

The **dog** (***Canis familiaris*** or ***Canis lupus familiaris***) is a **domesticated** descendant of the **gray wolf**. Also called the **domestic dog**, it was **selectively bred** from an **extinct** population of wolves during the **Late Pleistocene** by **hunter-gatherers**. The dog was the first **species** to be domesticated by **humans**, over 14,000 years ago and before the **development of agriculture**. Due to their long association with humans, dogs have gained the ability to thrive on a **starch**-rich diet that would be inadequate for other **canids**.

Dogs have been bred for desired behaviors, sensory capabilities, and physical attributes. **Dog breeds** vary widely in shape, size, and color. They have the same number of bones (with the exception of the tail), powerful jaws that house around 42 teeth, and well-developed **senses of smell**, hearing, and sight. Compared to humans, dogs possess a superior sense of smell and hearing, but inferior **visual acuity**. Dogs perform many roles for humans, such as **hunting**, **herding**, **pulling loads**, **protection**, **companionship**, **therapy**, **aiding disabled people**, and **assisting police** and the **military**.

Communication in dogs includes eye gaze, facial expression, vocalization, body posture (including movements of bodies and limbs), and gustatory communication (scents, pheromones, and taste). They mark their territories by urinating on them, which is more likely when entering a new environment. Over the millennia, dogs have uniquely adapted to human behavior; this adaptation includes being able to understand and communicate with humans. As such, the **human–canine bond** has been a topic of frequent study, and dogs' influence on human society has given them the **sobriquet** of "**man's best friend**".

The global dog population is estimated at 700 million to 1 billion, **distributed around the world**. The dog is the most popular pet in the United States, present in 34–40% of households. Developed countries make up approximately 20% of the global dog population, while around 75% of dogs are estimated to be from developing countries, mainly in the form of feral and community dogs.