



Goats



Se these best friends? That's Sheldon, in front, and Pinky snuggled up on his backbone. Sheldon and Pinky were rescued together from a live market. An activist noticed Sheldon calling to her from inside. She walked over to comfort him, and was met with kisses all over her face, and a deep, heartfelt head nuzzle from a goat who seemed to have no intention of moving. Our activist wrapped her arms around his neck and embraced him for some time. Finally, she broke it off to ask a worker why this goat was so friendly.

He shrugged and said he had maybe been a pet that someone didn't want anymore. That happened sometimes, he said. Our unnamed activist told the owner that she wanted Sheldon. He told her to get lost. She told him she certainly could but that she

wanted to give him a choice: let her take Sheldon, and he'd never see her again, or she would leave empty-handed today, and come back tomorrow and every day after with activists to make sure his public knew he might be selling family pets as meat.

He wisely chose the former. But when she tried to walk out with Sheldon, he refused to budge. He kept looking behind him toward a faint coughing sound. She followed his glance and saw Pinky, a very scared, very sick baby goat. She told the owner that Pinky had to be part of the deal. As soon as Pinky was in tow, Sheldon raced out of that hellhole.

When they arrived at Tamerlaine. Sheldon and Pinky faced the daunting task of integrating into a herd of 30+ goats. No worries: Sheldon waltzed right in, entirely expecting friends, and he was right. Once Pinky was healthy enough to meet everyone, the herd eagerly welcomed the orphaned little kid. Despite their new, huge family, Pinky and Sheldon remained inseparable, even snuggling each night. These best friends had been through a lot together; we'll never know their entire histories.

Sadly, Pinky recently passed away. When Pinky needed a transfusion, Sheldon ran and leapt into the van as if he knew what was being asked of him. But this time, he couldn't save his friend. When they arrived at the vet, he could only say a goodbye.

Today, Sheldon is still searching for what he had with Pinky. Sheldon is, as Pinky was, a staff favorite and is especially spoiled as he grieves. When you see him walking toward you, head low and ears out, get ready for love. He may lift a paw for attention, but his goal is ultimately to wrap his head on your shoulder and feel your arms around his neck.

Domesticated goats are used in the agricultural industry for food, their milk, or their fur and skin. As such, studies on goat intelligence aren't common.



However, one study in 2019 confirmed that goats can interpret feelings based on other goats' vocalizations. In other words, goats sense if another goat is happy, scared, frustrated, or sad based on his bleats. According to scientists, this is an evolutionary adaptation, used to communicate for survival. According to many who have worked with goats, yep: they understand each other's feelings. Sheldon and Pinky's story is just one that proves, to us, that goats also empathize and respond with care. In another one of our rescues, a pregnant goat, Mama Rose and her mate Jasper were rescued along with about 30 others from a farm shut down by the USDA. (To put that into perspective, there is not a single federal law regarding the welfare of any livestock; so, for a federal agency to shut a farm down, it has to be unimaginably terrible.)

Mama Rose had her babies at Tamerlaine. When they were born, she refused to let anyone near them for fear that these, too, would be taken away. Then, one day, after weeks of caretakers just sitting with her, Mama walked over to Peter, one of our founders. She placed her head on his leg and looked up at him. Then, she turned to her babies. She did this two more times before walking away...leaving no one between Peter and her babies. He gently put out his hand and pet them. She watched momentarily, and then casually turned away to eat. Later, the caretakers compared stories and realized she had done the same to each of them. It was her way of telling us that she trusted us and thanking us for letting her keep her children—a natural right she should not have had to be thankful for.

Knowing that goats can detect feelings from one another brings up the unavoidable question: how should this change how they are treated? According to the United Nations, there are over one billion goats worldwide in 2020, with 90% of them raised in African and Asia. Over 450 million were killed for meat, with others being born into the industry, and others being used as dairy goats, or fur their fur. In 2020, over 600,000 goats were slaughtered for food

in the United States according to the USDA. Surely Pinky and Sheldon were witness to goats being slaughtered and heard their cries of intense distress. What effect would this have had on them?

The best friends were rescued from a live market in NYC—where there are more than 80 such markets. Here, consumers can buy their animals live and kill them at home or have them slaughtered onsite. The demand for goat meat in the United States is on the rise, due in part to the growth of an increasingly multi-cultural population. Currently, the largest number of goats are slaughtered in Asia and Africa. Goat is a popular Muslim dish and is also a tradition at many holiday feasts—as turkeys are in the United States at Thanksgiving, or pigs at Christmas. Religious beliefs require meat be slaughtered in accordance with *halal* laws. As such, they are not stunned before their throats are slit.



A goat is prepared to be slaughtered in the halal fashion at a live market in Brooklyn. Photo credit: Cassandra Giraldo for WSI

Live markets like the one Sheldon and Pinky were rescued from are considered “custom except” by USDA standards—which means no federal inspection is required. Slaughters here aren't always included in the USDA's statistics. Before their rescue, they would have lived in a cramped urban building without enough room to separate slaughter vs holding areas.



Pinky was just three months old when he was rescued. We don't know how he or Sheldon really wound up there. What we do know is from the moment they set foot in that building, they were in a living hell. Live markets allow buyers to come in and choose which animal they want to buy, and it is slaughtered on the spot. Goats are intelligent enough to learn patterns. So our rescues would have noticed a person walk over, choose one of their fellow goats, and then realize that goat was killed—often without the stunning necessary for USDA inspection, meaning they would be fully conscious when their throats were slit, struggling to live as they bled to death. Every time someone walked over, Pinky and Sheldon must have wondered if it was their turn. Their desperate bleats would have terrified every goat there, including our babies.

These live markets are not just cruel and unregulated, they are also hotbeds of infection and exploitation. NYC has more live markets than any other city in the United States, likely because of its wonderfully diverse population, each with their own cultural norms, and people longing for a taste of familiarity and home. That's understandable.

However, these operations, looking to make the most profit, open their doors in underprivileged neighborhoods. Many are near schools. Organizations like Slaughter-Free NYC have documented multiple violations—such as contaminated sidewalks—in attempts to shutter these businesses, but they still operate. So students must walk through gore and see body parts left in open garbage cans on their way to school. In fact, zoonotic diseases can be spread this way, and could lead to the next pandemic.

Had Pinky and Sheldon been rescued from a factory farm, their lives would not have been much improved. They would have spent their entire lives indoors, crowded into sheds with a central feeding trough. Goats naturally live in the mountains and are

so evolved for jumping and galivanting all day that their pupils are horizontal, to help them see ledges and predators around corners. Being trapped inside a stinking, crowded shed all their lives is a torture in and of itself for this species. Because goats are so hardy, some factory farmers leave them outdoors in one crowded, filthy pen for their entire lives, without any protection against extreme weather.

If Pinky had been born into this environment, he would have been “disbudded” at just a few days old. His horns, which contain nerves and vessels, would have been burned off without pain relief. The burning process is as painful as you would imagine, and it is not fast.



The UK requires pain relief and local anesthetic for disbudding. The USA does not.

Both Pinky and Sheldon would also have been castrated without pain relief before, during, or after. Within a week of birth, a tight rubber ring would have been wrapped around their testicles to stop the blood flow. This is just the beginning of their suffering. Factory farmed goats suffer respiratory infections from the polluted air and noxious fumes of their own waste in which they are forced to live. In the USA, about 9% of animals from factory farms never even make it to transport—they die from stress or illness beforehand. That adds up to more than 850 million animals. If Pinky had been on a factory farm, sick as he was, he would have been one of these statistics.



Sheldon would have survived the trip to slaughter. He would have been forced into a line and shocked if his fear stopped him from moving forward. When his turn came, he would have been rendered unconscious with a bolt gun through his forehead before he was hung upside down and his throat was slit. Unless, as a prey animal, he was so terrified from the sights, smells, and sounds of other distressed goats, he may have wiggled and not been properly stunned—it happens. However, the slaughter line waits for no one. He would have been hung by an ankle and cut while fully conscious. As most goats are killed at less than a year of age, his skin would have been sold as “kid leather,” used for shoes, gloves, and purses. From the beginning of their lives until the end, all goats raised for food live a life of fear and pain until the moment of their death. And even after, they are denied dignity.



Dairy goats being milked by machines, rather than their own babies. These mamas, on average, will have 40 babies, stolen over 10 years.

In 2020, there were also about 440,000 dairy goats in the United States, an increase of 2% from 2019. However, this number does not include farms with fewer than 10 goats. Globally, dairy goats are almost impossible to count, due to the popularity of them in small villages and as backyard sources of income.

Just like humans, cows, and other mammals, a female cow must give birth to produce milk. Factory-

farmed goats are not impregnated naturally by males. Instead, female goats are forcefully restrained, unable to move while a human artificially inseminates them. This is all about profit. It increases the number of females that can be bred and reduces the expenses of caring for male goats.

Goats are pregnant 150 days and on average have two kids. Most does are impregnated twice a year. And they can be bred for ten long years. Each time they do, their babies are removed within hours or days. It should be noted that goats are known for being doting mothers. In fact, they are often used on farms to care for orphans of other species—foals, calves, and lambs—because nurturing is in their nature. Yet, twice a year, their own babies are stolen before they even have a chance to give all that love to them. As we know from Mama Rose and many of our other rescues, goat moms are as protective and loving as “mama bears.” There is even a story of a goat in China that rammed a truck with her head after it had hit and killed her babies. She refused to move her head off the truck in her grief and anger.

But farmers make money selling her milk to humans, so her babies must be removed lest they drink it. Instead, moms are hooked up to milking machines, even while pregnant again. They may be injected with artificial growth hormone to increase milk production. These hormones can increase the risk of mastitis, a painful breast infection that requires antibiotics. Both the hormone, linked to various cancers, and the antibiotics can be passed on in milk, increasing human antibiotic resistance. The USDA makes allowances for mastitis by legalizing a certain number of pus cells in milk and cheese products—750,000 per mL to be exact, or over 179 million cells per cup.

Meanwhile, dairy goats will be born into a life of misery. Female kids will take mom’s place. Male goats are killed or sold for meat—this might be where Sheldon and Pinky came from. Because goats produce the most milk at 4-6 weeks after birthing,



some farms will allow a kid to stay with their mother to stimulate production—without nursing, of course. They are fitted with a “weaning ring.” It’s an invention worthy of a medieval torture chamber. The ring is inserted into a kid’s nostrils and tightened in place with a wingnut. Now, the kid can stimulate the mother to produce milk by trying to nurse. But the spikes hurt, and she will kick her baby away, forced to act very against her nurturing instinct. The baby is left rejected and confused. Neither will be given the comfort nursing provides. After she has unwillingly given 10 years of her life to this cycle, she is considered an expense, and killed.

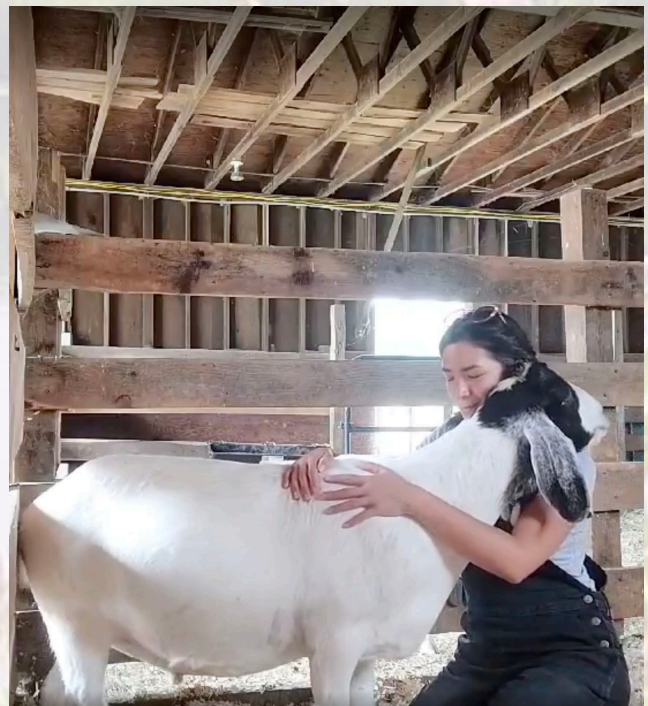
Goats face an extra abuse other farmed animals may not: some are kept alive for their fur, which is used to make mohair and cashmere. Long considered luxury fabrics, there is absolutely nothing glamorous about wearing hair that is forcefully removed from an animal. Shearers are generally paid by the volume of fur they produce, so work as fast as possible. Goats are prey animals—just being held down is terrifying. Witnesses have been filmed workers carelessly tossing the goats, tying their



Shearing is a harrowing experience that leaves many goats bloodied and injured.

back legs, leaving them bloodied and injured. They are often shorn without regard to the weather. Many goats die of exposure to the elements. When they are no longer useful as producers of fibers, these goats are sold to slaughter.

The demand for goat meat and milk, angora and cashmere are rising worldwide. But so, too is the number of informed consumers refusing to be a part of systemic abuse of these innocent animals. Many large retailers, such as H&M, have stopped carrying animal fibers. People are realizing that any dairy animal suffers the same way cows suffer. When our rescuer left the live market in NYC with Sheldon and Pinky, she had to leave behind many goats, chickens, pigs, and other animals. No one person can save every animal; but one person can change the world for one—or two—animals. Just ask Pinky and Sheldon. Imagine what people could do if we worked together? We are just one sanctuary, but we continue to rescue as many animals as we can at Tamerlaine, giving them the peaceful, love-filled life they deserve. Together, we can create a future where no animals need saving.



Sheldon misses Pinky every day—and so do we. But we make sure that the rest of his days are filled with all the love, friendship, and joy he deserves.