

SANCTUAIRE



LA GARIE

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Fostering a Space for Ethological Observation and Learning at Sanctuaire La Garie

*An open proposal for ethologists, researchers, students, partners -
and institutional stakeholders in the study of farm animal behaviour.*

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1. Why this project?

Sanctuaire La Garie is a safe haven for animals originating, directly or indirectly, from farming systems: pigs, cows, goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, geese, equines and other animals that are traditionally perceived through their productive role.

These animals are among the most numerous, the most exploited and the least visible in our societies.

They are also at the centre of major contemporary questions relating to animal welfare, agriculture, food systems, environmental sustainability, public health, agricultural transitions and our ethical relationship with the living world.

Yet much of our understanding of their behaviour comes from contexts shaped by production constraints: intensive or extensive farming systems, economic cycles, controlled reproduction, restricted mobility, human interventions and managed social groups.

La Garie Sanctuary offers a different context.

Located near Toulouse in Southern France, the sanctuary extends across 55 hectares of meadows and woodland.

Here, animals are no longer expected to produce. They are no longer defined by an economic purpose. They live in relatively stable social groups, on a large territory, with opportunities for social interaction, routine formation, choice, exploration and time.

This situation does not automatically transform the sanctuary into a research centre. However, it creates an opportunity: the possibility of developing a space for observation, learning and collaboration around animal behaviour beyond systems of exploitation.





2. A rare opportunity for ethology

Ethology seeks to understand animal behaviour within its context: interactions, needs, choices, adaptations, communication, emotions, learning processes and social relationships.

For farm animals, a major challenge remains.

Many observations necessarily take place in environments where behaviour is influenced by production systems and management constraints.

This is not to suggest that such observations are less valuable. They are essential for understanding the conditions in which the vast majority of these animals live.

But they do not always answer another question:

What do these animals reveal when they are no longer expected to produce?

Within a sanctuary such as La Garie, it becomes possible to observe different dimensions of animal life:

- long-term social relationships
- attachment bonds
- group dynamics
- spatial exploration
- resting behaviours
- comfort-seeking behaviours
- nutritional choices
- maternal behaviours when conditions allow
- interspecies relationships
- adaptation to stable environments
- the effects of ageing
- behavioural individuality

Such observations may enrich scientific, educational and ethical understanding of farm animals.



3. What La Garie can contribute

La Garie does not seek to replace laboratories, universities, veterinary schools or research institutions.

Its potential role is different.

La Garie can become a **partner site**, a **place for observation**, an **educational immersion setting** and a **space for knowledge sharing**.

Its strengths are tangible:

- approximately 55 hectares of meadows, woodland and open spaces
- a diversity of species originating from agricultural systems
- animals living for life without productive purpose
- relatively stable social groups
- an ecolodge providing workspaces and accommodation for up to eighteen people
- facilities suitable for workshops, study visits and immersive learning experiences
- an environment conducive to long-term and peaceful observation
- a clearly stated ethical mission



This combination is uncommon.

It creates opportunities for observation stays, training courses, educational programmes, methodological workshops, student immersions and collaborations with researchers interested in exploring aspects of animal behaviour within a non-productive context.

4. A multi-species approach

This project is not limited to a single species.

It focuses primarily on farm animals because they concentrate a remarkable number of contemporary questions about the living world.

Among them:

- pigs, often studied for their intelligence, social behaviour and sensitivity
- cows, at the heart of dairy and meat systems, displaying complex social, maternal and relational behaviours
- goats and sheep, frequently perceived collectively despite strong individual differences
- chickens, whose natural behaviours are often heavily constrained within production systems
- ducks and geese, frequently associated with practices such as force-feeding
- equines, situated at the intersection of work, leisure, companionship and care.

The value of a multi-species sanctuary lies precisely in its ability to support comparative observations while respecting the specific characteristics of each species.



5. Observing without instrumentalising

One principle is fundamental.

La Garie does not wish animals to become objects of use again in the name of science.

This project must therefore be developed with caution.

Observation should remain non-invasive.

Animals should not be disturbed, displaced, constrained or instrumentalised in order to generate results.

The guiding principles are simple:

- observe without forcing
- document without disturbing
- learn without imposing
- share knowledge without exploiting

This commitment is central to the credibility of the project.

It is also fully aligned with the sanctuary's deeper mission.





6. An Opportunity for Researchers, Students and Educators

Sanctuaire La Garie could offer new perspectives to a variety of specialised audiences, including:

- ethology students
- veterinary students
- researchers
- educators and lecturers
- training organisations
- animal behaviour specialists
- animal welfare professionals
- organisations working on issues related to farm animals

Possible formats could develop progressively:

1. Observation Immersions

Short stays designed to introduce participants to the sanctuary, the species present, their living conditions and initial avenues for observation.

2. Supervised Study Programmes

More structured stays organised in collaboration with partner ethologists, educators or trainers.

3. Methodological Workshops

Practical work focused on observation techniques, note-taking, behavioural recording methods, observational ethics and the comparison of different animal living contexts.

4. Academic Partnerships

Collaborative projects developed with universities, veterinary schools, research centres or academic laboratories.



5. Sponsored Learning Opportunities

Over time, Sanctuaire La Garie hopes to secure funding that would enable certain programmes to remain accessible to students and early-career researchers with limited financial resources.

7. A Possible Contribution to Animal Ethics

This project is not solely scientific. It may also contribute to evolving ethical considerations in a particularly meaningful way.

Developing a deeper understanding of farm animals also means gaining access to dimensions of their lives that are often difficult to observe within productive systems.

When a pig is able to explore, choose, rest, interact and seek comfort, it ceases to be perceived merely as an agricultural category.

When a cow, a goat, a chicken or a goose is observed in an environment where production is no longer expected, a different perspective becomes possible.

In this sense, ethology may contribute to transforming social and cultural perceptions.

Not through confrontation.

Not through self-reproach.

But through the patient observation of living beings.

8. An Open Approach

This project remains under development.



Sanctuaire La Garie does not claim to possess all the expertise required to bring it to life. Quite the opposite.

Its ambition is to build this initiative together with qualified individuals and organisations, including:

- trained ethologists
- researchers
- veterinarians
- educators
- training institutions
- students
- partner organisations

This Statement of Intent is therefore an invitation.

An invitation to visit.

To observe.

To discuss.

To contribute.

To imagine together what a multi-species sanctuary might bring to the field of ethology applied to farm animals.



Initial Avenues for Collaboration

The project is still evolving.

At this stage, our priority is simply to connect with people who are interested in this approach and to explore together the most relevant forms of collaboration.

Among the possibilities currently envisioned:

- exploratory visits to the sanctuary
- observation days and immersive stays
- student placements and educational programmes
- workshops dedicated to behavioural observation
- contributions from ethologists and specialist trainers
- collaborations with universities, schools and training centres
- applied research projects compatible with the sanctuary's mission

Each collaboration would be developed with full respect for animal welfare and for the sanctuary's primary purpose: offering animals a lifelong home free from any productive function.

9. Conclusion

Sanctuaire La Garie protects animals.

But it may also become a place where we learn to see them differently.

At a time when agricultural, environmental, food-related and ethical questions are becoming increasingly important, farm animals deserve to be better understood.

Not only within the systems where they are exploited.

But also within the rare places where they are finally able to live differently.

Sanctuaire La Garie wishes to help open that space.

With care.

With rigour.

With qualified partners.

And with one simple conviction:

Observing differently may help us understand differently.

And understanding differently may help transform our relationship with animals.



For further information...

- Sanctuaire La Garie website : www.lagarie.org
- Email : sanctuairelagarie@gmail.com