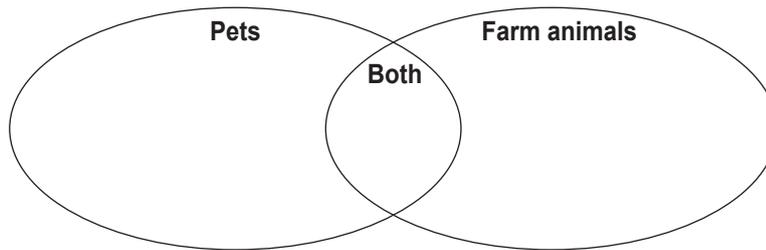


Back-scratching bovine leads scientists to reassess intelligence of cows

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

- a. Think about the different types of animals you know. Are these animals pets, farm animals or both?



2 Key words

- a. Choose the correct word to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context. Some words may appear in different form in the article.

rethink

cattle

colleague

sharp

broom

1. cows and similar animals like bulls _____
2. to think about something again or in a different way _____
3. a tool for sweeping or cleaning a house _____
4. having a thin point that's good for cutting _____
5. a person you work or study with _____

scratch

meadow

pattern

livestock

smooth

6. something that repeats in a similar way _____
7. all the animals that live or work on a farm _____
8. to touch your skin with your nails or a tool _____
9. having a flat and even surface _____
10. a small area of grass where animals walk and eat _____

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. We walked along the river and saw the cows in the _____.
2. I invited my _____ to a meeting next week.
3. The shopkeeper cleans the pavement with a(n) _____.
4. Horses, pigs, chicken and sheep are examples of _____.
5. The cowboy worked with _____ on the farm.
6. Tim used a(n) _____ knife to cut the wood.
7. The bear used a tree to _____ its back.
8. The documentary made me _____ my opinions on the topic.
9. The desk was _____, so it was easy to write on it.
10. We realised there was a(n) _____ in the puppies' behaviour.

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Ian Sample

19 January 2026

- 1 Scientists are rethinking the intelligence of cattle because of an Austrian cow named Veronika. She has an incredible talent for using tools.
- 2 Witgar Wiegele is a farmer and baker from a small town. He keeps Veronika as a pet and noticed she sometimes played with sticks and used them to scratch her body.
- 3 Wiegele said Veronika began playing with pieces of wood years ago. Then she learned how to scratch herself with sticks. He said she also recognised family members' voices and ran to meet them when they called.
- 4 "I was amazed by her intelligence and how much we could learn from animals: patience, calmness, contentment, and gentleness," he said.
- 5 Soon, scientists in Vienna saw a video of the cow's behaviour. These scientists study animal intelligence. They immediately realized the importance of the video. "It was a cow using an actual tool," said Dr Antonio Osuna Mascaró at the city's University of Veterinary Medicine.
- 6 Veronika's home town has green forests, blue lakes, mountains and a church and school near Veronika's meadow, Osuna Mascaró said "It's a beautiful place for an Austrian cow."
- 7 Osuna Mascaró and his colleague Alice Auersperg decided to test Veronika's skills. The tests showed she could pick up a broom. She could also use it in different ways depending on her needs. Veronika used her tongue to move the broom and held it in place with her teeth.
- 8 Veronika used the sharp end of the broom to scratch the skin on her back. But she changed to the smooth end for soft areas like her belly.
- 9 "At first, I thought this was mistake. Osuna Mascaró said. "But then we saw a pattern: Veronika used the different parts of the stick in meaningful ways."
- 10 Scientists already know that animals like chimps, crows, dolphins and octopuses use tools. But they didn't think that livestock were very intelligent animals.
- 11 It is not clear how Veronika learned her skills, but her special life experience has helped her. Most cows don't live be 13 years old like Veronika, or live in such an interesting place. Also, the researchers believe cattle may be smarter than people realised. After the study, Osuna Mascaró heard about other clever cows. "We don't believe that Veronika is the Einstein of cows," he said.
- 12 "This tells us that cows have the ability to find new ways to use tools. We ignored this fact for thousands of years," he added. "It's shocking that we're only discovering this now."

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First published in *The Guardian*, 19/1/2026

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3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article again. Use the words in the box to complete the summary.

intelligence

mouth

scientists

scratch

smooth

tools

Veronika lives on a beautiful farm in Austria. Her owner, Witgar, noticed that she often used a stick to (1) _____ her back and belly. He took a video of Veronika, which got the attention of (2) _____ at a university in Vienna. They came to watch her and did several tests. They realised that Veronika could pick up a broom with her (3) _____ and use it many ways. She usually used the sharp end. But, when she touched soft parts of her body, she preferred the (4) _____ end. The scientists were very impressed by Veronika's skills. They discovered that cows can use (5) _____, just like chimps and dolphins. This special cow helped them learn more about animal (6) _____.

4 Key language

a. Read the article. Find the noun forms for the adjectives below.

Nouns	Adjectives
1.	able
2.	calm
3.	content
4.	gentle
5.	important
6.	intelligent
7.	patient
8.	talented

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Level 1: Elementary

b. Complete sentences 1-8 with the words from the table above. Choose the noun or adjective form.

1. Many young children are _____ to read and write.
2. I enjoy the quietness and _____ of the library.
3. Ana Luisa is _____ with her life on the farm.
4. You should always be _____ with baby animals.
5. Teachers understand the _____ of a good education.
6. Albert Einstein was famous for his _____.
7. Doctors work hard, so they need a lot of _____.
8. Lin and Markus like to sing. They are _____.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Do you think Veronika's skills are amazing? Why or why not?
2. Is using tools a good way to show that an animal is intelligent?
3. What does "the Einstein of cows" mean?

6 In your own words

a. Find out more about an amazing animal. You can choose an individual animal that has special skills or a type of animal that is very intelligent. Make a poster to share facts and photos. Include the following information:

- Which animal did you choose?
- Is it a special individual or a type of animal?
- Where does it live?
- What makes it so amazing?
- What can people learn from this animal?

b. Share your poster with your class. Vote on your favourite amazing animal.