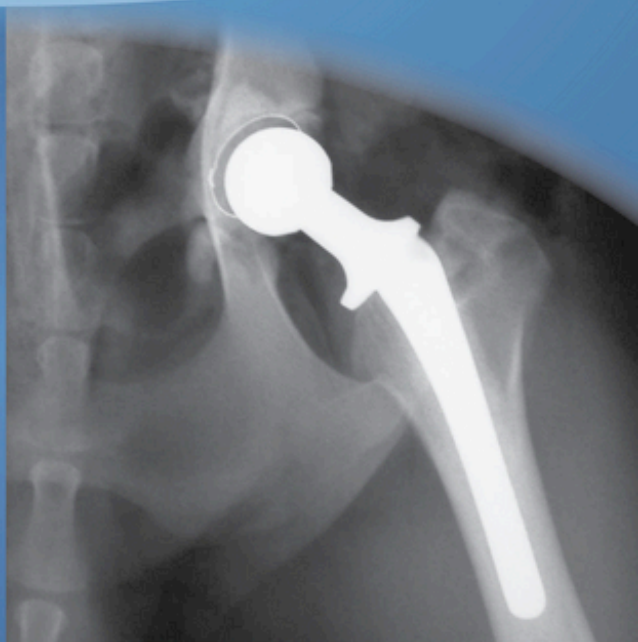


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Companion Animal Ethics

Peter Sandøe, Sandra Corr, and Clare Palmer



WILEY Blackwell

Companion Animal Ethics

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Companion Animal Ethics

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
Introduction	1
1 History of Companion Animals and the Companion Animal Sector	8
2 The Development and Role of the Veterinary and Other Professions in Relation to Companion Animals	24
3 Human Attachment to Companion Animals	41
4 Companion Animal Welfare	58
5 Theories of Companion Animal Ethics	73
6 Breeding and Acquiring Companion Animals	89
7 Selective Breeding	103
8 Feeding and the Problem of Obesity	117
9 Companion Animal Training and Behavioural Problems	132
10 Routine Neutering of Companion Animals	150
11 Performing Convenience Surgery: Tail Docking, Ear Cropping, Debarking and Declawing	169
12 Treating Sick Animals and End-of-Life Issues	186
13 Unwanted and Unowned Companion Animals	201
14 Ethics and Broader Impacts of Companion Animals	217
15 Other Companions	235
16 Companion Animals and the Future	252
<i>Index</i>	<i>269</i>

Foreword

Humans have been domesticating animals and keeping some of them as companions for thousands of years. Over the past century, the industrialized Western world has seen a huge increase in the number of companion animals, especially dogs and cats; and this increase has been accompanied by a number of ethical and welfare issues specific to those companion animals. Those who keep animals as companions usually have no wish to harm the animals in their care, but the way we treat companion animals is, whether we like it or not, affected by both tradition and culture, and because humans and animals have for the most part evolved separately, compromises sometimes have to be struck between the best interests of the animal and those of the owner. So, how should individuals and society address these compromises? What ethical principles should we use to determine how to interact with companion animals? How do we decide what really matters and how we should treat companion animals? How do we decide whether new and sometimes painful or stressful treatments developed for humans should be used on companion animals? How do we deal with issues where a decision in the best interests of one companion animal impacts adversely on other animals whether in our control or in the wild?

The science of animal welfare has proven extraordinarily useful in providing the evidence to help us with such questions, but decisions on appropriate behaviour are ultimately dependent on society reaching a consensus on what should be done. This is where ethics helps make clear what the issues are, alerts us to the dangers of relying on custom and past behaviour and helps us to work through the implications of adopting a particular ethical position. This is the first book that has set out to provide a comprehensive ethical analysis of this topic, and the authors are admirably placed to guide the reader through this forest, being eminent and respected in the fields of both ethics and the science of animal welfare. We are very grateful to them for undertaking the task and for providing us with this excellent and very readable account combining a synthesis of the existing literature and the authors' original perspectives on the issues. It will be an excellent addition to the UFAW/Wiley Series.

Robert Hubrecht

January 2015

Acknowledgements

In this book, we explore the important ethical questions and problems that arise as a result of humans keeping animals as companions who live with us in our homes. These ethical issues are not only important but also highly complex. To do justice to this complexity, we draw on a wide range of disciplines to underpin our arguments, including history, psychology, ethical and political theory, and the veterinary, behavioural and social sciences. In addition to incorporating a significant body of published research, we have also been greatly helped by our colleagues.

Four of these colleagues, Brenda Bonnett, Andrew Gardiner, Iben Meyer and James A. Serpell, have contributed so much, through advice and written input, to certain chapters that we have acknowledged them as co-authors of those chapters. We are immensely grateful for their contributions.

Many other friends and colleagues have given advice and/or have commented on specific chapters. In particular, we would like to thank Charlotte Reinhard Bjørnvad, Stine B. Christiansen, Lise Lotte Christensen, Björn Forkman, Merete Fredholm, Gail Golab, Ayoe Hoff, T. J. Kasperbauer, Sara Kondrup, Vibeke Knudsen, Helle Friis Proschowsky and Cecilie Agnete Thorslund. Special thanks are due to Geir Tveit for helping us to check the references and to Sara Kondrup for helping us make the index.

About 4 years have passed since we made the first outline for the book. Since then, working on the book has taken up a significant part of our time. While it has been enjoyable, it was also at times a struggle, due to conflicting commitments. Much of the work has been conducted at odd hours, in evenings, on weekends and during vacations; this has been a strain on our family and friends, and we are grateful for their patience.

Finally, Peter would like to thank the Department of Food and Resource Economics at the University of Copenhagen for financial and other kinds of support that, among other things, enabled him to go to University of Pennsylvania for two research visits; he

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Peter Sandøe
Sandra Corr
Clare Palmer

Introduction

I.1	Introduction	1
I.2	Companion Animal Ethics	2
I.3	Why We Use The Terms ‘Companion Animals’ and ‘Owners’	4
I.4	The Structure of This Book	7

I.1 Introduction

Companion animals can be a source of pleasure, fun, exercise, comfort, fascination and consolation. Choosing to live with animal companions can be life enriching, even when it comes with some expense and inconvenience. Most of those who live with animal companions believe this to be a two-way relationship: as well as being fed and cared for, the animal companions also derive pleasure, satisfaction and comfort from living with people.

This seems, therefore, to be a win–win situation: what is good for people is also good for the animals; the animals are cared for, and they help to create human happiness. Put like this, there does not seem to be much need for a book on companion animal ethics. But things are not that simple. For instance, it is not always clear what is good for animal companions, and what is good for animals may be in conflict with what is good for the people with whom they live. Animal companions can also be the source of very different human responses than pleasure and consolation, such as anxiety, fear or distress. So, there is a need for ethical reflection regarding our relationship with companion animals.

In this short introductory chapter, we first elaborate on why we think there is a need for ethical reflection about companion animals and then explain our ethical approach. In the following section, we will try to explain what we mean by ‘companion’ animals and

why we have chosen to focus on them, rather than on the wider group of pet animals. Finally, we will briefly outline the structure of the book.

1.2 Companion Animal Ethics

Even those who are well informed about veterinary and animal science and who have kept animals as companions for many years are sometimes unsure about what is in the best interests of their animals. Those without such knowledge and experience may be even more uncertain. For example, someone may be doubtful as to whether neutering is in the best interests of their male dog or whether their cat should be let out to roam. To complicate matters, popular ideas about companion animals' interests may not reflect the findings of current behavioural and veterinary research.

People may also find it difficult to balance potentially conflicting concerns for the well-being of their animals. If a dog or a cat is seriously ill, for example, due to a malignant type of cancer, an owner may find it difficult to weigh the interest of the animal in living (and their own desire for the animal to remain alive) against a concern to prevent their companion from suffering. This may lead to a dilemma between continuing veterinary treatment and euthanasing the animal. The owner may ask the vet for advice, but she or he may have similar doubts.

In other cases, different people may have strong and conflicting views about the significance of companion animals and how we should treat them. These conflicting views are often rooted in different ideas about animals' moral status, whether there is something special about companion animal species and what we do and do not owe to them. For example, some people consider painlessly killing stray and feral cats and dogs to be ethically unproblematic. Others claim that healthy dogs and cats have a right to life, whether owned or not. Similarly, some people see no moral problem in docking dogs' tails to make their appearance meet breed standards, whereas others find tail docking a morally unacceptable violation of the dog's bodily integrity.

Thus, living with companion animals gives rise to *uncertainties* about what is in the animals' best interests, *moral dilemmas* in weighing different human and animal well-being concerns and *ethical disagreements* concerning the moral significance and appropriate treatment of companion animals. These uncertainties, dilemmas and disagreements are the subject of this book (Figure 1.1).

Despite the millions of cats, dogs and other animals kept as companions around the world, the ethical aspects of this unique relationship have not previously been the subject of a comprehensive ethical analysis. As a result, although the ideas of animal welfare and the approaches to ethics that we discuss here are well established, the present book breaks new ground. In particular, previous work on animal ethics has tended to focus on higher-level theoretical questions, rather than on the more practical ethical issues that arise from our day-to-day engagement with the animals in our homes.

We believe that thinking through some of these everyday ethical issues – issues that can be incredibly important in individual animal lives, as well as our own human lives – is a critical step in developing and applying animal ethics. Partly because much of this material is new and cannot be taken for granted, and also for practical reasons of space,



Figure I.1 A 1-year-old cross-breed dog being carried in a 'Pooch Pouch'. In an accompanying article, the owner claimed that the dog loves it and it keeps him safe on the busy streets of New York; but critics claim the pouch is a 'fashion statement', which causes distress to the animals. (*Alberto Reyes/Wenn*)

we have been selective in terms of the topics and frameworks we discuss. Consequently, there are omissions and places where we are, of necessity, somewhat brief. However, we hope that what is included will provide a useful resource and a starting point for future work.

This book, unlike many in the field of animal ethics, does not advocate any particular ethical position, beyond the widely accepted idea that the lives and experiences of sentient animals should count for something in our ethical decision making. We take a pluralist perspective, presenting a variety of approaches to human and animal welfare, to animal ethics and to particular ethical problems raised by companion animals. Although we, as the authors of this book, have our own (often divergent) views, we have attempted to present the arguments in a balanced way, though there may be places where we have not always succeeded in putting our sympathies to one side. We hope to show that at least some disputes about our ethical relations with companion animals may flow from different understandings of animal welfare or different approaches to ethics, but that – considered from those perspectives – they are at least comprehensible and rational.

This book draws on a wide range of supporting scientific material, particularly from psychology and veterinary, behavioural and social sciences. In order to ensure that this book is as informative and up to date as possible, we invited experts in relevant fields to join us in co-authoring several chapters, to improve the quality and accuracy of the empirical material we discuss.

1.3 Why We Use The Terms 'Companion Animals' and 'Owners'

Humans use animals in various ways, mostly linked to tangible outputs or services, such as for food or fur, riding, guarding or modelling human diseases. However, some animals are kept in people's homes where they appear to serve a less clearly defined purpose – typically these animals are referred to as 'pets'.

As Grier (2006: p. 8) comments, the term 'pet' has 'a complex history and obscure origins'. In the sixteenth century, 'pet' was used to describe both people who were indulged or treated as favourites and tamed animals kept for pleasure or companionship (Grier 2006: p. 9). In some cases, the term 'favourite' was also used for animals kept for human company.

Recently, however, the term 'pet' has become controversial, on the grounds that it fails to respect animals' own dignity or integrity. For instance, Linzey and Cohn (2011) argue that calling animals 'pets' is derogatory and insulting and that we should instead use the term 'companion animals'. The Companion Animal Welfare Council in the United Kingdom takes a similar perspective (CAWC, n.d.). Grier (2006: p. 10), on the other hand, while acknowledging these opinions, continues to use the term 'pet' on the grounds that 'it is in wide use' and that people have a 'practical understanding of its meaning'.

In thinking about this book, we recognised the arguments on both sides: while 'pet' is the most widely used and understood term, we also accept that it may have demeaning connotations. However, we were persuaded by another set of arguments – that 'pet' and 'companion animal' are not straightforwardly interchangeable terms, but rather that we should think of 'companion animals' as a subset of those animals commonly called 'pets'. We take the term 'pet' to encompass a very broad range of animals alongside whom people choose to live and consider 'companion animals' to be a subset of 'pets', with whom we have a special interactive bond.

Let us consider this more systematically. Although the term 'pet' can be used in different ways, some features seem to be widely accepted as characterising the human/pet relationship. Grier (2006: p. 10) draws on Keith Thomas' characterisation of pets in England between 1400 and 1800: pets were distinguished by being allowed in the house, being given individual names and never being eaten. This is a useful starting point, although some animals widely regarded as pets, for example, fish in a tank, may well not be given individual names. Varner (2002) drawing on Barnbaum (1998) suggests a further set of characterisations, with which it is worth engaging.

First, Varner suggests, we expect a pet's owner to regard it affectionately. He seems right that this is normally the case – a 'pet' is not usually an object of hate, fear or disgust to its owner (in the way that, say, an invading cockroach may be regarded). Still, it would

presumably be possible to keep a pet – say, a snake or a stick insect – because one is fascinated by it or curious about it, rather than because one felt affection for it.

Second, Varner suggests, a pet should live in or close to the home (this was also part of Thomas' characterisation of a pet). To rule out plants, Varner adds that for something to be a pet, it should be mobile, and thus, either voluntarily choose to remain in the home or be prevented from leaving. We decided to restrict our definition of 'pet' still further, to animals that actually live *in* the home, thereby ruling out horses.

We recognise that some readers will see the exclusion of horses as a significant omission from the book. While some people do regard horses as pets or companion animals, and they can be kept near to (though very rarely in) one's home, they also to a very large degree have other roles. Firstly, for many people, horses are primarily kept for sport. Secondly, the keeping of horses is still in many respects linked to an agricultural context. For example, in many places, even in industrial Western nations, often *the very same* horses that are kept by private individuals are eventually slaughtered and used for human or animal food. So, although there is much to be said about horses and ethics, we will not say it here.

Third, Varner proposes, a pet must be the kind of being that lives a life different in kind from the owner, in terms of its capacities, occupations and so on; this rules out keeping another human as a pet.

Fourth, a pet should have interests – its life can go better or worse for it; it has a welfare or a good of its own – and it should depend in significant ways on its owner to help fulfil those interests. So, a pet cannot be a robot, such as a Tamagotchi, which cannot, for instance, have 'poor welfare'.

Although this characterisation of a pet rules out plants, pests, human beings and robots, it includes most animals voluntarily kept by people in their homes: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects and arachnids. While keeping such animals as pets certainly does raise ethical issues, the focus of this book is narrower: we are interested in animals kept primarily as companions. Even if one has affection for one's pet tarantula, it is, as Varner (2002) notes, a stretch to call it a companion. Insects and fish, likewise, may be kept for many reasons, but rarely primarily for their companionship. As argued by Varner (2002: p. 452), while a companion animal has all the characteristics shared by pets, it has additional characteristics that make it more than a pet.

However, this raises questions about what we mean by 'companionship'. Likewise, there is no generally accepted definition of 'companion animal'. The US-based animal welfare organisation, the ASPCA (n.d.) somewhat circularly defines companion animals as 'domesticated or domestic-bred animals whose physical, emotional, behavioural and social needs can be readily met as companions in the home, or in close daily relationship with humans'.

What seems critical to this definition is the emphasis on relationship and reciprocal engagement. Varner (2002) takes the term 'companion' to imply a 'significant degree of social interaction' between the owner(s) and the animal. Although somewhat vague, this involves humans and animals recognising and responding to one another as specific individuals (rather than, for instance, a fish swimming to the top of the tank to pick up food thrown in by anyone). For humans, companionship normally includes seeking out

the company of the particular animal for comfort, consolation, play and so on, and this is likely to be reciprocal in the case of companion animals.

We take this kind of reciprocal engagement to be the hallmark of human/animal companionship, and as the vast majority of the animals with whom we have such mutual relations are dogs and cats, they are the main focus of this book. However, other animals may be companions, and these are discussed in Chapter 15.

Some readers may think it an omission that we do not discuss in detail the relations between humans and working animals kept in the home, such as guide dogs, guard dogs and some hunting dogs. Although much of what we say about dogs kept as companions also applies to working dogs, we concluded that they raise special ethical questions beyond the scope of this book. For similar reasons, we decided to exclude companion animals used for various forms of animal-assisted therapy.

Another important terminological question relates to what we should call those people who live with and look after companion animals. Again, the terms used here have recently become controversial. Linzey and Cohn (2011) reject the term ‘owners’ in favour of ‘carers’. ‘The Guardian Campaign’ run by the international animal rights and rescue organisation, In Defense of Animals (IDA), promotes a switch to the language of guardianship from the language of ownership. IDA (n.d.) argues that ‘since other animals, whether domesticated or wild, are living beings, they ought not to have owners, only guardians, friends, caretakers, protectors, family or respectful observers’. The popularity of the term ‘guardian’ is slowly growing in the United States at least; a few US cities and Rhode Island have now incorporated the term into their animal-related ordinances.

While we have no objections to either ‘carer’ or ‘guardian’ and are sympathetic to the arguments, we were reluctant to use terms not currently in widespread use. Legally speaking, companion animals *are* the property of the people who look after them. While many of those who defend animal rights, in particular, find the idea of companion animals as property offensive and immoral, changing the terminology does not change the legal situation. So, we decided to use the more traditional term, ‘owners’, in this book.

We also recognise that relations people have with their animal companions, and the kinds of animals they keep as companions, vary significantly across cultures. In some cultures, for instance, dogs are regarded as belonging to an entire human community and are fed by a number of different households. For example, this often seems to be the case for unowned street dogs in India, which are also legally protected (see, for instance, Srinivasan 2013). Some cultures tame and keep members of local wild species as companions – for instance, long-tailed macaques on Angaur Island in Polynesia. These relationships, while clearly important, raise their own ethical issues. We did not want to deal superficially with such issues, nor to attempt to tackle them without sufficient cultural knowledge. So, we decided to limit the scope of this book to the keeping of animal companions in what we (very roughly) call the industrialised West, focusing on Europe, Australasia and North America. This is where all the authors are located, and *Companion Animal Ethics* reflects this location.

Finally, we decided not to make either serious cruelty towards or neglect of companion animals a focus of this book (although we do say a little about this in Chapters 3 and 4). Serious cruelty and neglect of companion animals are, virtually universally, ethically condemned and, in many places, are already illegal. We wanted instead to discuss the

ongoing ethical uncertainties, dilemmas and disagreements about living with companion animals, rather than issues about which everyone already agrees and to which we could make little new ethical contribution.

1.4 The Structure of This Book

The book begins with three chapters that establish the context and background for thinking about ethics and companion animals. Chapter 1 provides a brief history of the development of human relations to companion animals. Chapter 2 outlines the development of the veterinary and other animal-related professions with a focus on how these professions influence and deal with ethical issues relating to companion animals, and Chapter 3 explores the nature of the human–companion animal bond, including the ways in which humans are psychologically attached to companion animals, and the effects of keeping companion animals on human health. The next two chapters examine two essential concerns for companion animal ethics: ideas of animal welfare (Chapter 4) and different approaches to thinking about ethics (Chapter 5). Chapters 6–13 then consider particular ethical issues raised by breeding and rearing, pedigree selective breeding, diet, training and behaviour, convenience surgeries and neutering. We also consider ethical issues raised by unwanted animal companions, including the euthanasia of healthy animals; and by the veterinary treatment of sick animals. Chapter 14 considers how to deal with broader negative impacts of animal companions in terms of zoonoses, environmental effects and the use of resources. Chapter 15 considers special ethical issues raised by companion animals other than cats and dogs. Finally, in Chapter 16, we speculate on the future of the companion animal sector in terms of ethics, law, policy and the market.

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History of Companion Animals and the Companion Animal Sector



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1.1	Introduction	8
1.2	Early Human Relations to Companion Animals	10
1.3	Animal Companions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe	11
1.4	Europe and North America 1600–1950	13
1.4.1	Breeding	15
1.4.2	Diet	16
1.4.3	Training	17
1.5	From the 1950s to the Present	17
1.6	Are Companion Animals Benefactors or Social Parasites?	20

1.1 Introduction

Many households in the industrialised Western world own companion animals. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA, 2012) reported that just over a third of US households kept one or more dogs in 2011, and just under a third kept one or more

cats (AVMA, 2012: p. 1). Figures are similar, though somewhat lower, in the European Union (EU) where, in 2010, just over 25% of households had at least one dog, and just under 25% had at least one cat, according to the European Pet Food Industry (FEDIAF, 2010). In most Western countries, the number of households keeping dogs and cats has been steadily growing for decades.

The AVMA (2012) also gives us information on people's attitudes to the animals in their homes. Two-thirds of US dog owners see their dogs as members of the family; most of the rest, according to the survey, view them as 'companions' or 'pets'. Over half the owners see cats as family members. For both species, the younger the owners, the more likely they are to view their animals as family members (AVMA, 2012: p. 14). According to a survey prepared for a pet food company in 2000, nearly half of American dog owners have taken their dog on vacation, and a similar number have celebrated their dog's birthday (Ralston Purina, 2000). Thus the general trend is not only to allow dogs and cats into the family home but also – in these respects, at least – to treat them as members of the family.

Many owners of companion animals put their money where their mouth is. Thus they both demand, and can access, a growing supply of expensive products and services, including organic dog and cat food, elaborate day-care facilities, special overnight hotels, and advanced veterinary care. It's difficult to pin down the exact sums involved here, as different surveys produce different figures; but all show that animal companions are costly. According to the AVMA (2012: p. 57) in 2011, the average US dog owner spent \$378 on veterinary services alone. The American Pet Products Association puts expenditure much higher: \$655 on routine and surgical veterinary visits, \$254 on food, \$274 on kennel boarding and \$359 on other products and services, in total more than \$1500 per year. The amount spent by the average cat owner is smaller, but not by much according to the American Pet Products Association (APPA, n.d.). Although there may be significant local variations, it is reasonable to claim that the trend to spend increasing amounts on dogs, cats and other companion animals is representative of the industrialised Western world as a whole.

Yet this, surely, raises interesting questions. The number of animal companions is growing, while the costs of keeping them are increasing. Why would so many contemporary households – in particular, urban and suburban households in industrial societies – decide to spend their scarce resources on sharing their lives and homes with members of other species? How did our relationship with animal companions develop such that this could come about, and why? Could companion animals be some kind of substitute for the animals that people formerly lived alongside in rural, agriculturally based societies? Is keeping animal companions a symptom of changing family and household structures, and perhaps increasing loneliness? Or is it, instead, a way of expanding relations to nature that has been made possible by growing wealth? Are companion animals giving their owners tangible benefits or are they, rather, a diversion from other, more important, things?

In this chapter we will try to address these questions in two ways: first, we will sketch an outline of some key historical developments that led to current Western attitudes to animal companions. Second, from the perspective of evolutionary biology, we will consider whether animal companions do benefit their owners, and if so, in what ways and how much.

As we noted in the Introduction, the scope of this book is limited to the Western nations, in particular to Europe, Australasia and North America. Although living with animals as companions is practiced globally, the practice takes so many different forms internationally that – unfortunately – we do not have space to discuss them all in sufficient detail.

1.2 Early Human Relations to Companion Animals

There is sound evidence to show that humans have lived alongside domesticated animals for more than 10,000 years. But there is still considerable dispute about how, when and why animal domestication first occurred (and even what we should take domestication to mean). It is widely agreed, however, that dogs were the first animals to be domesticated, though even here there is uncertainty over whether dogs as opportunistic scavengers ‘domesticated themselves’ or whether they were deliberately drawn in or captured by people (see Cassidy, 2007: p. 7).

However domestication began, it is likely that dogs soon became useful to people in a practical sense, in particular by warning of intruders, tracking down prey animals, and finding wounded animals that escaped during hunts. But we do not know whether dogs were more than this; not just helpers and guards, but also objects of human affection. There is some archaeological evidence that prehistoric humans had affectionate feelings for dogs. In 1978, at a late Paleolithic site in northern Israel, for instance, a tomb was uncovered where about 12,000 years ago a person had been buried with a dog or wolf puppy. The hand of the dead person, who was around 50 years old, was placed on the animal’s shoulder. It is likely that the dog was sacrificed when the person died in order that it could accompany the person onwards in his or her spiritual journey (Davis & Valla, 1978). There are many other cases, across the globe, where dogs appear to have been buried after death, a practice that was rarely adopted with other animals, with the exception of the mummification of cats in Egypt. In fact, the archaeologist Morey notes that, across many cultures, dead dogs seem to have been treated rather like dead people (Morey, 2006: p. 164).

The history of the emergence of cats as human companions is even less clear than that of dogs, in part because of uncertainty over whether and how cats could have been useful to people. Genetic evidence suggests that all current housecats come from *Felis s. lybica* wildcat populations in the Middle East, and there is some archaeological evidence to suggest that they became human companions as long as 10,000 years ago (Driscoll *et al.*, 2009). It’s likely that certain human-tolerant cats came to live near humans to feed on small rodents and trash, that humans in turn tolerated them, and that gradually these bolder cats diverged from their wild relatives (Driscoll *et al.*, 2009). However, it was in Egypt around 3700 years ago that cat domestication really seems to have spread, with cats living in homes, being represented in art, and being bred (Driscoll *et al.*, 2009). From Egypt, the practice of living with domesticated cats seems to have spread across the world.

From ancient times it has also been common to keep other animals, not least birds, as companions. For example, there is ample evidence from ancient Greece that people kept a

number of bird species in cages for company, and according to Kitchell (2011: p. 19) next to dogs, birds ‘may have been the second most common type of pet in ancient Greece’.

Living affectionately with animals also seems to have been common in many hunter-forager societies across the globe. Evidence for this can be found in reports from early European explorers, missionaries and, later, anthropologists, who describe the affection with which dogs and other animals in the households of peoples living as hunters, gatherers and horticulturalists were regarded (Serpell, 1996: Chapter 4). Among these peoples, keeping some animals for company, not food, seemed to be the norm rather than the exception; humans were unwilling to sell or give away their animals, and became distraught with grief when the animals were taken away from them by force (Serpell, 1996: Chapter 4). These attachments are seen as strange by the European authors who write about them, and who express amusement or astonishment at the degree of affection so-called primitive peoples expressed towards animals (Serpell, 1996: Chapter 4). These accounts themselves suggest, however, that while attachments to animals were not widely accepted in Europe, they were nonetheless widespread elsewhere. Keeping animals as companions seems to be a widely practiced part of human life; it may be the European failure to do so until relatively recently that requires explanation.

1.3 Animal Companions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Christian theology shaped Europe’s cultural and political climate from medieval times, and its influence was persistent. Prior to 1600, at least, a dominant view held within Christian orthodoxy was that close relations between humans and animals were theologically and morally troubling, and were best avoided. Of course, different theological traditions had somewhat divergent approaches here, and there were some notable exceptions. The best known of these is St Francis of Assisi, who famously called animals his brothers and sisters, and as Hughes (1996: p. 313) notes, friendships with animals were not unusual among religious ascetics.

A key idea that strongly influenced the dominant Christian tradition of keeping animals at a distance was the belief that humans had a unique status in nature. This idea was supported in multiple ways. One of the most influential was Aristotle’s argument that humans, like other animals, have a nutritive and sensitive soul, but that they differ from animals by also having an intellectual or a rational soul. Medieval theologians linked this idea with a second powerful concept of separation, drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, that man is created in God’s image:

Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

(Genesis 1: 26)

This idea of separation was reflected and revitalised in early modern philosophy in the work of René Descartes (1596–1650). Descartes divided the world into souled and

soulless beings, arguing that animals lacked souls while humans possessed them. Since Descartes equated the soul with the mind and consciousness, his view entailed the conclusion that animals lack consciousness and rational thought, and that their actions and responses were purely the result of mechanistic processes. Although Descartes' work is open to more subtle interpretation (see Cottingham, 1978) the claim that animals are essentially mechanisms, lacking both agency and feelings (including the capacity to feel pain) was influential not only in terms of reinforcing the existing view of human supremacy, but also serving as a licence to deny that animals could have morally relevant needs.

That humans have a unique status vis-à-vis the animals does not, by itself, imply anything about whether or not humans should enjoy their company – just as the assumption that flowers lack sentience should not debar us from enjoying their beauty. The claim that humans ought to maintain a clear boundary between themselves and other animals follows from a different aspect of a Christian view of human nature: the idea that to get close to God, humans should suppress and forsake the animal sides of their natures. The historian Keith Thomas maintains that humans were taught 'to regard their bodily impulses as "animal" ones, needing to be subdued' (Thomas, 1984: p. 38). Lust, in particular, was seen as belonging to human's problematic nature; and one of Thomas's sixteenth-century sources is quoted as saying that lust made men 'like ... swine, goats, dogs and the most savage and brutish beasts in the world' (Thomas, 1984: p. 38). A tacit premise here seems to be that by enjoying the company of animals, a human being will excite his or her 'animal side'. Bestiality therefore was a particularly heinous sin, since it 'was the sin of confusion; it was immoral to mix the categories' (Thomas, 1984: p. 39).

However, the idea of 'mixing the categories' of human and animal was regarded as more broadly problematic, beyond having sex with them. According to Thomas 'in early modern England even animal pets were morally suspect, especially if admitted to the table and fed better than the servants'; and he quotes a moralist from the early seventeenth century as saying: 'Over-familiar usage of any brute creature is to be abhorred' (Thomas, 1984: p. 40).

Thomas reproduces the following story of a pious woman from the sixteenth century who on her deathbed regrets the way she and her husband have privileged their female dog:

She ... said "Good husband, you and I have offended God grievously in receiving many a time this bitch into our bed; we would have been loathe to have received a Christian soul ... into our bed, and to have nourished him in our bosoms, and to have fed him at our table, as we have done this filthy cur many times. The Lord give us grace to repent it" ... and afterwards she could not abide to look upon the bitch any more.

(Thomas, 1984: p. 40)

Being too close to dogs, or treating them better than some people, was seen as problematic. Occasionally, dogs were even demonised, although in this respect, the dog's situation during the Middle Ages seems to have been better than that of cats.

There is considerable uncertainty as to the roles cats played in medieval Europe. We have evidence that they were skinned, though this may not mean that they all were kept for their skins; many may have led essentially feral lives, while others were kept as companions (O'Connor, 1992). It is clear, though, that cats were sometimes portrayed as the personification of the devil, and this served as a justification for their persecution. Serpell notes that on feast days, cats were tortured and killed in violent ways as a way of symbolically driving out the Devil:

By associating cats with the Devil and misfortune, the medieval Church seems to have provided the superstitious masses of Europe with a sort of universal scapegoat; something to blame and punish for all of life's numerous perils and hardships.

(Serpell, 2000: p. 12)

Of course, some people still had close relations with cats, although especially for women, this could be seen as evidence of involvement with witchcraft. The cat typically was ascribed the role of the witch's 'familiar', that is, as a demonic companion that the witch sends out to do her evil deeds in return for protection and nourishment. In some cases it was also assumed that the witch transformed herself into the shape of a cat (Serpell, 2000). Although 'official' Christian views in medieval and early modern times required animals to be kept at a distance, in practice, Thomas suggests, 'human relations with domestic animals were closer than official religion implied' (Thomas, 1984: p. 93). Among the aristocratic social elite, for instance, dogs were frequently kept for companionship or as status symbols (Swabe, 1999: p. 161). There were clear differences between these dogs and the dogs used by working people for pulling, guarding and herding. The dogs owned by aristocrats were different breeds – typically very large breeds such as mastiffs, so-called hounds, including beagles, spaniels, setters and greyhounds, used by the men for hunting, or 'lapdogs' used as company for the ladies (Figure 1.1).

While working people may have felt some attachment and admiration for their dogs, they 'seem to have been regarded unsentimentally; and they were generally hanged or drowned when they had outlived their usefulness' (Thomas, 1984: p. 102). So, although there may have been many different individual relations to the animals with whom people lived, attitudes of affection and closeness towards animal companions were not widespread.

1.4 Europe and North America 1600–1950

Gradually during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the habits of the wealthy trickled down to the members of the expanding middle classes, especially in towns. Dogs and caged birds became increasingly popular companions. In the eighteenth century, it also became common to keep cats as companion animals; and in the nineteenth century, children often kept small pets such as rabbits, white mice and guinea pigs (Grier, 2006: p. 32).



Figure 1.1 Five eldest children of King Charles 1 of England, by Sir Anthony van Dyck (1637). In the picture are two dogs of breeds typically owned by aristocrats at the time, a mastiff and a toy spaniel. (Royal Collection Trust, UK)

There seem to have been several parallel reasons for this development. First, the influence of the church gradually diminished, particularly in Northern Europe following the Reformation. Second, during this period many people became wealthier, and a growing urban middle class seems to have supported the expanding numbers of dogs, birds and cats kept as companions. The shift towards urban life also distanced increasing sectors of the population from any direct involvement in farming and livestock exploitation, and this may have helped to promote less use-oriented, more anthropomorphic attitudes and feelings towards animals (Serpell, 1996; Thomas, 1984). Clearly there are significant local differences in the speed with which these developments took place. Most of the sources we use here concern the United Kingdom and, for the later part of the period, also North America. In the United Kingdom particularly, urbanisation and the expansion of the middle classes set in very early; it followed somewhat later in other parts of the Western world.

A further factor that may have played a role in the development of the companion animal sector was a growing interest in biology and, in particular, in breeding. This interest took the shape of an expansion in breeding so-called purebred dogs, and later cats, and the establishment of breeding institutions or ‘fancies’. Breeding – along with the development of specialised diets, and the growth of dog training – was one of the

major structural changes in human–animal relations during this period; we will look briefly at each of these factors.

1.4.1 Breeding

The systematic breeding of dogs emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although there were already clearly distinguishable breeds of dogs and other domestic animals before this, the new trend was characterised by conscious efforts to ‘improve’ domestic animals through controlled breeding. These efforts were combined with a sporting element in which people competed for prizes at shows, and this was typically linked to social status. In 1859, the world’s first dog show was held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. The 60 dogs showed were confined to pointers and setters, and a group of judges was appointed to assess the dogs and find a winner in each class (Sampson & Binns, 2006: pp. 21–22). This was the beginning of a trend; subsequent dog shows were organised in Birmingham and Manchester (where they still occur annually) and in other European countries.

While dog shows emphasised the form and appearance of dogs, later ‘field trials’ were established in which hunting dogs competed with one other for their ability to solve practical tasks such as finding and retrieving a ‘lure’. In the early years the same dogs would typically appear both in dog shows and field trials. Later these activities became specialised, and dogs were divided into show or field trial types (Sampson & Binns, 2006: p. 22).

These new purebred dogs had a documented pedigree. This meant that their breed ancestors were documented in stud books. Stud books were established by including particular animals that were thought at the time to represent the best specimens of their breed, after which the stud book was typically closed. This meant that only offspring of those original dogs would count as purebred. So all purebred dogs of a certain breed could be traced back to a limited number of founders. In some cases, a dog’s favourable performance at a dog show could also be set as an additional requirement for its offspring to qualify as purebred.

The potential for conflicts to arise concerning whether a dog should qualify as purebred, along with the management of stud books, led to the establishment of kennel clubs. The first was (and still is) simply called the Kennel Club, established in England in 1873. The first *Kennel Club Stud Book* was published in 1874. Other kennel clubs followed suit, including the French Société Centrale Canine in 1882, the American Kennel Club in 1884, and an international umbrella organisation, the Fédération Cynologique Internationale, in 1911.

Many factors drove this early enthusiasm for dog breeding. Apart from the sporting element, and an obsession with exhibitions and shows, there seems to have been a wider, underlying idea of eugenics at play:

The Victorians were clearly fascinated by the ideas of breed purity and genetic improvement. Indeed, there was widespread concern about the concept of degeneration, the progressive ill health in succeeding generations of a family, and the need to actively reverse this trend. This in turn probably lay behind early ideas of eugenics ... that also advanced in parallel with the ideas of breed purity in dogs and other species.

(Sampson & Binns, 2006: p. 27)

It is ironic, as we shall see in Chapter 6, that the same breeding system concerned about generational *ill* health, set up in the nineteenth century, is to blame for much of the current health and welfare problems of modern pedigree dogs and cats.

In addition, engaging in dog breeding may have allowed people to maintain their own social status. As Harriet Ritvo (1987: p. 104) argues, the structures evolving around the breeding and showing of pedigree dogs ‘figuratively expressed the desire of predominantly middle-class fanciers for a relatively prestigious and readily identifiable position within a stable, hierarchical society’.

The first Kennel Club stud book identified 40 different breeds of dogs. This number has been growing steadily over the years; in 2003, the Kennel Club recognised 201 breeds. Some of these were types of dogs that already existed as geographic ‘landraces’, but were then transformed into breeds through genetic isolation; others were the results of the creative efforts of passionate and entrepreneurial individuals. The English Golden Retriever, for instance, was produced by hybridizing a yellow wavy-coated retriever over a number of generations with a spaniel, a setter, a Labrador Retriever and a Bloodhound. It is, therefore, essentially the product of deliberate line breeding involving a range of different breeds (Sampson & Binns, 2006: pp. 27–29). Eventually, dogs not typically owned by the aristocracy, such as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier in 1935, were recognised as breeds by the Kennel Club.

Cat breeding and cat shows also became established in parallel with dog shows; the late nineteenth-century ‘cat fancy’ was extremely popular both in England and on the European continent (Kete, 1994: p. 131), and successful cat breeders made good profits. However, although certain fine breeds of cats became reasonably popular, the interest in cat shows declined, and the majority of cat owners, unlike dog owners, stuck with ordinary domestic cats that were not purebred or pedigree, nor the subject of planned breeding (Hartwell, 2003–2014).

1.4.2 Diet

Alongside selective breeding for pedigree, a second area in which substantial changes took place during the nineteenth and early twentieth century was in the diet of companion animals. As far back as the eighteenth century, books on dogs began to provide recipes for proper feeding; and in the nineteenth century, the first commercial dog food was developed in the form of so-called Meat Dog Biscuits. Later came granulated and canned versions of ready-made dog food. These products were marketed through relentless advertising, in the beginning aimed primarily at the high-end market. Thus the first main producer of dog food, Spratt’s, targeted their advertisements at dog shows. Later these products gradually gained a wider uptake:

Dog food, both wet and dry, gradually became part of the middle-class grocery list because of its convenience and availability, its gradually decreasing cost, changes in cooking practices, and changing beliefs about the needs of dogs.

(Grier, 2006: p. 377)

The new dog foods were marketed as providing dogs with a more balanced and healthy diet than that which could come from table scraps; the importance of meat in

dogs' diet was also emphasised. By the 1930s, commercialised canned cat food also became available – although the availability of specialised food for animal companions was severely restricted during World War II. One factor influencing the development of this market was the improvement in human food quality. This led to by-products becoming available, particularly from the slaughter and fisheries industries, for which the dog and cat food industry provided a good outlet. By the later part of the twentieth century, as we will discuss in Chapter 8, commercial cat and dog food came to constitute virtually the entire diet of dogs and cats in the industrialised West. Commercial feed for birds, guinea pigs and other small companion animals also proliferated and became standard stock in supermarkets.

1.4.3 Training

A final development we should note here was an increased focus on obedience training of dogs during the first half of the twentieth century (Cats by tradition have been regarded as being 'untrainable', though as we will see in Chapter 9, this is not necessarily true). Of course, dogs used for tasks such as herding and hunting were always trained to perform these functions. But the early twentieth century saw the broader propagation of dog training.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, programs for systematic training of the dogs used by the military and the police were established. Dog trainers, who had worked in these contexts, began to extend dog training into the civilian world, so that the training of police dogs spilled over to the rest of society (Johnson n.d.). For example, in Denmark, a club for people training police dogs was established in 1909; and this club also allowed 'civilians' to participate in training. However, the non-police members decided to break away and establish their own Civilian Club for Dog Handlers in 1937, now the largest Danish dog-handling club (Hansen, 2012).

The main focus in dog training clubs was, and still is, on obedience training as a sport. However, increasingly, many clubs opened their doors to ordinary dog owners who wanted to train their newly acquired puppies to become well-behaved members of a modern suburban family. More recently, training became necessary to enable owners to follow requirements to control dogs in public, and, in particular, to walk them on a leash.

By the mid-twentieth century, then, the companion animal sector had changed and expanded dramatically. The lives of animal companions had become considerably more structured and heavily influenced by people in terms of breeding, training and diet. While the hardships and shortages of World War II put many of these processes on hold, the end of the war and the growth and prosperity that followed led to an unprecedented boom in the companion animal sector.

1.5 From the 1950s to the Present

The most striking post-war trend was the major growth in the number of dogs and cats kept as companions. Other animals, especially birds, became much less popular. This trend can be seen in the following graph mapping ownership of dogs, cats and budgerigars (also known as common pet parakeets – a common type of caged bird in the United Kingdom) (Figure 1.2).