

## Reflections on the Soul of a Dog

**Writer Jon Katz reflects on the animals of Bedlam Farm in his new book.**

Posted: October 26, 2009, 5 a.m. EDT

Life at writer Jon Katz' upstate New York residence, Bedlam Farm, has its own rhythm. From the sheep grazing to the barn cat hunting, each animal performs his duty without question. But inside each creature lies a unique spirit.

In his new book, "Soul of a Dog: Reflections on the Spirits of the Animals of Bedlam Farm," Katz explores the intrinsic nature of his animals and addresses the long-pondered question: Do they have souls?

In his experience living on the farm, Katz regularly encounters animals in their most natural state and observes their unique characters with wonder and admiration. His beloved Border Collie Rose shows little interest in anything that is not work. Mother, the barn cat, ruthlessly tortures and murders a plethora of creatures, yet lovingly nurtures kittens that are not even her own.

And though many behaviors can be attributed to breed and instinct, Katz finds plenty of unusual activity, like when Labrador Retriever Lenore befriends ram Brutus. It is such anomalies that make Katz reflect on the true nature of each creature.

Their DNA may dictate much of their existence, but is there something more? For there must be something truly special about an animal like Elvis, his 2,500-pound Brown Swiss steer, whose gentle nature saved him from the slaughterhouse.

To get to the heart of matter, Katz explores the subject of the animal soul in several ways. In addition to pulling from his own experience, he consults with a local clergyman, a vet, and the writers and thinkers who have addressed the topic throughout history.

Any pet owner who has ever felt an intimate connection with their animal will enjoy Katz writing and reflections while pondering the question themselves.

"Soul of a Dog: Reflections on the Spirits of the Animals of Bedlam Farm" by Jon Katz is on sale now.