



THE MILITARY ARK: ANIMALS IN SERVICE

By Brian Patrick Duggan

The list of animals used by armed forces over the centuries reads like a passenger manifest on Noah's Ark—elephants, camels, oxen, horses, donkeys, pigeons, dogs, cats, and even rats and bats ...

Until the internal combustion engine, mankind couldn't go to war without animals, and even after vehicles and aircraft were utilized, military animals still served in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam—and are still used by military forces today.

GRUNTS

Certainly the first military usage of animals was haulage. Weapons, food, tents, and other supplies had to be transported on campaigns so armies could fight. Local beasts of burden—horses, mules, oxen, donkeys, and camels—were drafted and loaded with provisions and weapons, and marched off to war (the U.S. Army experimented with camels as pack animals in the 1850s). During World War I, the French, Belgian, and German armies used sturdy dogs to pull ammunition and ambulance carts. Dogs wearing Red Cross insignia were trained by both sides to deliver first aid supplies to the wounded in No Man's Land. The British favored using Airedale Terriers because they were the right size, agile, intelligent, and tenacious—Britain's work served as a model for the emerging U.S. War Dog program).

MILITARY HYGIENE

In both wooden and steel ships, it was rare if a naval vessel didn't have at least one cat to exterminate rodents. During World War II and after, the H.M.S. Belfast's feline had its own small hammock next to the sailors and had the run of food lockers to catch rats. In 1991, during the First Gulf War, Sgt. Phil Lemon of the 319th Field Artillery of the 82nd Airborne adopted an abandoned, starving Saluki in Kuwait. Lemon named the native desert hound, "Dick." The two became best friends, surviving deadly barrages together. Dick sniffed out garbage bags not properly secured and was promoted to 'Field Sanitation Liaison.' He came home with Lemon to Arizona when their tour was over.

CHARGE!

Warhorses conjure up images of war chariots and pharaohs, the armored knights at the Battle of Agincourt, the Royal Scots Greys at Waterloo, the Light Brigade at Balaklava, J.E.B. Stuart's Confederate troopers, and the Cheyenne