

## THINKING AND WRITING THE PAST BEYOND THE HUMAN

### Launch of the Animal History Special Issue of Toplumsal Tarih Akademi

The Animal History special issue of **Toplumsal Tarih Akademi**, organized around the theme *Thinking and Writing the Past Beyond the Human*, was launched at a public event held at the History Foundation (Tarih Vakfı) in Istanbul on 3 June 2026.

Opening the event, guest editor **Deniz Dölek Sever** highlighted the central questions of animal history and emphasized that nonhuman animals should be understood not merely as passive subjects of history but as actors that have shaped historical processes. She noted that this perspective offers new ways of thinking about the past and challenges conventional human-centered narratives.

Editors **Cihangir Gündoğdu** and **İbrahim Can Usta** followed with brief remarks, thanking the institutions and individuals who contributed to the publication of the issue. They emphasized that despite coming from different disciplines and institutions, the contributors shared a common commitment to bringing nonhuman animals into historical analysis.

The launch continued with short presentations by the authors and a lively question-and-answer session with the audience.

The special issue opens with an introductory essay by Cihangir Gündoğdu, Deniz Dölek Sever, and İbrahim Can Usta. It includes four research articles, five document analyses, and four book reviews.

In the research articles section, **Suraiya Faroqhi** examines the dependence of early modern Ottoman society on nonhuman animal labor and resources, exploring the military, economic, and social roles of horses, camels, and oxen. **Cansu Asarkaya** shifts the focus of animal history from land to water, examining the historical invisibility of aquatic worlds and discussing fish in relation to labor, violence, and exploitation.



**Deniz İnce** analyzes the “Merino Cause” of the early Republican period, investigating animal breeding policies and the transformation of animal bodies within broader projects of modernization. **Onur İnal** examines zootechnics as a key component of nation-building, state-led development, and economic nationalism, offering a new perspective on human-animal relations in the early Turkish Republic.

The document analysis section brings together diverse sources and approaches. **Canan Çakırlar** explores animal labor and welfare through zooarchaeological evidence from Çatalhöyük and Gordion. **Faisal Husain** reinterprets sixteenth-century Ottoman cadastral surveys (tahrir registers) from an animal history perspective, highlighting both their possibilities and limitations. H. **Seda Şenvarıcı** examines a 1918 law regulating animal slaughter and analyzes Ottoman policies of governing animal populations through the lens of biopolitics.

**Büşra Arabacı** investigates the changing meanings of scorpions in Ottoman archival records, tracing their transformation from symbols of danger to ingredients in medicinal remedies. **Orçun Nalezen**, drawing on a seventeenth-century imperial decree, examines sponges as historical actors and explores the relationships between marine life, local communities, and the Ottoman state.



The issue also includes four book reviews covering recent scholarship in animal history and environmental history. **İrfan Kokdaş** reviews Anatolian Livestock Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire by Yonca Köksal Özyaşar and Can Nacar; **Semih Çelik** discusses Samuel Dolbee’s *Locusts of Power*; **Özkan Akpınar** reviews Zozan Pehlivan’s *The Political Ecology of Violence*; and **İnci Bilgin Tekin** examines Dilek Bulut Sarıkaya’s *The Human–Animal Relationship in Pre-Modern Turkish Literature*.

Bringing together studies from the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, the Animal History special issue highlights the historical experiences of nonhuman animals while showcasing the growing body of scholarship on animal history, environmental history, and human-animal relations in Turkish academia.

