

## TRANSCRIPT

We are used to seeing domestic animals every day. Some animals, such as cats and dogs, often serve as pets. Other animals—cows, chickens, pigs—provide food and a variety of materials to people. Animals also often facilitate people's work; elephants, horses, and camels are some examples. We know that some of these animals descended from wild animals, which means that they somehow became domesticated. When did this change happen and how?

Modern evidence suggests that the first animals were domesticated around 12,000 years ago. We're talking about dogs. Later, between 9000 and 7000 BC, cows or domestic cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs were domesticated in the Middle East. These animals would become a major source of food for ancient civilizations. Starting from 4000 BC working animals, like oxen, became more common both in the Middle East and Europe. Cats, which started appearing as pets since 3000 BC, retained their wild roots more than other animals. We still see this wild side even today.

Now, how did animals become domesticated? Multiple theories explaining domestication existed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Some theories are usually not based on evidence or any empirical data. It was once believed that there was some genius out there who decided to domesticate the first animal. For some time, scientists believed that scarce resources would force animals and humans to live closer together, which would in turn foster domestication. For instance, the Oasis Theory, developed by Gordon Childe in 1950, states that as the climate became drier in Central Asia, people would concentrate around oasis areas. Scarcity of wild resources prompted cultivation of plants, which in turn attracted animals. The problem with the Oasis Theory is that domestication did not initially occur in oases, as we now know. Joel Cohen proposed an alternative theory, suggesting that population growth and lack of food prompted people to cultivate plants and domesticate animals. However, the theory does not fully hold because firstly, it assumes that domestication was intentional; and secondly, domestication is very gradual, meaning it does not provide great benefits in the first generations.

Unlike animals that primarily serve as food sources, dogs may have had a different path of domestication. The most modern view holds that dogs were domesticated naturally, through the mutual benefits of a partnership in hunting. Humans and wolves hunted the same prey. Wolves could spot the prey easily and harass the prey continuously. Human intellect and weapons meant more efficient hunting and more meat from hunting activities, and possibly some scraps for the wolves. Humans would not mind tamer and less aggressive animals around. Naturally, tamer species would stay with humans, while more aggressive and more successful animals would stay wild.

Animals such as cows and sheep would have been domesticated mainly as a source of food. The proof of the domestication process can be seen in the high proportion of the bones of young animals found in old human settlements. This may suggest a starting point of animal domestication. Sheep and goats are very common with pastoral nomads—tribes who would move all year long in

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search of fresh grass for the animals. Cattle and pigs were domesticated slightly later and became more representative of settled communities. By domesticating animals, humans would have constant access to meat and other animal products. Later, some of the animals, such as oxen, would also be used to perform physically difficult work.

There do exist alternative theories for the domestication process. For instance, Richard Bulliet, a professor of history at Columbia University, argues that animals were first used and domesticated for religious purposes. He argues that if humans wanted meat, they would kill the animals they found, instead of putting the animals in an enclosure or pen and wait for them to breed. Bulliet suggests that animals would be kept and used for recurring religious practices (such as summer solstice celebrations) or used as sacrifices in case of droughts or other natural disasters. The theory offers an explanation of why the animals would be kept unharmed for some time.

Another interesting line of research is presented by David Anthony, an archaeologist, who explored the first domestication of horses. He relies on evidence from multiple sources, such as archeology, linguistics, zoology, chemistry, and climatology, amongst others. However, let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. The domestication of horses is so closely tied to the development of the wheel that it deserves its own lecture. We'll leave that for next week!

Any questions?