

# Care of Animals/Good Shepherd

**Carol:** Well there's that special music again – and here we are!! I'm Carol...

**Tammy:** And I'm Tammy, here as usual...welcome to *Women of Hope*. Do you remember a while ago when we had Harley the gardener come to tell us about making nutritious compost for our gardens?

**Carol:** Then he came back and told us about how to plant different things in the soil each year so that we'd get better crops. Wasn't that interesting? I wonder if you've started doing that with any new crops you've planted.

**Tammy:** I have. He gave me lots of great ideas last time we talked. He said that some plants use up the nutrition in the soil and some put it back there. So it makes sense to find out which plants to put in after others. Do you remember what they were?

**Carol:** I remember that he said it's best to leave the roots of the peas and beans in the soil – so that they will rot down and leave nitrogen in the soil for the next planting... I think he said to put green leafy vegetables in next didn't he?

**Tammy:** That's right, he did...and after that to put vegies with deep roots – like potatoes, carrots, beetroot and radishes. You could also plant garlic, onions and spinach in this soil.

**Carol:** Then he said you could put in corn and pumpkin – but to add a bit of manure first.

**Tammy:** And finally, our favourites – tomatoes, eggplant and capsicums...and this is the time to put in some garden lime as the plants have been using it all up.

**Carol:** Today our gardener Harley is back. And do you know what we're going to do? We're going to listen to a conversation that he had with Arti who he helped with *her* garden. Let's listen in...

**Harley:** Hello Arti.

**Arti:** Hello Harley

**Harley:** I hear that your garden's growing well now. Are you going to plant more crops?

**Arti:** Yes, it *is* growing well...and I *am* ready to plant some more crops. Thanks for your helpful advice. But I have a little more space in the garden and I'm wondering what you think about me getting some animals or poultry.

**Harley:** That could be a good idea. It depends on how much space you have and what you think you could manage. It's very good for children to learn to look after animals too. They learn so much about responsibility. And of course you would have the benefit of fresh eggs, or meat.

**Arti:** Please give me some ideas... I've been thinking about getting some chickens. How easy are they to look after, and what would I need to do to prepare for them?

**Harley:** OK...let's talk about a few different farm animals first and then you can decide which would be the best for you and your family. There are poultry such as chickens and ducks and small animals like rabbits and guinea-pigs, and the larger ones – goats, pigs, sheep, cows.

**Arti:** Oh, I don't have enough room for a cow!

**Harley:** Oh, of course, that may be difficult - unless there's some spare land nearby. Your cow could mow the grass, and provide manure for your garden. And you could milk it if it has a calf. The same could be true for goats and sheep. They could be the grass mowers, and would be easier to manage than a cow. You would need to tie them with a rope, or have a movable fence, or perhaps your children could take them for a walk to a grassy area after school.

**Arti:** They would really enjoy that.

**Harley:** There may be times of the year when feeding them could be a problem. You may need to cut extra grass when it's green, before it sets seed, so that later when it's dry it would be soft and sweet.

**Arti:** Would I need to build something for them to sleep in?

**Harley:** That depends on the weather. They may be happy just sleeping outside, or if you have a cold winter or a very hot summer it's good to have a shelter of some kind, with straw on the floor. Their manure with the straw is good for the garden too.

**Arti:** Well – my garden's growing so well...I'm worried that my vegetables could be eaten by the animals.

**Harley:** Yes, that can be a problem. Goats especially are very clever at getting to your plants and trees. They'll even eat the clothes off your clothesline! So you need to be more clever than they are. Tie your goat with a good rope, or make a high fence to keep it in.

**Arti:** Mmm...maybe I'll just go for something small. You mentioned rabbits and guinea-pigs. How could I look after them?

**Harley:** A good way is to make a kind of box, with one end sheltered and the other end open, with wire netting around it. They can sleep and have their babies in the sheltered end, and the other end gives them sunshine. If the bottom is open, they can eat the grass, and you can move it each day so that they have new grass to eat. Rabbits and guinea-pigs have lots of babies and they grow quickly. You may want to eat them, or you may be able to sell them to others.

**Arti:** What about ducks? Ducks need water, don't they? I don't have a pond.

**Harley:** Yes, they're certainly happier if they have water to cool them down. However, it doesn't have to be a big pond. Just a small container may be enough. Of course, if you were able to dig a pond, and have water available, you may be able to get some fish as well. Put some pieces of pipe or old tyres or something in the pond so that the fish can hide from the ducks and other birds that will want to eat them.

Fish and ducks can go well together, because the fish eat the ducks' droppings. Make a shelter for the ducks from boxes and put it on top of one side of the pond so that the manure drops into the pond. If you have both male and female ducks, put some straw in the boxes so the ducks can make their nests and lay their eggs. You may want to eat the eggs or let them hatch out, so you will have many more ducks, to sell or eat.

**Arti:** Well...that sounds wonderful... But I think I may settle on chickens, after all. I guess I could make a shelter like you described for the rabbits. Would that be a good idea?

**Harley:** Yes. And if you were able to find some wheels to put on one end of the shelter, you could move it by yourself each day, so that the chickens will provide some good fertiliser for every area of your garden.

**Arti:** That sounds perfect. And the children would enjoy helping look after them I'm sure. Thanks for your advice Harley.

**Harley:** You're welcome Arti. All the best, and I hope you get lots of eggs!

**Carol:** I wonder if you have space for an animal – and if you do which ones you might like to have?

**Tammy:** I'd love to have a cow so that I could have fresh milk every morning – but my garden's way too small.

**Carol:** Maybe you could think about having a goat – then you might still be able to have fresh milk. But you would need to be careful of the clothes on the line wouldn't you! (laugh)

**Tammy:** Yes – I'd make sure it had a fence to keep it in the right part of the garden.

**Carol:** Or tie it with a long rope – so it can only go as far as the rope will stretch!

**Tammy:** Maybe I should think about chickens, like Arti did. Then we could have fresh eggs every day, and I would have some good fertiliser for my fruit trees...and the vegetables.

**Carol:** And I'm sure you could build a shelter for them – like Harley suggested – with one end closed in so that the chickens had a nice dry place to lay their eggs.

**Tammy:** And the wheels on one end of the shelter are a very good idea – so the children could easily move it to a fresh place each day. Then the chickens can peck at any worms or insects in the soil as well as eat the vegetable scraps.

**Tammy:** I wonder if you've decided that *you* have room for some animals in your garden? I do hope that you've learned something today about how to take care of them.

**Carol:** You're still with us on *Women of Hope*. Let's listen in as Harley and Arti keep talking...

**Harley:** Did you know that there are lots of stories about farm animals in God's word, the Bible?

**Arti:** Really? Which animals?

**Harley:** Cows, donkeys, camels, horses, goats and sheep are often mentioned, as well as your favourites...chickens.

**Arti:** If I had enough room I'd like to have a sheep. I'd like it to follow me around like a dog. Isn't that what they do in some places?

**Harley:** Yes, they can become very dependent on their shepherd, the one who looks after them. Did you know that Jesus talked about being like a shepherd and us like sheep? He said, 'I am the Good Shepherd.'

**Arti:** Did he? What a wonderful picture. I love that idea.

**Harley:** Yes, I love it too. But in some places it can be very dangerous being a shepherd. You may remember hearing about king David who was king over the Israelites many centuries ago. He was a shepherd when he was young. He said that when he was guarding his father's sheep, a lion and a bear came and tried to take some of the sheep. David killed them both.

**Arti:** Wow! He must have been very brave and strong!

**Harley:** He was...and later King David wrote a beautiful song, or psalm (Psalm 23 – *mostly New Century Version*), which starts like this:

<sup>1</sup> The LORD is my shepherd, I have everything I need.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me rest in green pastures,  
he leads me to calm water,

<sup>3</sup> he refreshes my soul.

**Arti:** That's so beautiful. I can just picture it. I would love to be a sheep if the Lord was my Shepherd. I'm starting to feel refreshed just thinking about it.

**Harley:** And the song goes on:

He guides me along the right paths  
for the good of his name.

<sup>4</sup> Even if I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will not be afraid,  
because you are with me;  
your rod and your shepherd's staff,  
comfort me.

**Arti:** So God is the good shepherd who protects us when we are in dangerous places. That's a great comfort.

**Harley:** And many years later Jesus told his followers, 'I am the good shepherd. He said (John 10):

<sup>2</sup>The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. <sup>3</sup>The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

<sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

**Arti:** So if Jesus is *my* shepherd, he refreshes me...he protects me...and he knows *my* name...even though he has millions of others that he is also shepherding. That's amazing!

**Harley:** Yes it is...and then Jesus used a different picture. He said:

<sup>9</sup>I *am* the gate; whoever *enters through me* will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture...

The people Jesus was talking to at the time would have understood this picture because they often saw shepherds with their sheep, and some of *them* would have been shepherds. At night time the shepherd would lie down in the gateway to the yard where he kept the sheep. He would guard them and keep them safe from lions, or other animals that might attack them. He would also check them over as they were coming in or going out through the gate. He would make sure that they were healthy, and not have any thorns sticking to them. He loved his sheep. Then Jesus said:

<sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

**Arti:** I *really* like that picture...to have life to the full. To know that I have someone who protects me and who knows me well and will take good care of me. Even though I can't see him yet.

**Harley:** Yes, it's a great picture of the protection that Jesus offers us isn't it. I wonder who he was talking about when he said, 'the thief comes to steal and kill and destroy'? Do you think he was talking about Satan, the evil one – who doesn't want us to follow Jesus? ... I do.

And then remember what we said before? Jesus said..."I am the *good* shepherd." And he went on to say: "I *know* my sheep and my sheep know *me* - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep."

**Harley:** When Jesus said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' he was talking about when he was going to die on the cross. He died, and rose again, so that we can have life to the full...both here on earth, and later in heaven with him.

The end of that song by king David says:

<sup>6</sup> Surely your goodness and love will be with me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the LORD  
forever.

**Arti:** Thank you so much for telling me the wonderful news that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. I want his goodness and love to be mine all the days of my life, and I certainly want to live in heaven with him forever.

**Harley:** You can. Just ask him.

**Tammy:** I hope you enjoyed listening to Harley and Arti today as they talked about Jesus the Good Shepherd.

I liked that picture of the shepherd lying down over the gate of the sheepfold, to protect the sheep from danger. Did you?...

**Carol:** I also liked the part where he said that the shepherd checks the sheep as they come and go and makes sure they're healthy and they don't have thorns sticking to them. You know what that tells me?... This is a picture of Jesus, who can be *our* good shepherd too. He loves us and he wants only the *very best* for us in our lives. It might mean that we have struggles sometimes. But he wants us to learn to be closer to him through those struggles.

**Tammy:** Yes – we all go through times of difficulty and sadness. But do you remember what King David also said in that song – he, the Lord, leads us to calm water. We can ask Jesus to be with us in these hard times and he will give us calm and peace – even in our hard times.

**Carol:** You know, just like Harley said to Arti. If we want Jesus to be with us as our shepherd, and we want to live with him in heaven forever, we only have to ask him. Let's do that now. Will you join me?

*Dear Father God, thank you for this lovely 'song' from your word that tells us about Jesus – that he is our shepherd and that he will take care of us – his sheep. Thank you that he lay down his life for us – and that he rose again to give us a full life. Thank you for the promise that we can be with him in heaven forever.*

*We pray this in the name of Jesus, your son...who loves us and takes care of us. Amen*

**Tammy:** That's all we have time for today. Thank you for being with us. I hope you've enjoyed learning about taking care of animals. I want to say thank you to Harley and Arti for letting us listen in today on their conversation.

**Carol:** If you've learned something new today about Jesus and how he can be your shepherd, and you want to contact us, you can do that at...  
Goodbye til next time and God bless you.

**Tammy:** Bye...