



# In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships

*By James Serpell*

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## **In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships** By James Serpell

In the Company of Animals is an original and very readable study of human attitudes to the natural world. It contrasts the way we love some animals while ruthlessly exploiting others; it provides a detailed and fascinating account of ways in which animal companionship can influence our health; and it provides a key to understanding the moral contradictions inherent in our treatment of animals and nature. Its scope encompasses history, anthropology, and animal and human psychology. Along the way, the author uncovers a fascinating trail of insights and myths about our relationship with the species with which we share the planet. James Serpell is the editor of *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior and Interactions With People* (CUP, 1995).

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Arguing by copious example in a thoroughly well-researched and well-written book, Serpell demonstrates that pet-keeping appeals both to a wide variety of cultures throughout the world, and to all social classes within Western society." Stephen J. Gould, *The New York Review of Books*

"In the Company of Animals is a work of cross-cultural panache. Serpell writes passionately and well about a subject that seems to have fallen between the cracks of specializations. His overview is sweeping and provocative." *Time Magazine*

"Why did James Serpell feel the need to write a book in defence of pet-keeping? Surely this is one aspect of human behaviour that requires no advocacy. But read on. Indeed, read this book, for it is full of fascinating comments on a subject that many of us have taken for granted." Desmond Morris, *BBC Wildlife Wildlife*

#### From the Back Cover

What purpose, if any, do pets really serve? Are they simply an outlet for misplaced love? Or four-legged friends who help us to satisfy vital emotional needs? Whatever they are, when we elevate pets to the status of social companions, we undermine the distinction between human and non-human. In other words, pets force us to confront the moral contradictions inherent in our treatment of animals in general. Pursuing this idea to its logical conclusion, the author uncovers a fascinating and disturbing trail of myths, evasions and double standards which humans have used since earliest times to justify their subjugation of nature and other life forms. Through an exploration of the phenomenon of pet-keeping across history and between cultures, this thought-provoking study reassesses our relationships with animals and the natural world. This new edition of *In the Company of Animals* has been substantially revised and updated to take into account developments in research since 1986.

#### About the Author

James Serpell is the Marie A. Moore Professor of Humane Ethics and Animal Welfare at the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, where he also directs the Center for the Interaction of Animals & Society. He received his bachelor's degree in Zoology from University College London (UK) in 1974, and his PhD in Animal Behavior from the University of Liverpool (UK) in 1980. He moved to his current position at the University of Pennsylvania in 1993. Dr. Serpell is the current President of the International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ). He serves on the editorial boards of most of the major journals on animal welfare, applied animal behavior, and human-animal interactions. His research focuses on the behavior and welfare of companion animals, the development of human attitudes to animals, and the history of human-animal relationships. In addition to publishing more than 70 journal articles and book chapters on these and related topics, he is the author, editor, or co-editor of several books including *Animals & Human Society: Changing Perspectives* (1994), *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior & Interactions with People* (1995), *In the Company of Animals* (1996), and *Companion Animals & Us* (2000).

### **Users Review**

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