

## Would Dogs Be better off without us?

An Essay authored by: Jessica Pierce, titled “The Post Human Dog” attempts to answer the question, what would a dogs life look like without humans? A world without humans seems like a dogs worst nightmare. Is it really though? Would dogs in fact be better off without us. Anecdotal evidence would suggest dogs need a certain level of human interaction to survive.

Author Jessica Pierce is a bioethicist, affiliated with the center for Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, writing several books specializing in dog behavior and biology. The author approaches the subject primarily through a behavioral and biological stance, taking a very measured, even, and scientific tone throughout the paper. Occasional emotional arguments are brought out, causing one to imagine a possibly familiar furry pup trying to survive alone in the wilderness. That thought might seem funny at first, but by the end of the article the question becomes, Are humans treating dogs as ethically as they should for the dogs own best interest?

The authors credibility is displayed smartly to the left of the article, and ethos based questions are peppered throughout the piece. This establishes from the beginning Pierce's expertise on the subject. The author has obviously done the required research to speak so confidently on the subject matter.

The nature of online publications is ad driven, which sadly in this case is the one distraction needing mention. Ads placed into the center of an article tend to break the readers focus. If ads need to be used perhaps it would serve the audience well for the publisher to move the ad to a less noticeable location, that's not always an option however.

The article stems from a larger conversation found in the book “*A Dogs World*” (2021) co-authored by Marc Bekoff. The authors of the book “invite readers into an imaginary world in

which humans have suddenly disappeared and dogs must survive on their own” (The Posthuman Dog). Many questions come to mind when pondering that thought. Can canines live without humans? Do dogs actually need help? Do dogs still possess the wild genes of the wolf brethren from which even the diminutive Chihuahua was derived? Will the canine species revert to prior form, or will even the most spoiled house hippo evolve new traits derived from their human companions?

It has become known in the scientific community, specifically the marine biology field that the bottle-nosed dolphins that inhabit the extreme southwest coast of Florida have developed a unique hunting skill only seen in that subset of the species and no where else on earth. The dolphins have observed commercial fisherman using nets to encircle, confuse and catch fish by setting out a length of net in a circle around the prey, stirring up the silt on the sea floor thereby confusing the prey and forcing it to swim directly into the net. The dolphins now form pods and encircle the school, forcing them into a ball. Next the pod sends 2 or 3 members into the circle to stir up the seafloor with their tails, which forces the prey to head straight for the mouths of the hungry dolphin waiting outside the circle. So how will dogs evolve in this new world?

To establish the logos based argument used primarily throughout the article the author points out that nearly “800 million dogs” (The Posthuman Dog) worldwide are strays, feral, or actual wild dogs. This is a staggering number of nearly 80% of dogs roaming free. Only 20% actually rely on human interaction for survival. That fact alone leads one to believe that dogs will probably do just fine without humans. Pierce points out that there will be some rough years but the species as a whole will eventually adapt to life without humans. Pierce also points out there will be serious challenges for the species, especially canines that have had traits bred generationally that might actually harm survival chances, such as the french bulldog, which suffers from breathing problems due to an extremely short fore-snout.

“Dogs share 99.98% of their DNA” (The Posthuman Dog) with the wolf ancestors from which even the diminutive Maltese was derived. Humans have altered everything from their morphology, physiology, even their behavior and coat color. This specific breeding has resulted in dogs that fit the needs of human companions more than the needs of dogs individually and on the whole. Sometimes this works out in the dogs best interest as well in breeds such as the Belgian Malinois which is bred for speed, intelligence, power and problem solving skills. Other times it creates a dog as useless as a teacup poodle, only useful to celebrities as fashion accessories while doing serious ethical harm to the dog its self.

The author gets into a fair amount of more log based detail regarding traits, hunting habits, pack behavior, and even micro group dynamics. It really is a fascinating article. Pierce hits the mark delivering a quality argument backed up with scientific knowledge, gained from years of studying dogs and canid behavior. The author even manages to bring about small emotional pathos argument. conjuring mental images of dogs rummaging for food, or cold and without shelter. This approach is mostly unnecessary given the scientific nature of the article.

Pierce even lists a pro and con argument for life without humans which is pretty well thought out and gives a nice change of pace for the article adding to the pleasing design elements. This leads one to think about how dogs are treated in the home as pets, whether humans really are dogs best friend.

The article is well laid out, with a pleasing design, well researched and has an eye-catching graphic at the top of a dog depicted as a stray in the cold, possibly abandoned or maybe it never had a human to begin with. The colors of the image are rather striking, bleak and do not cause the reader any distraction, while giving said reader something to ponder before beginning the article.

Dogs as most would suspect will be just fine in the long run without human interaction.

Canines will just behave differently, hunt differently and form different bonds with each other and potential mates. Some dogs may even develop solitary traits while others may become pair-bonded. It is hard to believe otherwise after reading such a well written, well thought out, and nicely researched article. Either way dogs will exist long after humans have left the building.

## Works Cited

Pierce, Jessica "*The Post Human Dog*" Aeon.co 1 Nov. 2021

<https://aeon.co/essays/who-could-dogs-become-without-humans-in-their-lives>