

### Activity 1. Domestication of Dogs

**Source:** N. Wade (September 8, 2009). "In Taming of Dogs, Humans May have Sought a Meal," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/08/science/08dogs.html>, accessed April 7, 2010

**Instructions:** Modern day historians have scientific evidence that enhances their ability to reconstruct the past. This study of the domestication of dogs draws on DNA evidence. Read the excerpts from the article and answer questions 1 – 4.

1. A new study of dogs worldwide, the largest of its kind, suggests . . . wolves may have first been domesticated for their meat. That is the proposal of a team of geneticists led by Peter Savolainen of the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Sampling the mitochondrial DNA of dogs worldwide, the team found that in every region of the world all dogs seem to belong to one lineage. That indicates a single domestication event.
2. The single domestication event seems to have occurred in southern China, where the dogs have greater genetic diversity than those elsewhere. The region of highest diversity is usually the place of origin because a species tends to lose diversity as it spreads . . . There is a long tradition of eating dogs in southern China, where dog bones with cut marks on them have been found at archaeological sites . . . The time of the domestication probably around the period that hunter-gatherers first settled down in fixed communities in China, about 11,000 to 14,000 years ago. Those people would have had an organized culture that enabled them to make muzzles, and possibly cages, that would have been needed to handle wolves.
3. Wolves probably domesticated themselves when they began scavenging around the garbage dumps at the first human settlements . . . As the wolves became tamer, they would have been captured and bred. Given local traditions . . . the wolves may have been bred for the table . . . Once domesticated, they rapidly spread west from the eastern end of the Eurasian continent. Most people do not eat dogs, so they must have spread so quickly for other reasons, perhaps because of their use as guard dogs or in pulling sleds . . . Dogs were evidently so useful to early people that they spread like wildfire. On the basis of current evidence, they were the first species to be domesticated.

#### Questions

1. What evidence is there that wolves were first domesticated in China?
2. How were wolves probably domesticated?
3. What conclusion does the study reach about the reason dogs were originally domesticated?
4. Are you convinced by the report? Explain. What additional evidence would you like to see?