



"I believe there are strong connections between how we treat animals and how we treat our fellow human beings," says Edgar's Mission founder, Pam Ahern.

## A mission of kindness

Edgar's Mission, in country Victoria, is a sanctuary for neglected, abused and unwanted farm animals. As **Kate Fitzpatrick** discovers, our farmyard friends have feelings and emotions, too — just like regular pets.

**There are dozens of zoos, sanctuaries, animal welfare organisations and shelters across Australia that look after native, exotic and endangered creatures as well as neglected and unwanted companion animals.**

But we can't forget about farm animals. Cows, pigs, lambs, chickens and the like — animals we typically rear for food — who will rescue these animals when they're in need of a helping hoof?

### Who cares for farm animals?

It was a question animal lover and rights activist Pam Ahern asked herself, too.

### Did you know?

Edgar's Mission is home to the three pigs that starred in the 2006 movie *Charlotte's Web* — Daisy, Lily and Alice.

In 2003, Pam was campaigning with actor and *Babe* star James Cromwell for animal rights. For the purposes of a photo shoot and to generate attention, Pam bought a piglet from a piggery, saving him from death row.

Once the pig's official duties were over, "Edgar Alan Pig", as he was known, became a regular companion of Pam's, helping her spread the word about animal rights.

"I would take him for walks in the park and people would come from everywhere to see my pig. It got me thinking that the best ambassadors for changing the way we think about farm animals are the animals themselves," Pam tells *PETS*.

PHOTOGRAPHY Courtesy of Pam Ahern, Edgar's Mission.



Animal activist Pam Ahern with Melbourne the sheep (left) and Edgar Alan Pig (right).

Even if Pam was prepared to part with Edgar, her initial plans of finding him a sanctuary were impossible as none existed. So Edgar's Mission was born — created by Pam's belief that as humans, we shouldn't discriminate by helping some animals but not others. "We never get the chance to know pigs and cows and chickens. We're so removed from them and I realised I wasn't really being kind and caring to all animals," Pam recalls.

### Did you know?

The volunteers at Edgar's Mission look after more than 100 farm animals including horses, cows, goats, sheep, pigs, turkeys, hens, rabbits, roosters and more.

### Edgar Alan Pig

Edgar is now four years old and weighs a whopping 300kg! He lives at Edgar's Mission with more than 100 friends, including other pigs, goats, horses, cows, turkeys, hens and rabbits.

"We get the animals from all sorts of places," says Pam. "We take animals from the RSPCA, the local ranger and sometimes people find them on the side of the road. We've had people pull up in truck stops and find little baby lambs."

### Life on the farm

There's no typical day at Edgar's Mission. Pam runs the not-for-profit sanctuary full-time, devoting not only her time but also her life savings. She also

relies on donations from visitors and volunteer helpers. It's a massive commitment, but it's one Pam is only too happy to make because of the rewards it generates.

"I believe so much in the power of kindness to change things, not only for animals, but for people, because I believe there are such strong connections between how we treat animals and how we treat our fellow human beings," she reveals.

Pam's primary goal is to raise awareness about farm animals. She wants people to know they have feelings and emotions just as the animals we traditionally keep as pets do. **P**

### Meet Mrs O'Reilly

"We have a lovely chicken that came to us between Christmas and New Year called Mrs O'Reilly," Pam tells *PETS*. "She was found scooting down the road at Carrum Downs in Victoria. She was a battery hen who had come off the back of a truck going to an abattoir. About 20 cars tried to stop and catch this chicken, which was literally playing chicken with the cars, and she took off down the railway line as fast as her little chicken legs could carry her. Luckily, one of the people in the posse that caught her knew about Edgar's Mission, and that's how Mrs O'Reilly came to us."

"I think Australia loves an underdog and she really is the one who got away! She's a wonderful chick and she's so grateful to be here. She loves scratching around in the dirt and when you call her name she comes running up to say hello. She's getting to see sunshine and soil for the first time in her life."



Mrs O'Reilly is one of 100 farm animal residents at Edgar's Mission.

### Visit Edgar's Mission

Edgar's Mission is in Willowmavin, near Bendigo, in central Victoria. Pam welcomes visitors and encourages you to book a tour in advance. Visit [www.edgarsmission.org.au](http://www.edgarsmission.org.au) for more info.