

HISTORY OF CATS .

Whether you hate cats or love them , it's always interesting to know the history of animals, humans and just about anything!

Tracing our steps back to 7500 BC , in the North east region, that's where cats were first domesticated. It is very much believed that the practice of domesticating cats began in the city of Egypt , obviously! Domesticated cats all come from wildcats called *Felis silvestris lybica* that originated in the Fertile Crescent in the Near East Neolithic period and in ancient Egypt in the Classical period.

EGYPT AND CATS.

The Egyptians started regarding cats as sacred creatures as they played a vital role in protecting crops and mitigating diseases . Cats were also represented in social and religious practices of ancient Egypt, thus proving how hallowed they were. Cats protected the Pharaohs by killing snakes and were very much praised for it .

Moreover , several Egyptian deities, namely Bastet , Sekhmet , Mafdet were depicted and sculptured with cat-like heads . The infamous “ Book of the Dead “ which consists of a number of magic spells intended to assist a dead person's journey through the Duat, or underworld, and into the afterlife also mentions the protective functions of cats . Cats were mummified and were offered at the sanctuary of goddess Bastet . Quite often pet cats were mummified and placed in tombs with their owners as it was believed that by doing so they could remain together forever.

POPULARITY OF CATS BEYOND THE WALLS OF EGYPT.

It is believed that the Egyptian Traders introduced cats to Europe, where the Greeks and the Romans used them as pest control. However during the Middle Ages, cats in Europe became associated with superstition. During the Black Death of 1348, rulers ordered the killing of all cats, because they were suspected of carrying the disease.

When the glorious Egyptian Dynasty fell apart, the popularity of cats did not pertain just to the city of Egypt . Geographically speaking, in the Far East cats were a sign of aristocracy, as they were only owned by the rich .

During the 15th and 16th century, cats were carried as cargo on ships to minimize vermin and diseases. It's commonly thought that when Christopher Columbus discovered America, cats from his ship went ashore and flourished. In fact, this is where the American Shorthair is rumored to have originated. Towards the end of the 19th century , cats became popular pets in American households.

Fast forwarding to the present , there are an estimated 220 million owned and 480 million stray cats in the world, also making cats the second most popular pet (in the U.S). There's a very popular saying that says - we might have forgotten that we worshipped cats decades ago , but they sure didn't , and it's absolutely fitting to say this .

So are you a cat person or a dog person?