

PREFACE

Historians once considered the "history of animals" such an unlikely subject that they openly ridiculed the idea in peer-reviewed journals, but that is no longer the case.¹ Over the past several decades, historians have published countless academic books and scholarly articles on the topic, and, in the words of Harriet Ritvo, the profession is currently experiencing an "animal turn."² Despite this growing scholarly interest, however, years of research have convinced me that the general public still regards the history of animals as an unfamiliar topic. That being the case, many readers might find the following information helpful before diving in. First, humans are obviously animals, but, in the interest of narrative thrust, all references to "animals" within this text refer to nonhuman animals. Also, plural first-person pronouns like "we" and "our" are reserved for all humans and only all humans. Within the context of this study, these pronouns do not include animals, and they are never used in reference to some people but not others. Finally, the reader will notice many instances in which the narrative references "animals who" rather than "animals that." This subtle distinction recognizes that animals are not lifeless automata, and that they are instead sentient organisms whose actions have influenced the course of life on Earth.³