

## ANIMALS WORKING FOR HUMANS

Throughout history and everywhere in the world, animals of many species were domesticated and kept as companion animals. Others were captured, forced to work, and punished for trying to escape or for not performing tasks correctly or quickly enough. The tasks animals were forced to perform are not part of their natural behaviors and include, for example, carrying heavy loads; plowing fields; guarding places and other animals; herding other animals; assisting people in hunts; guiding or serving people with disabilities; carrying messages; entertaining people; becoming a test subject for toxins, drugs, weapons, cosmetics, chemicals, and medical procedures; detecting and alerting people to bombs or drugs for law enforcement or for the military; and assisting people to fight the enemy for the military. In exchange for their labor, loyalty, and, often, their lives, humans have frequently abused, betrayed, and abandoned them. The animals forced to work for humans include horses, donkeys, dogs, birds, monkeys, chimpanzees, elephants, oxen, pigs, and marine mammals.

**Note:** The authors have included more information about dogs than other animals in this fact sheet. See **Resources** at the end of this fact sheet for further information about other species used for work. Also note that animals used in laboratories are not covered here; they have their own fact sheet: **Animal Experimentation and Xenotransplantation**

## ANIMALS USED IN THE MILITARY

### Dogs in the Military

In WWI, the British military trained dogs by exploding firecrackers in their faces or grenades near their kennels as they ate or slept. Belgian cart dogs who were found wounded or abandoned at the front were used by American soldiers to pull small ambulances or wagons. An autopsy of one messenger dog showed that he continued to carry messages for weeks after a bullet lodged in his lungs and shrapnel in his spine.

During WWII and until 1993, the Russian military strapped explosives to "suicide dogs" they trained to search under tanks for food, and blew the tanks and the dogs up together. The Israeli government strapped dogs with tear gas or explosives and blew them up when they entered underground Palestinian tunnels. Not all died. In some cases, their skin was burned off and they were dragged around villages as a show of defiance. Exposure on the front page of worldwide newspapers and a protest launched by the nonprofit organization CHAI (Concern for Helping Animals in Israel) ended the practice. The U.S. military launched a similar program, torturing dogs with electric shocks and bullwhips, dragging them behind galloping horses, starving them and forcing them to fight for food, but they scrapped it because the dogs could not distinguish between U.S. and enemy tanks.

During the Vietnam War, estimates put the number of soldiers' lives saved by dogs at over 10,000. Many dogs died of heatstroke, Agent Orange, or at the hands of the Viet Cong, who offered a large reward to anyone who killed one. After the war, dogs were classified as "surplus equipment" and handed over to the South Vietnamese, who had no experience with companion animals, were frightened of large dogs, and regarded them as livestock. Injured dogs or those considered to be too old were buried in mass graves. Only a few were allowed to return home. Soldiers who were dog handlers were at exceptionally high risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Shocked and heartbroken at the betrayal of their companions who had saved their lives, being forced to abandon them was too much to bear.

Today, the U.S. military maintains dogs at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. They are drafted for life, moved from one assignment to another so they are without a connection with one individual or group, despite their innate need to be a member of a pack (their equivalent of a human family), and euthanized when they are no longer useful. Many have been maimed or killed in battle. The government continues to classify canine soldiers as equipment.

## **Other Animals in the Military**

Since the earliest times, horses, donkeys, mules, oxen, elephants, orcas (a species of dolphin) and other dolphins were used by the military. The Greek general, Alexander the Great (fourth century BCE), took elephants out of their native habitat in India to fight the Persians. The Persians discovered that elephants' weak point was the soles of their feet, and they laid wooden frames studded with iron spikes in their path. Stampeding elephants were more dangerous to their own army than to the enemy's, so each elephant's driver carried a steel spike with him to hammer into the elephant's brain if he began to stampede.

During the American Civil War, the average life expectancy of a horse in war was just six months. Over one and a half million horses and mules were killed, wounded, or died from disease. Early in the war, more horses were killed than humans.

The military in countries around the world use dolphins as suicide torpedoes, or to retrieve mines, or to attach magnetic explosives to the bottom of enemy ships. In Vietnam, dolphins with lances attached to their noses were trained to skew Vietnamese frogmen. In 1989, the U.S. Navy launched a secret mission to train dolphins to drown enemy divers. Explosives were embedded in harnesses around their necks, so if they were captured by the enemy, they could be blown up. When dozens of dead dolphins washed ashore along the French Mediterranean, the London Observer reported that most had a fist-sized hole under their necks and were likely blown up to conceal the military's dolphin program. In 1988, trainers who worked with the dolphins exposed the abusive training methods used, including starvation, beating with bucket lids, kicking, and being put in a pen where they could see other animals being fed, but they were not fed. The 2.4 meter (8 foot) long dolphins, accustomed to swimming free in the ocean, spend their lives confined to a 7.3 by 7.3 meter (24 by 24 foot) space. Some said those dolphins who were too old or no longer of use to the Navy were abandoned at sea without first being rehabilitated. Twenty percent are said to escape each year, many with muzzles still on their snouts (rostrums) that prevent them from eating.

## **ANIMALS USED FOR RESCUE**

Because of their acute sense of smell, dogs are used to detect people buried under an avalanche or the rubble from an earthquake or explosion, to detect illegal drugs at airports, certain types of cancer (notably skin and prostate cancer), diabetic or epileptic seizures, and even truffles (pigs are also used to locate truffles). The police use dogs to detect drugs and explosives, track and attack dangerous criminals, and track and rescue missing persons.

Over 350 dogs worked up to 16-hour days without gas masks and protective clothing to locate people buried under the unstable rubble of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. They suffered cuts, scrapes, burnt paws, exhaustion, dehydration, and depression at not finding anyone alive. Even when they needed rest, some were required to give comfort to human rescue workers, exhausting them further. Five dogs lost their lives and some were left with chronic health problems. Among the dog heroes was Git Ander. After 9/11, he was assigned to a NJ police department, where he was shot 11 times at point blank range by two police officers who claimed they mistook him for a stray, although he was wearing a badge and was following orders perfectly.

## **ANIMALS USED BY THE POLICE**

Many of the dogs used for rescue are police dogs (referred to, in English, as K-9 dogs). The majority of police dogs are German Shepherds. The police also use dogs for their personal protection while on duty, for drug and explosives detection, and to enforce public order by chasing and holding crime suspects. In the past also, dogs were used to control people. For example, the Conquistadores used wolfhounds, greyhounds, mastiff mixes, and bulldogs to attack and control the indigenous people in the Americas.

The police ride horses for patrols and for crowd control.

## **ANIMALS USED TO HELP DISABLED PEOPLE**

After World War I, the German government sponsored programs to train dogs as guides for blind soldiers. The practice expanded, and today dogs are trained to work not only for the blind but also for deaf people, people in nursing homes, in hospitals for the physically or mentally impaired, in hospices, and in prisons.

In many cases, a service animal's need for play, exercise, fresh air, companionship of his or her own species, variety, and stimulation are met. In other cases, they are not. After they have completed their working years, they may be judged as useless and euthanized.

Capuchin and other monkeys have been captured from the wild, many for use as service animals. In some cases, their teeth are removed to ensure they cannot resist. Unless they are closely supervised by people who care about their wellbeing and understand their nature, they can easily be abused and neglected. When their needs are not met, they may become destructive or aggressive. If this occurs, or when they are no longer needed, or if they are not performing perfectly, they can be caged, given away, sold, or euthanized.

## **ANIMALS USED FOR ENTERTAINMENT**

The Romans brought dogs to Rome from England to fight in arenas against other dogs, bears, bulls, and lions. Animals are still forced to fight, race, perform in circuses and on the street, and live in zoos, all for the entertainment of humans. To train animals to perform in ways that do not come naturally to them, they can be denied food and water, tied up into unnatural postures, beaten, whipped, and shocked with electricity.

Dogs are raced against other dogs or forced to pull sleds in races in order to earn profits for their "owners," without considering their physical limits. Many companies have chosen to withdraw their sponsorship of races or other sports using nonhuman animals. (See the fact sheet **Animals in Entertainment** for information about horses used in the horse racing industry.)

Primates used for human entertainment are often forced to do what is not natural for them. They are chained up by their neck in an upright position, unable to sit or lay down, so they will learn to walk like a human and make people laugh. They are kept in cages in bars, zoos, and so on. They are taken from their families as babies (the mother is often killed so the babies can be captured) and trained to do whatever their captors want them to do.

Dogs, primates, and other animals, including cats, birds, bears, and orcas and other dolphins, are taken from their habitat and families and made to perform in movies, TV, circuses, and aquariums for human entertainment and profit. Their lives as performers for humans do not take their social and physical needs into account. (See the lesson plan **Lights, Camera, Action.**)

## **ANIMALS USED FOR TRANSPORT**

In the past, ponies were used to pull carts in mines. Today, in some parts of the world, dogs, horses, donkeys, and mules are still used to pull carts and carriages. Dogs are used to pull sleds across snow. Elephants are used to pull heavy loads, particularly logs. People ride long distances on camels and horses. Without laws or concerted efforts to enforce them, many of these animals have no protection from abuse, neglect, and abandonment.

At one time, approximately 175,000 dogs, typically mastiffs, were used in Belgium to pull carts for tradesmen such as bakers and grocers. The law allowed each dog to pull up to 136 kg (300 lb.). In 1855, England passed the first national law banning dog carts.

## **ANIMALS USED TO POWER MILLS AND PRESSES**

Donkey-powered mills were first used in Greece, in the fourth century BCE. From 1600–1800, many small dogs were forced to walk on treadmills for hours at a time to turn cooking spits, butter churns, or cider presses. The dogs were put into a circular pit area from which they could not escape, while tied to a mill or press. If they got tired and stopped moving, hot coals were put in the pit to make them keep moving. In some of the pits, the dogs were tied in such a way that they had to keep running or choke. Those few convicted of abusing dogs simply substituted goats, small donkeys, or African-American children.

## **ANIMALS USED IN AGRICULTURE**

In addition to plowing, carrying heavy farm loads, turning presses or mills on farms, and herding, animals have been used by people in food production in a variety of ways. For example, on some of the Sunda Islands, part of the [Malay Archipelago](#), monkeys are shackled with a metal cuff around their neck attached to a long chain, and they are forced to climb palm trees to bring down coconuts. In Malaysia, macaques are the species most often used.

## **THE PRICE PAID BY THE ANIMALS**

Animals used by humans in war and for other work changed history. Much development around the world would not have been possible without the strength and stamina of other species. Most animals were and continue to be used without regard for their own needs and desires. Normal connections with other members of their species often are not permitted, and they have no control over how their lives are spent.

In the best of circumstances, animals we use to perform tasks work together with us, are fulfilling their own nature, and are enjoying themselves. But the reality in most circumstances is that our use of animals considers our needs before theirs.

## **Resources**

### **Fact Sheets:**

Animal Agriculture  
Animal Experimentation and Xenotransplantation  
Animals in Entertainment  
Companion Animals  
Farmed Animal Sentience  
The Fur Industry  
Human Impact

### **Lesson Plans:**

Everyone Loses (animals in war)  
Lights, Camera, Action (animals in the entertainment industry)  
Saturday (work horses)  
Where We Belong  
Workers or Slaves  
You Have an Owner (nonhuman and human slavery)

### **Book:**

Thurston, Mary Elizabeth. *The Lost History of the Canine Race: Our 15,000 Year Love Affair with Dogs*. New York: Avon Books, 1997.

**Websites:**

"Git Ander, World Trade Center Hero." 2004.  
<http://www.remember-me-memorial.com/K-9%20Heros/GitAnder.html> **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/lfnx867>

"Working animal." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working\\_animal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_animal) **OR** <http://tinyurl.com/mtxyjsd>