

Part 3.3. A brief history of dogs and cats in the cities of Russia.

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Now a small historical digression. The origin of individual breeds is quite well studied by cynologists - which cannot yet be said about the history of the masses of mongrel animals that inhabited Russian cities and ves. Despite the fact that there are almost no special historical studies of the life of urban animals, the following most general reconstruction can be offered as a preliminary attempt. It would be nice if the creation of a complete picture and the popularization of the data obtained would be of interest to historians.

It should be noted that the situation when there are many homeless animals in cities, whatever you call it (up to the use of the word "culture") not only does not correspond to modern ideas about what a civilized city should look like, but also does not correspond to the historical traditions of Russia. Homelessness has never been considered the norm in our country.

3.3.1. Until the XX century. In ancient times in Russia, pets, including dogs, were kept for quite utilitarian purposes. It is clear that in the city the need for hunting and shepherding functions was relatively limited, so the guard and guard came to the fore.

For centuries, there has been a traditional culture of keeping urban domestic dogs, corresponding to the most common type of development for old Russia and the spatial division of the environment, which persisted in different cities until the beginning - middle of the last century and in principle survived to this day in rural settlements. Cities were arrays of one-story or low-rise residential buildings, and each house usually had its own courtyard with outbuildings, outbuildings, etc., fenced with a high fence ("courtyard", "estate"). The main and predominant "ecological type" of urban dogs were yard dogs (more often ordinary mongrel mongrels, from where, apparently, the word comes from), that is, animals directly living on the territory of these yards (one, two, rarely more in the yard, and dogs were not bred in all yards). These dogs more or less successfully and purposefully performed guard functions. At the same time, they were quite "masterly", belonging, as a rule, to the homeowner. The yard was a specially protected individual "territory" of the dog from strangers. However, they did not always sit on a chain at their booth and, in the absence of "rules for keeping animals", often went outside the yard and spent part of their time on the streets. That is, during these periods of self-walking, they were formally "unsupervised owners". Dogs behave similarly in modern Russian

villages. Females gave birth in the owner's farmstead, and excess puppies, as a rule, were quickly destroyed. Some, relatively small, part of the dogs gradually and to varying degrees lost contact with the owner's yard; such animals became homeless, gravitating to landfills and wastelands. And only there could the homeless sometimes breed on their own - after all, almost the rest of the city was divided into "farmsteads". In an ecological sense, they can to some extent be likened to South Asian semi-feral and conditionally supervised pariah dogs, however, if the populations of street pariahs in the south have been self-sustaining for hundreds of years, then in Russia stray dogs are still mainly the result of periodic secondary wildness of yard owners. The connection with a person in Russia is stronger.

Therefore, in retrospect, it is impossible to talk about the existence in Russia of completely "self-replicating populations" of stray dogs - they have always come from the owners or, at least, were replenished with them. Usually, there were more possessed dogs than stray ones (perhaps with the exception of the periods of the most severe historical crises: devastation and wars, when owners died or were left homeless).

Stray dogs in Russia, as usual, lived according to the laws of survival of the strongest, and they tried to get rid of them - both during outbreaks of rabies epidemics, and in between - using, as a rule, very inhumane methods from the current point of view; however, corresponding to the mores of its time. Some dogs could later be used for rough and practical purposes - on fur. Particularly massive campaigns to exterminate dogs were carried out, as mentioned, during outbreaks of rabies epidemics. Cats have always enjoyed almost unlimited freedom of movement and freely walked around yards, streets, roofs, attics and basements. Some of them were undoubtedly homeless – but the complete ferality of the city cats, of course, was not, and they did not avoid contact with humans. N.V. Gogol mentions them as more "civilized" than wild cats: "Forest wild cats should not be confused with those daredevils who run on the roofs of houses. Being in the cities, they, despite their cool disposition, are much more civilized than the inhabitants of the forests. "

With the development of industry and the growth of the population, the cities began to gradually lose the appearance of "large villages". There were arrays of continuous multi-storey buildings, however, in some places still preserving yard territories for some time, limited by fences or gates and in some places conditionally guarded mongrels.

In the mid to late 19th century, the first "rules of detention" began to appear in the cities, prescribing the walking of dogs in public metas on a leash and the capture of stray dogs. In the 19th century, the first "overexposure points" (often called "livestock") appeared, in which captured animals could be held for several days while waiting for the owner to pay the ransom. The means of killing the unclaimed remained the same - strangulation or a blow to the head. The "Russian Society for

the Protection of Animals" began to demand the replacement of these methods with euthanasia with chloroform.

With the development of urban culture proper, there gradually began to be a need for domestic animals, almost or completely not intended to perform utilitarian functions (yard protection, hunting, rat trapping) - that is, the need for animals needed mainly just "for communication", in those who are now called companion animals. Apparently, this socio-psychological phenomenon is associated with the disintegration of traditional large peasant families in the city, and the need and opportunity for a city person to transfer his social behavior, emotions and feelings to a greater extent to representatives of other species, that is, to domestic animals. If earlier animals for beauty or fun (for example, decorative dogs and hunting breeds) were in the cities mainly a whim and privilege of the aristocracy, now wider layers of citizens began to make four-legged friends and gradually move to their maintenance directly in their homes as the ancient buildings disappeared. Well-known literary examples of dogs that can reasonably be counted among the early companions are Turgenev's Mumu and Chekhov's Kashtanka. (By the way, they show how representatives or mestizos of then common hunting breeds were recruited as companions: the Spaniel Mumu and the "cross between a dachshund and a mongrel" Kashtanka. Later, there is every reason to believe that the bulk of the companions began to be a motley mixture consisting in different proportions of purebred "without pedigree", various mestizos and mongrel dogs).

3.3.2. XX century. The number of companion dogs grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, and the disappearance of yards with fences gradually put an end to the existence of "traditional" urban mongrels in large cities, with the exception of their outskirts. The massive multi-storey buildings of the second half of the 20th century with extensive courtyards of "common use" made the city blocks of residential development "transparent" for the passage of any dogs and potentially made possible a wide overlap of individual and group habitat areas of animals - both homeless and homeless (however, until now this possibility was not realized).

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the middle and large cities of Russia have been inhabited by companion animals living in the homes of the owners – which is completely similar to the situation in developed Western countries. Accordingly, stray dogs are wild discarded "companions" or their descendants.

The middle and especially the second half of the twentieth century seem to be marked by a number of other trends. The number of urban companion dogs and cats in Russia during the second half of the 20th century, apparently, increased several times (at least, a similar increase can be traced in many developed countries). The increase in the number of possessive dogs is accompanied by a phenomenon known as pet overpopulation, which has been well studied by experts in the West. If owners

do not take appropriate measures, dogs and cats produce such an amount of offspring that does not find demand from potential owners. This leads to the "depreciation" of animals in the eyes of many people and an increase in the number of animals thrown into the street. The more pet owners there are in a city, the potentially greater the severity of the overproduction situation. So, in the second half of the last century, there was a constant influx of dogs on the streets, however, until now moderate.

Against this background, the Soviet municipal trapping services operated, acting in subordination to the housing and communal services of the cities, and whose methods, alas, often did not differ much from those used in previous centuries. (It was possible and necessary to gradually bring them into a more civilized form, as in developed countries, but in those days this was almost not thought about). However, it was common to overexpose captured live dogs for at least 3 days. Used for killing either a blow to the head, or, later, electric current, or unfiltered gases from internal combustion engines (in Moscow and some other cities); sometimes "mobile gas chambers" were also used - exhaust gases were fed directly into the closed body of the trapping service car (in this case there was no overexposure). In some cities, chloroform was used for killing after overexposure (as we recall, they tried to introduce its use for killing captured animals in the 19th century). In rural areas, shooting with firearms was practiced. Sometimes in order to quickly get rid of dogs, herbs were used (for example, in Moscow before Olympiad-80).

Be that as it may, in most of the territory of cities, as a rule, it was possible to maintain a relatively small density of subpopulations of stray dogs.

The number of stray cats was also often regulated by the same methods, but with much less zeal; they were constantly present on the streets of most cities.

The second feature is associated with changes in the urban environment, which accompanied industrialization and an increase in the level of consumption of citizens. Individual plots and entire vast arrays of fenced territories on which factories, plants or large warehouses and food bases were located became commonplace. According to the degree of protection, they represented a relatively convenient place for the settlement of dogs, and dogs did not slow down with the appearance in these areas - watchmen started them as watchmen or "as if guard"; to these territories, people dragged unwanted animals from the residential area. Then the dogs multiplied and to a certain extent went wild in fenced areas. Thus, an army of homeless "fence" dogs, characteristic of industrial and warehouse areas, was gradually formed. They differed from the traditional owners of the mongrels in the fenced courtyards of the old type of buildings in that they formed stable and at times quite large flocks and, being ownerless, wild to varying degrees, were generally weaker controlled by people. Under Soviet power, there were relatively few of them (although in some places noticeably more than in residential areas), many were still more or less under

the control of watchmen and employees of enterprises, that is, they belonged to the category of conditional supervisory. It was such dogs of one of the industrial zones of Moscow at one time - in the early 80s - that served as the object of observations of the often cited specialist in dogs A.D. Poyarkov. (Which, by the way, implies that these studies relate to a specific area of space and time, and their findings cannot be arbitrarily extended to all currently existing stray dogs.)

The increase in the number of domestic dogs, the expansion of cities and the mosaic alternation of new buildings with areas of natural and agricultural landscapes led to the periodic penetration of dogs into suburban ecosystems and their wandering there. Dogs coming out of rural settlements also went wild (their detailed description was devoted to the article of the hunting expert Ryabov in the 70s of the 20th century - see Appendix 3).

3.3.3. The last 20 years. "Threshold of Distress". The chaos of late perestroika and the fall of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the degradation of utilities, respectively, a temporary reduction or cessation of trapping. Cities as a whole have become dirtier: there are more food outlets, therefore, more garbage – potential dog food, and garbage collection services often failed to cope with the duties – also the consequences of the economic crisis and degradation. Numerous fenced areas have appeared, primarily parking lots and garages, directly in the areas of residential development - that is, potential shelters for flocks, especially if the employees of such institutions do not control the stay of animals on their territory. But not only these factors influenced the change in the situation. The culture of keeping animals has fallen, the degree of responsibility of owners has decreased. In the minds of people, the idea began to take root that animals can be kept as they like and bred in any quantities. The result was a further aggravation of the situation of overproduction and a massive flow of animals entering the street. The "breeding" of stray dogs in industrial buildings has increased. The socio-psychological phenomenon of street "guardianship" has spread widely, and in some places has arisen from scratch, when begging dogs find permanent guardians-feeders. In the case of packing semi-feral dogs, guardians, usually pensioners, are usually not able to effectively control the behavior and reproduction of their wards, which often leads to the emergence of a pack (adult offspring from one original female) or the growth of fed packs, both due to offspring and due to the attachment of dogs from the outside to the "bread place".

All this together significantly increased the "supporting capacity" of the urban environment for stray dogs, that is, contributed to a steady increase in their number and high density of subpopulations, there was the formation of numerous packs of semi-feral dogs not only in the areas of industrial and warehouse and mixed, but also often in areas of multi-storey residential development. The size of pack dogs has

generally increased due to the appearance on the streets of taller, stronger individuals with an advantage in survival.

In short, economic and social changes have increased the total volume of the feed base and the diversity of feed resources – both through waste and begging and "extortion", which in some places have become the main forms of obtaining fodder. The number of shelters has increased. If in some places in the West the already few street dogs are, as a rule, loners, then in Russia in many cities recently the proportion of pack dogs is large.

By the way, therefore, based on a comprehensive analysis of the current situation, to solve the problem, it is necessary to provide not only the promotion of a responsible attitude to animals, the fight against overproduction and work directly with stray dogs, but also measures to reduce the capacity of the environment for dogs, narrow their potential "ecological niche", reduce the level of "environmental capacity" - by cleaning the city, fencing and closing garbage cans, regulation of the maintenance of guard dogs on fenced objects, clarification of the consequences of feeding dogs, etc., taking into account the relative plasticity and variability of food-producing behavior of dogs.

So, in cases where the situation is poorly controlled, packs (family groups) begin to prevail in the social structure of subpopulation. This happens in many settlements (usually in cities of medium and large sizes, but not only), where the possibility of long-term existence of groups of dogs is realized. For example, there are areas of the terrain that are relatively protected from the anxiety of outsiders – as a rule, these are industrial zones, where flocks find shelter behind the fences of enterprises, or wastelands and outskirts of cities. Or, on the contrary, crowded places that coincide with an abundant food base, but with irregular or absent trapping – for example, markets and public transport stops (in some cities - even metro stations). Especially "favorable" for flocks is the proximity of the two above conditions.

In fact, today's typical asphalt-concrete residential urban neighborhoods are not a very favorable place for dog gatherings (relatively few shelters and a high level of anxiety on the part of citizens and their domestic dogs). However, in the absence of regulation or the substitution of inefficient programs, it is possible to ensure a fairly significant density in these conditions. Under these conditions, stray cats, intensively destroyed by dogs, significantly reduce the density.

However – and this should be emphasized – in some cities the number of stray dogs has increased relatively slightly compared to Soviet times – for example, relatively small cities (for example, the Karelian Kondopoga), with a sharp predominance of one type of environment – monotonous residential buildings (multi-storey or of different floors) without significant industrial zones (or with clearly demarcated

industrial zones not interspersed in residential quarters). Many young towns of this "homogeneous type" – created in the second half of the 20th century – usually look like several urban blocks of five- to nine-story buildings set up among the rural or forest landscape. Quite often, the trapping service has been preserved in them, which also affects the situation.

Relatively few dogs can be found in larger cities – where trapping activity has remained high.

In such cities, the structure of the subpopulation of stray dogs is still dominated by solitary individuals, and the overall density of the subpopulation is relatively small. But there may be a significant number of stray dogs (their number is even greater if small areas of one-story manor buildings adjoin typically urban neighborhoods). Usually, residents of such cities are little familiar with such phenomena as the mass destruction of cats by packs of dogs (on the contrary, cats in public courtyards there are very numerous - both owners on traditional free range, and homeless, sometimes forming colonies).

In most large cities, a similar nature of the dog population is observed, as a rule, only in the depths of vast urban quarters, with dense multi-storey buildings.

There are also cities with an intermediate option, "balancing on the edge" - in which there are packs (usually small), but are concentrated only in industrial zones or on the far outskirts (there are represented by feral dogs).

The formation and predominance of flocks throughout the city can be called the threshold of trouble, a sign that the situation in the city is out of control. Intensive formation of packs, apparently, in populated areas occurs when the population density exceeds 15- 20 homeless (namely, homeless, not neglected owner) dogs per square kilometer. km. (Neglected possessive (semi-free) dogs, even with significantly higher density values of permanent packs, as a rule, do not form.) Subpopulation moves to self-reproduction as the main factor in maintaining and increasing the number, although the influx from the owner still remains. If this situation drags on for a long time, then "wildborn" dogs appear en masse in several generations.

The methods of capturing urban utilities in the post-perestroika years have changed in most cities to more radical ones - dogs are not so much caught alive as before, but killed on the spot with the help of muscle relaxant drugs (for example, dithylin; this is cheaper and faster). With regard to overexposure (or rather, its absence), thus, in a number of cities even a step back compared to Soviet times. On the other hand, as already indicated, due to the economic turmoil of the 1990s and 2000s in the cities, trapping services could temporarily cease to function or conduct very weak trapping. In such cities (for example, Samara), rewards were resorted to for animals surrendered by the population.

By the way, attracting both the experience of Russia and the experience of other countries, we can conclude that the number of stray dogs largely depends on the social and economic well-being in the country. And the number of stray cats can be relatively large both in developed countries (but necessarily with a warm climate) and in economically backward countries, but in the latter, with too much deterioration of the situation, their number falls, as they are suppressed by dogs.