mind, I opened the door into the house. Ernest was looking at me intently “You didn’t cut my new wire fence, did you?” he asked accusingly. My guilty grin told the story. Well now, Ernest certainly had no problem with his sixth sense ability!

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