Preface and Acknowledgements

A handbook, more than any other collaborative piece of publishing, refers to a community which it consolidates, circumscribes and projects further into the future, without being the last word on it, of course. Mieke Roscher and Brett Mizelle first met in 2005 at the "Animals in History: Studying the Not So Human Past" conference in Cologne, a meeting that eventually led to the initial collaboration of the editors in the context of a special issue on animals of the journal WerkstattGeschichte in 2011. The conversations continued when Brett joined Mieke and André Krebber at the University of Kassel as a visiting professor in 2016, where the ideas on how to compose a handbook of this format were initially discussed, attesting to the long and generative relationships that the human-animal studies (HAS) community fosters. Indeed, we have experienced the HAS and animal history communities as exceptionally welcoming and supportive, which is far from a given in academia, as we all know. We believe that such openness is not a coincidence and is related to the field's primary concern: understanding how humans treat and have treated nonhuman animals in the interest of transforming those relationships and promoting multispecies justice. Despite the wide range of attitudes and practices of HAS scholars when it comes to animal activism and social transformation, we believe that history provides the bedrock for deciphering these relations and figuring out how to promote change. Concomitantly, we insist that the study of history remains wanting without consideration of its animals.

We want to express our deep gratitude to the HAS community for providing us so generously with a collegial and productive intellectual home, one which has made this volume possible. The relationships we have built over the years have been indispensable to the development of this handbook – it has been shaped by our many conversations, collaborations and interactions with other scholars and research groups over the years. A special place is reserved in all our hearts for the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies, who have impacted on our thinking on animals so deeply and with which Kassel in particular has a close relationship through a scholar exchange program. Likewise, the meetings of the British Animal Studies Network have become a reliable fixture in our academic calendars. In Germany, we have drawn immensely on the conversations during the regular meetings of FITT - Research Initiative on Animal Theory - Forum Tiere und Geschichte - Forum Animals and History – as well as with our colleagues in Kassel from the now concluded LOEWE research project "Tier-Mensch-Gesellschaft" - Animal-Human-Society. We have equally been fortunate to have worked with a number of European HAS initiatives over the years, among them the HumAnimal Group at Uppsala University in Sweden; the Human-Animal Studies Group at Innsbruck University and the Messerli Institute in Vienna, Austria; the Centre for Human-Animal Studies at Edge Hill University and the Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre in the UK; as well as outside of Europe the Human Animal Research Network at Sydney University in Australia. In 2019, we were able to bring members from all of these groups together in Kassel for the week-long European Summer School Interspecies Relationality, which we cohosted with the US-American Animals & Society Institute. The biennial meetings of Living with Animals in Kentucky and triennial meetings of Minding Animals at locations across the globe have also proven to be generative sites of scholarly exchange. Finally, the H-Animal Network, founded and edited by one of our editors as part of the H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences Online scholarly association, has played a vital role in promoting intellectual exchanges, collaborative productions, and the dissemination of new knowledge. These groups and institutions describe a constellation of our own work in historical animal studies that might help readers to better locate this handbook as well as our approaches in the wider human-animal studies landscape. We are grateful to them for the impact they have had on our thinking about animals and for enabling us to get to the point of being able to return to the community this handbook as a meaningful resource.

It is the authors of the chapters in this volume who we are most thankful to, however, for not only do they present its heart and soul, but they have also been enormously patient and lenient with our occasionally stubborn editorial demands. Likewise, we are thankful to our publisher, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, and especially to our editor-in-chief – Bettina Neuhoff – who proclaimed and offered the project to us in the first place and has been patiently waiting while we negotiated the demands of such a taxing project with our other duties. Last but not least, we would like to thank our research assistant Martina Freitag for spending tireless hours unifying the footnotes and copy editor Ian Copestake for his careful attention to polishing the prose and grammar of the text.

Mieke Roscher, André Krebber, Brett Mizelle November 2020, Kassel and Long Beach