

An information sheet on feral children.

What is a feral child?

A feral child is a human child who has lived isolated from human contact from a very young age, and has no (or very little) experience of human care, loving or social behavior, and, crucially, of human language.

Why are there feral children?

Children turn into feral children because of many various reasons. They are either confined by people (usually their own parents) due to the parents' rejection of their severe intellectual or physical impairment or they may have faced severe child abuse or trauma before being abandoned or running away.

How are they then brought up?

Some live in the wild on their own whilst others take the support of wild animals and are brought up by them to be like them with their characteristics.

Cases of feral children.

1. Traian Căldărar

A Romanian boy who lived for approximately three years in the wild. In February 2002, a shepherd found him huddling in a cardboard box naked and barely alive. Although he was seven years old, he looked like a three year old because of suffering from malnutrition and rickets. He was looked after in an orphanage. By that time, he had forgotten how to speak considering he lived alone for so many years with dogs.

Soon he was reunited with his mother, Lina Căldărar. The reason why his mother abandoned him as well was because during the time of his disappearance, she was forced to flee from his abusive father and when she returned, she found that he had run away. When he was returned to his mother, he rapidly began to relearn human behavior, as his first found behavior was very animalistic. This was unusual of feral children who when found at a later age are unable to learn a new language and form normal human relations.

2. Oxana Malaya

Oxana's parents were alcoholics and were unable to care for her. At the age of three, she was exiled from her home. Her family lived in a poor area where there were wild dogs roaming around the streets. She took refuge in a shed inhabited by these dogs behind her house. She learnt their behaviors and mannerisms and they took care of her. She barked, walked on all four feet, crouched like a dog and sniffed her food before eating it.

When she was found later on, she found it difficult to behave like a normal human being with social and emotional skills. She was deprived of intellectual education and her only emotional support came from the dogs she lived with. Her lack of exposure to language made it very difficult for her to improve them. But today, she can speak and many of her behavioral problems were cured. There are doubts on whether she will be able to form strong relationships and feel part of the human community. In 2006, she was of age 23 and she lives in a home for the mentally handicapped where she helps look after the cows in the clinic's farm and she is happiest when among dogs.

What do you feel after having read the above and knowing about their lives?

After reading this, I felt immensely sad having known that such children do actually exist. I pity them a lot and now am grateful for the loving family I have. A child's childhood is very important as it determines how they will end up being. Their upbringing affects their morals and values.

Not only that, I feel terrible knowing that because they live in such conditions they receive no education and don't live their lives like a normal average person and so end up having some problems when they grow up and having to live in homes that provide special help. They cannot then start learning because it becomes too late and therefore too difficult for them to manage it.

I've learnt that not all children have caring and loving parents and that parents play an important role in society as they have the responsibility of bringing up another life. If they get it wrong then they have ruined a life and will be held responsible for it all.