

13. Summary

The history of civilization of the domestic cat with special regard to its diseases

The scientific name of the domestic cat is *Felis silvestris* forma *catus* Linnaeus, 1758.

The historically earliest findings of cats in connection with human beings were made in Jericho (approx. 800 B.C.) and Anatolia (approx. 6000 B.C.). In both cases it was in mud cottage villages in which people lived in large, stable communities. The growing of wild corn in the surroundings of the villages made it possible for cats to exist. Most likely local wild cats settled in these farm villages and because of their usefulness were tamed and finally domesticated. However, only assumptions may be made in this respect.

The parallel appearance of cats on the Greek islands, Egypt and Pakistan may be based on the extended trading of the highly civilized cultures as well as a result of analogous domestication. Whether the ancient Egyptian cats were the first domesticated ones, as is commonly believed, is debatable. However, the Egyptians were most likely the first ones who bred cats to a large extent.

The African wild cat *Felis silvestris libyca* Forster, 1780 is mentioned as progenitor in almost every publication, however, we can only be certain that our domestic cat stems from the race *Felis silvestris*.

The domestic cat spread from the area along the Mediterranean Sea to Europe and around 1000 A.D. became a firm part of the European domestic animal world. In Eastern Asia the domestic cat was already known 800 B.C. In the United States of America its existence was first documented in 1626 and in Australia in 1798.

Because of its reputation of being an unpredictable beast of prey along with other characteristics the cat was a part of religious acts in the ancient Egypt. This must not be understood as worship of or even love for the cat. The Egyptians killed cats during rituals. The cat was persecuted in every continent. The persecution reached its peak under the influence of the Christian Church and especially in Germany in the 15th-17th Century the cat was nearly exterminated.

Even if the cat in single cases was kept as a pet, the main reason for keeping cats was their participation in pest control. This trait saved the human race from immeasurable economical damage.

During the end of the middle age and beginning of the new age the cat was furthermore deliverer of fur, meat and raw materials used for the production of medicine and witch craft.

As laboratory animal the cat plays only a minor role. Today, however, its psychohygienic and social role must not be underestimated.

The cat plays a large role in public belief as well as in literature and customs. It mainly symbolizes falseness, misfortune, greed and lust. It seldom stands for fortune. This symbolic is contained in animal tales and legends as well as in proverbs and idioms. Nevertheless the cat always has been the muse of many important literary men and performers.

In the middle of the 18th century miscellaneous literature appears for the first time which now and then relates to cat keeping and care, whereby the general opinion was that cats suffer from the same diseases as dogs. Therapy was often neglected because of the cat's resistance and robust constitution. The first specialized book about cat diseases was published in 1925. Thereafter the science about cat diseases developed rapidly and reached its peak in 1996 with the foundation of the European Society for Feline Medicine with more than 700 members world wide.

One historically interesting disease of the domestic cat is the rabies as the oldest known infectious disease for which man is susceptible to as well as additional infectious diseases about whose epidemic occurrences historical deliveries exist or those infectious diseases having a large impact on cat population based on their morbidity and mortality. These include Panleukopenia, cat flu, FIP, FIV and the FeLV-Infection.

In early publications much attention was paid to the parasitic diseases, mainly the Scabies, especially in regards to its therapy.

In 2003 the cat with a number of 6,9 million was the number one pet in Germany.