

# The understanding of canine behaviour sociology essay

[Sociology](#)



There are many theories and hypothesis regarding the origin of the domesticated dog; its place of origin and date of evolution. It is certain that the dog is a descended of the wolf however never believe the floating theories that your dog is a " mini wolf". The dog carries a remarkable amount of traits, drives and instincts inherited from its ancestor the wolf however the dog is and should be treated as a different species as evolution from wolf took place a very long time ago. Through your research you will find writings based on the belief that the Canis Familiaris (domestic dog) is a descended from a European Dingo like wild dog, however such theories are false. There is no evidence of such a creature nor has any fossil been found. The domestic dog is a pure descended of a sub-species of the Canis Lupas (wolf). The dog and wolf share the same genetics, behaviours, and anatomy. Both species also share the same number of chromosomes (seventy eight) which differs from any other canidae such as the jackal or fox. Some people like to believe that the Dingo itself is a missing link between wolf and dog however this notion is only fantasy as the oldest fossil of a Dingo ever found dates to only 1500 B. C. Tasmania broke away from Australia 12, 000years ago and no fossil has been found here proving that the Dingo did not exist at this time. The dog is a pure descendant of the wolf. The wolf is a playful character that – just like the dog – enjoys playing tricks, carrying sticks and general foolery.

## **The Wolf**

The story begins some 45, 000 years ago when this planet was in the midst of the ice age. Billions of wolves roamed the continents of the northern hemisphere in packs. The wolf pack was the ultimate killing machine capable

of tracking and killing prey much larger than themselves. Our ancestors would have admired the abilities and speed of the wolf which could chase at 30 miles per hour. The pack had a family like social structure. There was an alpha male and female (the pack leaders) who never showed aggression to pack members and who were well respected. They got the best parts of the killed prey to eat, however all pack members got their fair share of food. Each pack roamed within its own territory and aggression or the killing of other wolves only occurred when territory or leadership was challenged. However such instances were very uncommon and wolf packs lived in harmony on the whole. These continents of the northern hemisphere with creatures long since extinct was the wolf's back garden and it was not until 32,000 years ago that the first small steps of evolution from wolf to dog began. If we go back 32,000 years there were only approximately one million humans inhabiting this planet. These people, just like today lived in clans and made small settlements or camps in which to live. Just like us humans wolves are curious animals and would have watched the humans from afar. The wolf's nose is one hundred times more sensitive than ours, and the smell of cooking meat at the camp fires became a lure to these carnivores. As the more curious wolves approached the edge of camp site they found a surprising reward – our rubbish and with it food. For the less aggressive and more curious wolves - living close to humans was a great resource to them. Hunting prey could be a tiresome and unrewarding task and so some wolves broke away from the others and began to live close to humans' camp sites. This pack became a sub-species of wolf and it is from this sub-species that dogs evolved. This more timid sub-species of wolf

(camp wolf) began to beg for food from humans and the curious human gave food to the wolf. There were many predators in the wilderness that would be harmful to humans, the camp wolves were also on the lookout for predators especially when they had young around. These camp wolves protected themselves against predators and hence protected the camp where they lived and the humans in it. The camp wolves used the humans as a resource for food and the humans used the wolves for protection. A bond began to grow between the camp wolf and mankind. The camp wolf was no longer a territorial animal hunting prey and they became genetically detached from other wolves. The camp wolf changed due to the environmental factors surrounding it; it became smaller in size, its skull became more slender (as the brain decreased in size by 20%) and it had a shorter nose. The cave wolf became what we call the proto dog. The skull of such a proto dog dating back over 31, 000 years was found in Goyet Cave, Belgium in 1870. The skull of a wolf was found at the same location. The skull of the proto dog was more slender and had a shorter snout; however it still had the large teeth of a wolf, much larger than dogs' teeth today. Although the Goyet Cave skull was discovered by archaeologists in 1870 it was only recently investigated and proven as a dog-like skull. Palaeontologist Mietje Germonpré of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences led the team how investigated the remains and were able to prove an age of 31, 700 years. This skull remains the oldest dog skull ever found and it is an astonishing 17, 700 years older than any other dog skull found. Archaeologists have always accepted a general date of 14, 000 years ago as the oldest dog remains ever found as many skeletons from this time have been found throughout the Near East.

There is clearly a huge gap in these dates and so the Goyet Skull has caused much controversy amongst scholars. Was the skull at Goyet Cave an isolated instance of domestication? Many believe it is; however there is more fascinating evidence to suggest the domestication of dog happened long before the agreed 14, 000 years ago. Chauvet Cave, Southern France, discovered in 1994 contains the earliest cave paintings found in Europe. More interestingly on the clay floor the footprints of a child were found accompanied by the paw prints of a dog. We know these prints belonged to a dog as they were smaller than that of a wolf with the shortened middle toe of a dog. The child's torch marks swiped on the cave wall still remain and a carbon print of these marks tells us that the child and dog took their walk together 26, 000 years ago. There is much debate over when the beginning of a genetically distinguished species of dog appeared. Contrary to the agreed 14, 000 years ago evidence is slowly emerging that brings it back to over 30, 000 years ago. Wolf remains buried along with human remains date back as far as 400, 000 years!

## **The Domestic Dog**

The proto dog that lived amongst our ancestors was still very much wolf. As pups were born humans selected only the most timid, docile pups that integrated well with humans, the others would have been shunned. Any proto dog that showed signs of aggression would have been taken away and killed. Our ancestors interfered with natural selection and hence this generation of humans were the first geneticists, and changed the world we live in for ever. Humans soon realised the abilities we could utilise from these dogs apart from protection against predators. These dogs were great

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hunters and were much more useful to us than using only a spear which was hit and miss. The dog had retained the great hunting abilities of the wolf and saw the humans in its clan as pack members. As a result the dog would accompany man on hunting ventures working to flush out and kill game sharing it with the humans (its pack members). Humans began to select and mate only the best hunters and so selective breeding began. As time passed and there was a rise in agriculture, we used these dogs for herding, and once again only the dogs with the best abilities in herding were bred. There are over 400 breeds of dog in the world today, bred under a strict regime, however the majority of the breeds we have today only came into existence in this last couple of hundred years. The Kennel Club was created in the 1870's and so it is only since then that breeds have been kept "pure". Without deterring the lovers of the pure breed it has to be pointed out that no dog has a unique genetic makeup, every single dog breed from Poodle to Doberman has the exact same DNA sequence. The only breeds that show any possibility of a distinctive, ancient DNA origin are some of the Norwegian breeds. Dogs began to break away into different body and behaviour types (certainly not breeds) between 4000 and 3000 B. C. A dog that resembled a Saluki or Greyhound was in existence in ancient Egypt. A fan was made for King Tutankhamen 3300 years ago, showing the young king hunting ostrich with a dog the spitting image of a Saluki. The remains of a Saluki-like dog was found in North West Iraq dating back 5,500 years. By Roman times there were six types of dog; Villatici – house or guardian dogs Pastorales Pecuarii – shepherd dogs Venatici – sporting dogs Pugnaces and Bellicosi – war dogs Nares Sagaces – scent hounds Pedibus Celeres – sight hounds It was not

until only a few hundred years ago that categories of dog developed; Any large dog was a Mastiff Any small dog that hunted vermin was called a Terrier Foxhounds Sheepdogs Pointers Retrievers In 1800 there were only 15 breeds of dog in Britain; by 1900 there were more than 60 breeds. Today we have more than 400 breeds around the world. It is important to remember that evolution did take place and that today's domestic dog is not a mini wolf but an ancestor. However many of the wolf's natural tendencies and instincts are hardwired into today's dogs such as prey drives and predatory behaviour. This explains why dogs love to chase things whether it be a stick, cat, or car; anything the dog sees as potential prey. If a dog does not receive a responsible outlet for its instinctual behaviour, the dog may become frustrated, anxious or aggressive. The wolf will always be within our dog no matter how we breed or carry out genetic selection.

## **Evolution**

The concept of evolution can be mind boggling. When we speak of evolution we are usually referring to a process that took place tens of thousands of years ago such as wolf to dog or depending on your religious beliefs the evolution of humans and our relationship with the ape. Although we can comprehend how and why evolution of species took place; it is incredibly hard at times to visualise. As a result I have decided to include in this unit of work an experiment which is taking place in Siberia – the "Siberian Silver Fox Experiment". This experiment began in the 1950's and its aim was to see if it was possible to domesticate the wild silver fox. The scientist used the exact same selection method as our ancestors did with the wolf all those years ago. The on-going results of this experiment are astounding and

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incredibly similar to the evolution of dog. I have included below an article from the Scientific American", written by Jason Goldman. Some may see this as irrelevant in a canine behaviour course, however I have included this article as it is a modern day evolution taking place right now demonstrating how these wild silver foxes are developing into a dog - like species. It would be ignorant to ignore such an experiment.