

# ANIMALS IN THE CITY

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Vedute of medieval or Early Modern walled cities, fortified 19th-century towns or even cliffs and mountain ranges reminiscent of the silhouettes of modern metropolises built of brick, concrete, steel and glass directly evoke an impression of sites cut off from nature. The vegetative component of nature has at least gradually found the partial grace of builders and city dwellers, especially in the form of ornamental flowers in window boxes, in gardens in more spacious residential quarters, and in parks and alleys. But what about animals?

Historians know, of course, that without animals, a city (large metropolitan cities, not small, semi-rural communities) could not function at all between the Middle Ages and at least the middle of the 20th century.

Therefore, let's take a look at the urban existence of animals from a functional perspective: Animals were needed in the city mainly for hauling, transport and carrying loads, perhaps also for driving horse mills located away from a water source. This means that in cities from their beginning until the final victory of engines in the second half of the 20th century, we encounter a smaller yet significant number of horses, donkeys and mules. These animals lived separately in individual houses or farm areas, in large stables at palaces, monasteries, and later barracks, and we shouldn't forget the thousands of horses harnessed in Prague, Vienna and Paris to carriages and rental farm transport wagons.

Substantial numbers of cows, sheep, goats and pigs (as well as large amounts of poultry) were also found in cities at least until the end of the Early Modern period. A large part of the four-legged companions of human existence were driven to pasture outside the city gates each day by municipal herdsmen. Conversely, herds of mainly cattle were brought to the city for slaughter at regular intervals. All the animals mentioned above were intended for consumption by the urban population, and for the processing of hides, bones, hooves, etc. For the sake of completeness, we should also mention fish caught from the Vltava and especially brought in a salted state to the "undrerlak" at the Cattle Market in Prague.

And we shouldn't forget dogs, which served a variety of functions in the city. "Man's best friend" patrolled residences and was his master's bodyguard. The role of city dogs as pets, prestigious "objects" and companions for lonely people survives to this day. For a very long time, some breeds were also used as draught animals – classically by butchers for their deliveries. And let's not forget stray dogs, which in the Early Modern period, sometimes in large packs, terrorised and even killed people from the very edge of society living at waste dumps. And yet, the greatest urban wildlife scourge was rodents, both as food raiders and the carriers of horrific diseases, to which insects can also be added.

The reality of the existence of animals in cities was anticipated and reflected in construction and urban planning concepts. How, then, did the presence of animals influence the appearance of city houses, quarters and urban units? Did animals find a response in it as a visual symbol? Given that the living conditions of animals in cities were not ideal from today's point of view, it is necessary to remember their clashes with humans, veterinary diseases and many threats that the animal component necessarily brought to everyday urban life.



