

MATSON MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

DOG TALES



Transformation of Wolves into Dogs

Scientists believe that people transformed wolves into dogs unintentionally. Over a long time, wolves were most likely attracted to trash that built up around human settlements.

Some people tolerated individual animals that were relatively tame and friendly to humans. Ultimately, continuous contact between wolves and human populations led to their domestication.



Foxes?

How long did it take to domesticate wolves? A

Russian experiment started in the 1950s provides some insight. Zoologist Dmitry Belyayev replicated the domestication by intentionally selecting for docility in a population of wild foxes. Not only did the fox become friendlier within only a few generations, unintended morphological changes, including changes in coat coloration and floppy, drooping, dog-like ears, arose. Selective breeding over fifty generations also instigated skeletal changes like shortened legs and wider skulls, as well as shifts in reproductive behavior.



Differentiation After Domestication

Genetic changes in dogs did not stop with domestication. There would have been some morphological variation over time simply due to distance between populations of domesticated dogs. At least 20 morphologically different dog types existed by the Roman period in Europe. Today there are numerous breeds, populations whose appearance and physical characteristics differ from other populations of dogs. The length of time it takes to create new breeds depends on the combination of morphological or behavioral traits that are desired by the breeder.



Boston Terrier

The Boston Terrier was bred in England in the late 1860s by crossing the Bulldog with the now extinct English Terrier. One of these crosses, named Judge, was imported to Boston and sold to Robert Hooper in 1870. Hooper continued breeding the line, eventually producing the modern Boston Terrier. They are characterized by a short head, compact build, short tail, and a seal or black coat marked with white. Boston Terriers were bred for bullfighting but have become a popular companion.



Boxer

Boxer-like dogs descended from war dogs used in the Assyrian Empire 4,500 years ago. The modern version was developed from the Bullenbeisser ("bull biter") breed used in Germany for hunting large, dangerous game in the late 19th century. When the tradition of lavish boar hunts on German nobles' estates ended in the early 20th century, the need for a large breed capable of taking on wild boar disappeared. Then, the Bullenbeisser was crossed with a smaller English mastiff. Modern Boxers have been used as service, hunting, herding, police and war dogs. They are medium-sized and squarely built with strong limbs, short fur, and a blunt nose with a protruding lower jaw. Their ears are often cropped to be long and tapering.



Pitbull

The Pit Bull, or American Bull Terrier, is not recognized as an official breed by the American Kennel Club. Some people use the term to refer to the American Pit Bull Terrier, the Bull Terrier, or the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. These breeds were developed for dog fighting. These breeds are small to medium in size and heavy set with developed musculature and powerful jaws.

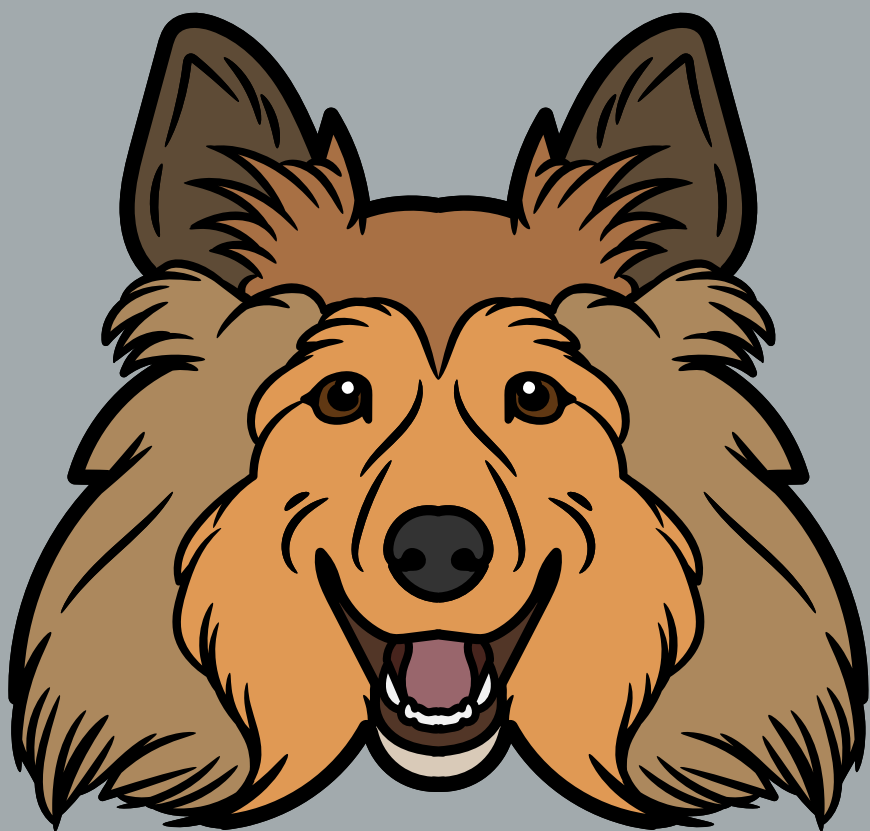


Shetland Sheepdog

This dog was bred on Scotland's Shetland Islands to herd sheep, ponies, and poultry.

They were bred to be small, since there was little food on the rocky, cold islands.

The breed's origin is uncertain, but it remained isolated from other English breeds until the early 20th Century. The U.K. Kennel Club recognized the breed in 1909. Shetland Sheepdogs are expected to be relatively small and longhaired with a long, flattened, wedge-shaped skull, small flexible ears, and black, blue merle and sable fur marked with white.



Chihuahua

The Chihuahua may be descended from the Native American "techichi" dog found in Mexico at the time of Spanish Contact. Today's breed standard states that the chihuahua is characterized by its small size (six pounds or lighter), large erect ears, a rounded "apple dome" skull, and a long body relative to height.



German Shepherd

For a long time, German Shepherds varied in form across Germany. In the late 19th century, a German cavalry officer, Max von Stephanitz, refined the breed by selecting traits from the regional types that he considered ideal traits for sheep-herding. The breed is characterized by medium-length dense fur, pointy ears, a long black muzzle, and a long body relative to height.



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