
History of Dogs: When Did Dogs Become "Man's Best Friend"?



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Where did dogs come from? When did our friendship with them begin? When did dogs become "man's best friend"? It seems like dogs have been our constant companions forever! Tracing our bond back through history points to the many ways this friendship grew around the world.

To this day, scientists debate who made the first move — did dogs decide to befriend humans, or was it the other way around? What we do know is that the feeling was mutual, and both species have been fast friends ever since.

The Start of a Beautiful (Centuries-old) Friendship

It's estimated that about 15,000 to 14,000 years ago, wolves (ancestors of the modern dog) began the transition from wild animal to domesticated companion. While some remained wild (today's wolves are their descendants), others chose to associate more closely with humans.

As people learned how to live with and train them, these animals began to assume

important roles in society and family life — hunting, guarding and even companionship. One sign of this bond that archeologists have identified was burial. During this time, humans began burying dogs much like they would bury their own dead, sometimes even burying them together. Examining these ancient dogs' remains gave scientists even deeper insight into human-dog relationships. For example, the Bonn-Oberkassel dog's teeth show that it lived with ailments that would have required human's care to survive.

Around 8,000 years ago, many people began to abandon nomadic ways in favor of settling down and farming, which made working dogs that herded and protected livestock increasingly important in daily life. Dog evolution was shifting too — dog DNA samples from 8,000 to 4,000 years ago show that they were adapting right along with us. While their wolf ancestors were carnivores, dogs developed the ability to digest starchy foods that were common in human diets!

World History of Dog and Human Friendship

Friendship between dogs and humans isn't just a matter of history and archeology — four-legged friends make appearances in ancient art around the world!

Records show that in ancient Greece dogs were often kept in healing temples for their therapeutic abilities. These important members of ancient Greek society were depicted in sculpture and on painted pottery.

Egyptian murals show pharaohs with pet companions, and sculptures, toys, art and even mummies of dogs show how important canines were to pet parents going back as far as 6000 BCE.

Even leashes made it into ancient art depicting dogs with humans! Rock art in northwestern Saudi Arabia is the earliest-known prehistoric art depicting dog-assisted hunting.

We've come a long way since the ancient world, but the desire to immortalize our canine companions in art is just as strong now as it ever was!

The People's Pet

In the Middle Ages, European nobles had close relationships with their dogs. Ladies doted on their fashionable lap dogs and noblemen often went hunting with their hounds — a practice that grew so popular that breeding hunting dogs became a trend throughout

Europe.

We can probably credit the Victorian era in England with creating the kind of dog-friendly family households that ours resemble. Pet ownership wasn't just for the wealthy anymore; having a dog was now considered character-building because it taught children how to be responsible. Ever since then, Britain has been a center for dog breeding, and the first formal competitive dog shows were held in Newcastle in the mid-19th century.

From ancient hunting companions to highly trained service dogs, human-and-canine friendship has a rich and fascinating history. Learning to connect with and better understand our dogs not only brings you and your four-legged friend closer together but also connects you both to a history of friendship that goes back thousands of years!"

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