

Today, I have the pleasure of presenting an award that recognizes a quality that cannot be measured by numbers or results, but by consistency, tenacity, and the ability to remain faithful to one's beliefs. We are talking about courage.

Not the kind of courage that is loud, with grand statements or heroic gestures. But the kind of courage that is patient and constant, built day after day by doing difficult things, even when no one is watching. The kind of courage that keeps you true to what you believe in, even when it would be much easier to back down.

Dawn has been working with Animals' Angels for twenty-three years. Twenty-three years in which she has chosen to tackle one of the most complex issues imaginable for those involved in animal welfare:

the production and trade of live animals in Australia.

She started by monitoring animal exports from the port of Fremantle. It was difficult, often lonely work that required attention, rigor, and a cool head. They made her life difficult in every way possible. They blocked her view, prevented her from approaching the ships, and tried to take away any chance she had of seeing and documenting what was happening.

But she never stopped. She found a way to continue. When she couldn't see, she brought a ladder. When they closed one access point, she found another.

When she was banned from the port, she didn't give up: she simply moved her efforts elsewhere. She focused on the large livestock markets.

— huge, complex, strategic places where transport-related problems can be prevented. Places where it is not easy to talk about animal welfare and where a very particular combination of credibility, firmness, and diplomacy is needed to be heard.

A few weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to accompany her to some of these markets.

I was struck by how, in an environment that one might imagine to be hostile, Dawn is instead respected.

Managers talk to her, ask her opinion, and listen to her observations.

This does not happen by chance.

It is the result of years of work, professionalism, and a rare balance: the ability to say uncomfortable things without closing the door to dialogue.

I expected a tense, perhaps distrustful environment. Instead, I saw respect. People know her, greet her, listen to her. They could decide to ignore her as she has no power, but they accept her observations.

This does not happen by chance. It is the result of years of presence, consistency, competence, but also something more subtle: the ability to build relations and to tell the truth without destroying dialogue.

Dawn manages to say difficult things, to bring up uncomfortable points of view, and to do so in a way that doesn't alienate people, but brings them closer.

This is courage.

It takes courage to enter a world that doesn't share your values and choose to work within it, not against it.

It takes courage to see things that hurt every day, and continue to believe in it.

It also takes courage to cultivate trust, step by step, knowing that every small improvement is still a step forward.

Once, Dawn told me that she considers herself a fixer. Someone who fixes things.

And that word stuck with me. Because it perfectly explains her approach. She doesn't just point out what's wrong—she wants to fix it, improve it, make it work.

And she doesn't get discouraged if it takes time, or if mediation is needed, or if the solutions aren't perfect. “fixing things” is a mission.

And this attitude has brought concrete results. Not the ones she would like and we would all like, but it makes a difference for some animals that go from being invisible to being seen.

And it puts an end to their suffering before it gets worse. And it is another step.

Dawn has built her credibility in a hostile and critical world, ready to take you down. She has been and continues to be called upon to write manuals and guidelines that are now adopted by the industry itself,

by state institutions, and in the markets

She continues to monitor. She has earned respect and a voice—not because she has compromised her principles, but because she has been able to combine firmness with openness.

And that, in my opinion, is a form of courage.

Not the wall, but the bridge. Not anger, but patience.

Working alongside Dawn has taught me a lesson: that there are many ways to pursue change while remaining faithful and consistent.

That you can be firm without being harsh, and you can and continue to believe in it.

It also takes courage to cultivate trust, step by step, knowing that every small improvement is still a step forward.

And you can have an impact by being kind, and you remain true to yourself.

For all this, it is an great honor to present you with the Courage Award today. For your tenacity, your clarity, your ability to see beyond obstacles and continue to “fix things” —

even when everything seems to be pushing you to give up.

Dawn, thank you for your example. Because your way of working has reminded me that courage is not only about weathering storms but also about building bridges with respect and determination.

staying true to what matters.

Congratulations, and thank you so much.