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What kind of treatment does Judaism require toward animals, given the fact that they have parental feelings toward their young?

Theme:

Judaism recognizes that animals have parental feelings toward their young and feel emotional pain when their young are harassed, threatened, or hurt. Inflicting such pain is forbidden.

Sources:

- A. "Do not boil a baby goat in its mother's milk"
- B. Law of "shiluach haken."
- C. Laws forbidding people to take young away to slaughter in the first week of life, and forbidding killing the offspring and the mother on the same day.
- D. Quotes about the protective eagle and her young, and the bereaved bear.
- E. Quote from Maimonides, the great Sephardic commentator also known as Rambam, on parental feelings.

Maimonides

Maimonides, the great Sephardic scholar and physician also known as Rambam, wrote in his famous book "Guide for the Perplexed": " There is no difference between the worry of a human mother and an animal mother for their offspring. A mother's love does not derive from the intellect but from the emotions, in animals just as in humans."

Questions for Students:

1. Have you seen instances of a mother animal showing fear for her young or trying to protect them? (cat or dog or wild animal)
2. How can we be considerate of both domestic/wild animals when they have young to protect? Sometimes even our own companion animals will be upset when we come too close to their babies.
3. What do you think of children who take away an animal's young (in the case of a cat or dog, before 6–8 weeks; in the case of a wild animal, taking them at all)?
4. How would Jewish tradition regard the slaughter of seal pups in the sight of their mothers? (Explain the clubbing of seal pups for fur.)
5. How would Jewish tradition regard the veal industry, in which newborn calves are forcibly taken away from their mothers?
6. People who are considerate of the mother bird are promised a "long life," as are people who honor their parents. What does this tell us about the importance Judaism attached to this law?