



Oral Presentation

The domestic worker standing between the large carnivore and us

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Abstract

The first domesticated animal, the dog assisted humans in hunting, defending territory, searching and herding. The dog is the only species selected for its behavior and cooperation, while other domesticated species have been domesticated mostly for characteristics such as meat, eggs, or fur. Dogs were the first domesticated animals because of their social nature and their ancestral ability to change their behavior significantly in response to human behavior. Wolves, considered to be the ancestors of dogs, are ecologically and morphologically flexible animals. They live in packs of closely-knit individuals. Living and hunting in a pack requires coordinated tracking, predicting the movements of the prey and the other wolf, and cooperation. Being in such a social group and specializing in cooperative hunting, enabled the development of the social cognitive skills of wolves. These skills and observational abilities of wolves have recently been demonstrated by their performance in experimental manipulative problem-solving tasks. It is assumed that the domestication process not only changed dog morphology, but also changed and improved the way dogs process information. It is thought that dogs are able to perceive their environment and use this information to make decisions. Recent studies of dogs social learning styles and observational abilities show that domestication and selection have enhanced social communication and cooperation between humans and dogs. Livestock guarding dogs have been used for thousands of years in Europe and Asia to protect livestock from attacks of predators and wild stray dogs, or from harm such as theft that may be caused by humans. Its origins extend from the Tibetan plateau to Mesopotamia in the prehistoric period. They have a rich tradition known to date back at least 5000 years in European and Eurasian history. The use of livestock guarding dogs is still an important part of animal husbandry in these regions. In the late 1970s, they were exported from the old world to the new world USA and were widely adopted by traditional domestic sheep producers. The first guarding dogs are thought to have been simply bred and bonded to livestock, and expressed task-appropriate behavior. Over the centuries that followed, humans selected the best working dogs for breeding and passed down the appropriate morphological and behavioral features through the generations. Dogs that showed unwanted behaviors such as attacking and chasing farm animals were removed from the livestock guarding duty and were not allowed to breed, therefore undesirable features in the gene pool were reduced. Livestock guarding dogs have been described as 'highly intelligent and independent, devoted to family members and wary of strangers, calm and stable but frightening and quick to react to perceived threats.

Keywords: dog, domestication, livestock guarding dogs, wild life protection

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