



AUSTRALIAN
HIGHLAND
CATTLE



HOW HIGHLAND CATTLE EFFECT PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

Shania Whitehead

Why I chose to look at this topic?

G'day, I am Shania Whitehead. I work with and show highland cattle. I also suffer from some mental health issues. I chose to look at highland cattle and their effect on mental health for my AIF as it is a topic I relate to. After losing my best mate to an accident earlier in the year highland cattle became the biggest part to helping me with my mental health since then. Going out on weekends to halter break or just chill out with them have helped me take my mind off things. Over the last few months I have built a bond even stronger with one bull, named Titan, that I show.



Pictured Titan Arrow of MacAnLeister with Shania



Pictured Titan Arrow of MacAnLeister with Shania



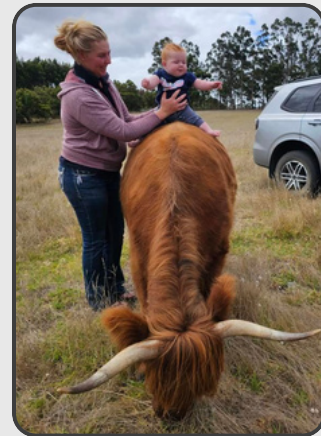
Pictured Winifred Bow of MacAnLeister and Ophelia Bow of MacAnLeister with Shania



Pictured Clifford Arrow of MacAnLeister with Shania

Survey Responses

One highland cattle fold said that she started her fold with the money her brother left her a few years ago when he lost his battle to mental health. She said the fold name is her and her brother's name combined in memory of him. She said when he passed away her animal support at the time were her Friesian steers which has now become her highlands. They are something her brother would have loved and brought him as much joy as they do for her.



Pictured Rosie of Royalie with Natalie and Lilly

Another fold has found their animals behaviours have changed since an incident, specifically one animal after her husband lost his leg in an accident. Now he walks around on a prosthetic leg and that one cow is gentler and more willing to go to him/work with him. Steers also are showing the same changed behaviours.



Pictured Isla Bow of MacAnLeister with Dave

Survey Responses

A couple who runs a highland fold in New South Wales said that he works in a school that specialises working with young people who have experienced with complex trauma and taking them out to their highlands helps bring them grounding opportunities and emotional regulation. He said that they have one particular cow that will single out any female student that is having a particularly hard time to comfort them.



Pictured Kapheria May of Glenstrae



Pictured Aladair Leal of Koolah Creek with Sarah

A fold located in the Lower South East often takes her highlands to shows and events. She said that her cattle can tell if her or her handlers are feeling upset or stressed because they will demand attention and want to hang out with you which changes your focus. She also said that she once took one heifer to a show and they took her over to a young boy who was in a motorised wheel chair and she placed her head in his lap to allow him to pat her.



Pictured on the right Isla Bow of MacAnLeister with calf Emerson Arrow of MacAnLeister and on the left Solas Iona Bow of MacAnLeister with Melissa

Survey Responses

The owner of a fold in the Barossa Valley said that his cattle tend to feed off of people's stress and effect accordingly but often the animals he has worked closely to have that extra bond with and will react in a comforting manner. He also stated that even some of his most difficult cattle will react in a positive way to young children and people with disabilities.



Pictured Larimar of Amrabull Park with Scott

A Tasmanian fold who frequently takes their animals to shows said that they pick their well-handled and naturally quiet animals to show. They have found that they are relaxed and quietly standing/sitting there while floods of kids come through to pat and brush the cows. They have had some people with disabilities or even some young kids who are lacking the confidence to go up to the animals tend to open up and really let them in to pat they and show that they are just as friendly as they look.



Pictured Craggy Island show team

Survey Responses

A Victorian fold said that when they are feeling down they go out and cuddle and talk with their cattle which takes their mind off things. Their cattle tend to be more aware of their surroundings but will generally be pretty relaxed and calm



Pictured Uilleam Arrow of MacAnLeister with Bow and Khan

A retiring fold said that their cattle have always responded well to small children and babies. They sense that they are less likely to cause them any harm and will generally be a lot more willing and curious to interact with them. Also saying that when they are out with the cattle they tend to walk around them, sometimes giving them a treat the whole world seems to melt away.



Pictured Cruachan Weaners with Bill



Pictured Cruachan Weaners with Hanneke

Research

After doing some extra research I found that hugging cattle can make an improvement on mental health. Interacting with the animals can increase happiness and reduce stress. Cattle are very grounded creatures who are completely involved in the moment and help us do the same. Cattle provide unconditional love and with the warmth of their bodies melt away worries. With the breed being low stress themselves their calm behavior rubs off on us.

They have a long history of being close to humans. Despite their horns they are really easy animals to work with and making them one of the easiest to halter break. With the breed having the long coats the hair can be used in more of a sensory way of reducing anxiety as well. Cows fill people with hope, your able to just breathe and stop thinking.

A study has shown that the best way to hug them is to put your arms around them and lay your face on them. Try and connect your breathing with theirs in a safe way. A separate study showed that cuddling, interacting and talking to cows can also help with addiction and schizophrenia.

Just like humans cows too carry their own stories of resilience and courage. It makes people feel less alone. If you know that an animal can survive bad conditions and thrive so can you.



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