

## **Can Animals Sense Earthquakes?**

I found this article in National Geographic News- November 11, 2003. It attracted me because I have a dog and I was interested if she can sense an earthquake.

The belief that animals can predict earthquakes has been around for centuries.

In 373 B.C., historians recorded that animals, including rats, snakes and weasels, deserted the Greek city of Helice in droves just days before a quake devastated the place.

Catfish moving violently, chickens that stop laying eggs and bees leaving their hive in a panic have been reported. Countless pet owners claimed to have witnessed their cats and dogs acting strangely before the ground shook—barking or whining for no apparent reason, or showing signs of nervousness and restlessness.

Do animals have a sixth sense that allows them to predict earthquakes? Many pet owners claim their companions became agitated and acted strangely shortly before a quake.

But precisely what animals' sense, if they feel anything at all, is a mystery. One theory is that wild and domestic creatures feel the Earth vibrate before humans. Other ideas suggest they detect electrical changes in the air or gas released from the Earth.

In September 2003 a medical doctor in Japan made headlines with a study that indicated erratic behaviour in dogs, such as excessive barking or biting, could be used to forecast quakes. If the city had not been evacuated, it is estimated that the number of fatalities and injuries could have exceeded 150,000.

It was later discovered, though, that a rare series of small tremors, called foreshocks, occurred before the large quake hit the city.

But not all earthquakes cause unusual animal behaviour while others do.