

3 Questions

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Why Animals Make Us Better People

Jan Pol, the 73-year-old veterinarian and star of the Nat Geo WILD channel's hit series *The Incredible Dr. Pol*, grew up in the Netherlands. He first visited rural Michigan as a high school exchange student and then moved there permanently after veterinary school. He and his wife, Diane, started treating animals out of their home and today run a busy practice—even when the Nat Geo cameras are off. Learn more about Pol at facebook.com/TheDrPolOfficial.

Why is the interaction between humans and animals so important?

I think that animals make us better humans. This is why I am so active in 4-H. The children have to take care of the animals before they can do anything else. It teaches them responsibility. When Diane and I moved here 35 years ago, our kids were small. We went into 4-H, and we still are active in it. 4-H pushes children to take responsibility for the animals. That includes nutrition, taking care of them, and also vaccinations, grooming. All these things we teach the children so they know. It all makes a kid a better person later in life.

What are the best and worst parts of your job as a veterinarian?

The best is that we help animals get better. Then through that, we help people. The worst part is when we have to put animals down. As I tell my clients, animals are not afraid to die. And when the quality of life is gone, let them go. I go to church. I believe in the hereafter. For me it seems like there should be a heaven for animals too.

What's the most crucial thing owners can do for pets?

The main thing is: Spay or neuter your animals!

New episodes of *The Incredible Dr. Pol* air at 9 p.m. ET/PT, Saturdays from July 25 through September 26, on Nat Geo WILD.

PHOTO: CHRIS BUCK

