

**FROM PAPAYA-EATING DACHSHUNDS TO ANIMALS THAT TASTE GOOD:
PERCEPTIONS OF AND INTERACTIONS WITH LIVESTOCK AND COMPANION
ANIMALS IN COSTA RICA**

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In this ethnographic paper I examine observations and personal animal narratives from citizens of San Rafael de Heredia, a small city in the Central Valley of Costa Rica, to reveal how individuals perceive and interact with livestock and companion animals. Based on research that I conducted in the spring 2015 semester which involved participant observation at a local animal shelter at a farm as well as unstructured interviews with members of the community, this paper will explore how individuals can interact and communicate with animals, how the categories of livestock and companion animal are defined by individuals, how individuals determine what animals of different species may be used for and how these animals are valued, and which animals can be consumed and which animals cannot. I also ponder how having respect toward livestock and consuming them are not mutually exclusive, how physical and emotional closeness to certain animals may play a role in how we associate ourselves with different species of animals, and that eating meat is a perfectly good example of conforming to what is taught and naturalized by society. These ideas may help us have a better understanding of our own associations with different types of animals and why we may eat certain animals and not others.