

# **Animal Reactions to UFOs – A Summary of the Evidence**

**Joan Woodward**

Summarized from the original paper, *Animal Reactions to UFOs: A Preliminary Investigation from the Animals' Perspective*, MUFON Special Publication, July 2005, 60 pp, and also published as a submitted paper in the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual International UFO Symposium, (2005) pp. 229-278.

One of the many features of the NICAP site is Categorical Research of UFO Sightings. These include 11 categories, such as Close Encounters, E-M Cases, Radar Cases, and, of interest here, Animal Effects Cases (Category 4).

This summary presents trends and ideas suggested by 104 of the cases currently in Category 4. More sightings with animal reactions (ARs) are needed, and hopefully this summary will serve to invite and encourage other investigators to offer data or references that might be added to Category 4, thus clarifying and further exploring the data presented here. Sightings with reactions from a variety of animals are obviously of interest, but also of great interest are (1) sightings where animals are present but *do not* react and (2) sightings determined to be IFOs where animals are present and either react or do not react.

The study included only ARs that occurred simultaneously with UFO sighting events and only sighting reports that have some detail about the AR. It did not include either abduction or creature reports. The sightings were examined in detail in an effort to attain information about the following: How did the animals react? Do any consistencies emerge when animals react (or did not react)? How did reactions differ between different types of animals with different perceptual abilities and different behaviors? Do ARs suggest anything about the object to which they were reacting? Do ARs tell us anything about the overall sighting? Results are summarized as follows.

## **Generalizations About Sightings with ARs Reported**

When all sightings with AR aspects are considered as a whole, the following generalizations were found:

**Witnesses describe normal animal behaviors** that seem appropriate to the UFO events being described. For instance, mildly alert cattle were associated with a distant object; cattle stampeding were associated with a nearby, noisy object.

Further, the witnesses' descriptions tend to be consistent with the sensory perceptions and normal anti-predator or alarm behavior for the particular animal(s) involved.

**Uneasy to fearful behavior is most commonly reported.** Of the various 135 units of animal behavior reported, fear was most common (57 times), followed by alert/alarm

(primarily dogs, 29 times) indifferent/unaware (16 times), interested/calm (13 times), and uneasy (6 times). Some animal behaviors could not be classified (frogs for instance).

### **Sightings with ARs reported tend to be close encounters with UFOs that linger.**

In sightings where animals reacted, the UFOs were relatively close encounters. Where data were available, 90% of the estimated UFO altitudes were 500 feet or less, and 70% of these were 200 feet or less. Similarly, 79% of the estimated UFO distances were 500 feet or less, and 59% of these were 200 feet or less.

Sightings tended to involve UFOs that lingered and maneuvered. Where durations of sightings were reported, 54% were between 1 and 10 minutes, and 30% were between 10 minutes and an hour. In 60 of 92 sightings with animal reactions, the UFO was reported to hover (27 times), land or near land (17 times), meander or repeated passes (11 times), and demonstrate falling leaf or rocking motions (5 times).

### **Do secondary features of UFOs have an effect on ARs?**

Secondary features of UFOs that intuitively might be expected to effect animals were thought to be: sound, light beams/terrestrial illumination, physiological effects (hair on end, vibration felt, etc.), EM effects, wind generation, vapor/mist generation, and odor.

Sound was the most consistently reported secondary feature in AR reports. Animals (except birds) can hear higher and/or lower frequencies than humans can, so they may be reacting to sound that we cannot hear. Nonetheless, sound was reported by witnesses in 45 (49%) of the sightings where animals did react.

A variety of the other secondary features were reported irregularly. Light beams/ground illumination was reported 28 times; physiological effects during the sighting, 24 times; EM effects, 14 times; wind generation, 7 times; vapor/mist, 6 times; and odor, 2 times. Putting sound aside, other secondary features of UFOs did not have an apparent relationship to ARs, but their *collective near-total absence is noted where animals did not react*. One exception is terrestrial lighting and ungulate reactions, which will be discussed later.

### **UFO shapes were variable and had no relationship to ARs.**

The shapes reported in sightings with ARs are variable and equivalent in their variation to a much larger compilation of UFO shapes. In other words, the shapes are a typical subset of shapes normally reported in UFO events. Two possible, but questionable, exceptions are (1) hemispheric objects reported in 24% of the sightings with ungulates and (2) boxy or rectangular UFOs associated with animals reported relatively calm in 5 of 6 sightings.

### **Sightings Classified and Examined by the Type of Animals Present**

The 104 sightings were examined by taking into account the perceptual world of different types of animals, what anti-predator behavior those animals normally demonstrate, and what *inanimate stimulus* might elicit that behavior. The types of animals in these 104 sightings were: Barnyard birds, Cats, Ungulates, and Dogs. Information on wild animals was presented as an appendix but was too sparse and variable to analyze as a separate unit.

**Barnyard birds** were reported present in 6 sightings, all of them at night. In 5 of these sightings, the birds were heard to be upset as they scrambled and vocalized in the darkness. The UFOs in all 5 of these sightings had secondary features:

Sound, 3 times	EM effect, 1 time
Light beams, 2 times	Physiological (tingle), 1 time

Further, all 5 sightings described the UFOs as passing overhead, or nearly so, at least relative to the witnesses.

The sample size is small, but suggests the birds may have been responding to sound. Loud or deep, unfamiliar sounds are stress triggers for these animals, and the UFO sounds reported were of that nature. If the overhead position of the UFO proves to be of importance, then, theoretically, the birds could have been reacting to vibration through touch receptors, to pressure change, or to a passing magnetic field. The latter is questionable but current speculation is that birds can detect and use magnetic fields.

Visual reaction by the birds, who have excellent eyesight and who would respond to an “aerial predator,” is unknown because in most of the sightings it is not clear if the birds were indoors or outside, if they could see the sky or not.

**Cats** were reported present in 9 sightings, and their reactions were fearful, 5 times; interest/approach, 1 time; and indifferent, 3 times. The sightings with fearful cats all had secondary features:

Sound, 4 times
Light beams/terrestrial lighting, 2 times
EM effects, 1 time

In the 4 sightings with non-fearful cats, *no secondary UFO features were reported.*

In the 5 sightings with fearful cats, the UFOs path was overhead 3 times and the UFO made humming or harsh noise 4 times. . Cats are near-sighted, but they have excellent hearing into the very high-pitched frequencies (ultrasonic mouse squeak). Loud, harsh sounds frighten cats, and they are more likely to react to an approaching sound than to an approaching silent object. Cat whiskers are sensitive to vibration and pressure changes, so like birds, the overhead position of the UFO may be an important factor in understanding cat reactions.

**Ungulates** were lumped together as all are hoofed, grazing, prey animals with panoramic vision that detects danger at a distance, and all have a defense of running if they feel threatened. In these 104 sightings, ungulates were represented by cattle (14 times), horses (10), goats (2) and sheep (1). Ungulates were reported present in 22 sightings, and their reactions were fearful in 20 of these sightings.

The overhead UFO flight path was reported in only 4 sightings, and thus seems of less importance than in the cat and bird reactions. As mentioned earlier, hemispheric shaped objects were reported in 5 sightings with ungulates. In comparison, domed discs were reported 3 times. The reality and/or importance of the hemispheric shape are unknown.

Secondary UFO features were present in virtually all 20 sightings with fearful ungulates.

Sound, 14 times	EM effects, 5 times (2 questionable)
Terrestrial illumination, 6 times	Vapor, 2 times
Various physiological effects, 5 times	Odor, 2 times
	Wind/air blast, 2 times

Sound was reported by witnesses 70% of the time when animals were described as fearful. Known stress triggers for ungulates are unfamiliar sounds, particularly loud and/or high pitched sounds. In 7 of the 14 sightings with sound reported, high-pitched sound or harsh sounds are described or suggested. The remaining 7 sightings reported some form of hum/buzz/swish.

Also disturbing to ungulates are quick movements and sudden appearance of unfamiliar equipment, both potential factors in a relatively close approach. Finally, the play of lights and shadows are highly disturbing to ungulates. Twelve of these sightings occurred at night, and terrestrial illumination was described 6 times in combination with frightened ungulates. An example of this type of event occurred when cattle stampeded as their field was lit by bright red light from a silent, slow moving object. The cattle calmed once the object departed. (see Oct. 30, 1964, England on NICAP.org Category 4).

**Dogs** are more complex in their reactions. Some are by nature shy and tend to be fearful, some are bold, and the majority range in between. Dogs' sense of smell and hearing is phenomenal, which is why they make good watch animals that can give early warning alarms. Their vision is near-sighted and is less important to them than smell and hearing (though sight hounds and some terriers are more visually oriented than most dogs).

With increasing intensity of reaction, dog reactions during UFO events were divided into: unaware; calm/interested; alert/alarm; fearful; and howling. Unaware through fearful is on a behavior continuum, but howling is a separate behavior involving canine communication and would normally be at the calm/alert end of the behavior continuum.

UFO altitudes and distances were similar, no matter how the dogs reacted. UFO shapes demonstrated their normal variability, with the only exception being angular (square/rectangle) UFOs possibly related to calmer dogs. As in other groups of animals,

UFO secondary features were generally present when dogs reacted and were absent when they did not react.

<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Total sightings</u>	<u>Sightings with secondary features</u>
Alert/alarm	30	24 (80%)
Fearful	26	18 (69%)
Howling	11	11 (100%)
Calm/interested	8	8 (100%)
Unaware/no reaction	13	2* (15%)

\*See note in the following compilation regarding these 2 sightings.

By far the most common secondary feature reported was sound. Dogs hear a greater range of frequencies than we can hear, and their hearing is far more acute than ours. Acknowledging that dogs are frequently aware of sounds missed by humans, the witnesses' descriptions of UFO sounds are all we have to work with. Sightings where witnesses heard and reported UFO sounds corresponds to different dog reactions as follows:

<u>Dog reaction</u>	<u>Sound reported-- No. of sightings (percent)</u>
alert/alarm,	16 (53%)
fearful	12 (46%)
howling	8 (73%)
calm	4 (50%)
unaware	2* (15%)

\*One dog slept through the event although a cat ran away, and one blind dog did not react. No information given on age and/or hearing abilities of these two dogs.

*High-pitched sound and dog reactions.*—When examined in more detail, dog responses to UFO sounds suggest the quality of the sound may be of importance relative to the dogs' responses. In the alert/alarm dog reactions only 1 of 16 sounds was described as high pitched. In the fearful dogs reactions, the witnesses specifically described the sounds as high pitched in 7 of the 12 sightings. Taking the sound concept a step farther, 4 sightings describe dogs demonstrating pain relative to high-pitched UFO sounds (2/19/68 Canada, 7/30/68 NH, 2/18/74 OK, and 3/14/75 WI on NICAP.org Category 4).

*Howling* is a social response, a form of communication, usually done by a relaxed dog with its head raised. Normally howling is done to elicit a response or to respond to another animal, or to a sound (like sirens) that triggers howling. Howling is not due to the dog's ears being hurt. Sound was reported in 8 of 11 sightings where dogs were reported to howl. This might be expected and makes sense. But some of these events involve dogs that are very fearful and howling, and this is *not an expected or normal combination of behaviors* (see 2/24/59 CA, 3/15/65 FL, and 2/22/90 IN on NICAP.org Category 4). Fear

vocalizations are normally yelping, screaming, or moaning. This makes one speculate that the stimulus causing the howling is overwhelming.

A final, possibly sound-related observation concerns dogs that appear mesmerized (classified in the calm/interested category of dog behavior). The dogs' behavior hints that they are completely focused on hearing something, although witnesses report no sound. The dogs are fixed, looking up or out, calm (or even happy) but oddly unresponsive to normal stimuli (See 10/97 GA and 2/18/99 NC on NICAP.org Category 4 for the most extreme examples.)

Sightings with howling, fearful dogs and mesmerized dogs are speculative. More data is needed on both of these types of responses in terms of their reality and their triggers.

I look forward to expanding the NICAP animal reaction category and to seeing where these initial observations lead. I will say that it is impossible to get too much detail. I would be happy to hear from anyone interested in the subject or anyone who could point us to more sightings (with details).

Below are some suggested approaches and questions for those lucky enough to investigate a sighting with animals present. Let me emphasize once again, a sighting where animals do not react is as interesting as one with animals that do react. IFO events with animals that react would be extremely interesting and enlightening, but they are nearly impossible to find in the literature with any details.

Joan Woodward  
Fairfax, VA

Suggestions for investigative approach and questions in sightings with animals present:

1. Ask *first* if animals were present. Then ask if they reacted. In sorting through these data, sightings where animals *did not react* are as interesting as those where they did react.
2. How did they react ("dog reacted" or "cat went nuts" is not much help). What did they do? How long did their reaction last? When did they calm down? The duration is important and helps tie the AR to the sighting events (or not).
3. Location of the animal(s), whether they reacted or did not react. Indoors or out? If the UFO was 250 feet to the east relative to the witness, where was the animal relative to the witness?
4. If light beams/terrestrial lighting is reported, what was lit? Field, fences, barn, animals, witness?

5. If sound is reported, ask witness to characterize it. High or low pitched, constant or changing frequency, soft, moderate, loud? Can the witness compare the sound to something familiar? If the sound changed, did the animal's response change?
6. Can the witnesses think of any mundane, everyday event that would cause the animal to react in a manner similar to that demonstrated during the sighting? If the animal does not react, ask if it is normally a good watchdog; or is a horse normally accustomed to low flying aircraft?