

# Presidential pets have come in all shapes and sizes



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Nearly every U.S. president has had pets — and not all of them were dogs and cats.

**BASIC** **What do you think of the Obamas' new dog, Bo, a Portuguese water dog? Do you think he will make a good pet for the Obama family?** Bo joins a very long line of presidential pets — nearly every president has had one or more pets, starting with George Washington, who had a parrot named Polly and 36 hounds. Some of the White House animals were rather unusual. For instance, the sixth president, John Quincy Adams, kept an alligator in the White House for six months. The nation's eighth president, Martin Van Buren, briefly had a pair of tiger

cubs, given to him by a foreign ruler. At bottom right, you see the family of Benjamin Harrison, president from 1893 to 1899. The Harrison family had a goat named Old Whiskers. **What is the goat doing here? Does that look like fun?** At left you see Grace Coolidge, wife of President Calvin Coolidge, who held office from 1923 to 1929. The Coolidges had several dogs and cats, but also some more unusual choices, including this raccoon named Rebecca. **Can you imagine having a raccoon as a pet?** NEXT

**GENERAL** Here you see President Obama and his daughters with their new dog. **Do you remember his name?** (*Bo.*) The Obamas had promised their daughters, Malia and Sasha, that they would get a dog after the election was over. The public waited for months as the Obamas looked for a breed that wouldn't aggravate Malia's allergies. Now, Bo joins a very long line of presidential pets. Nearly every U.S. president has had pets, starting with George Washington, who reportedly owned a parrot named Polly and 36 hounds. Some of the White House animals were rather unusual. For instance, the nation's sixth president, John Quincy Adams, kept an alligator in the White House for six months. **Can you imagine**

**an alligator in the White House today?** The eighth president, Martin Van Buren, briefly had a pair of tiger cubs given to him by the Sultan of Oman — but Congress made him send them to a zoo. At right, you see the family of Benjamin Harrison, president from 1893 to 1899. Harrison's family had dogs, but also a goat named Old Whiskers, which they apparently put to work. At left you see Grace Coolidge, wife of President Calvin Coolidge, who held office from 1923 to 1929. President Coolidge reportedly once said, "Any man who does not like dogs ... does not deserve to be in the White House." **Do you agree?** The Coolidges had several dogs and cats, but also some more unusual choices, including this raccoon named Rebecca. NEXT

**ADVANCED** The new "first pet," Bo the Portuguese water dog, has been sparking a media frenzy since his arrival at the White House. Millions of Americans have enjoyed watching the charismatic canine's romps on the White House lawn with President Obama and his family. Bo joins a long, long line of presidential pets, and while many of them have been dogs and cats, there have been some more unusual choices. **Can you think of some of the presidential pets of your lifetime, or that you have read about?** Nearly every president had some pets, starting with George Washington, who reportedly owned a parrot named Polly and 36 hounds. Some of the White House animals were not entirely domesticated. For instance, John Quincy Adams, the sixth president, kept an

alligator in the White House for six months. **Do you think people were more eccentric back then?** The nation's eighth president, Martin Van Buren, briefly had a pair of tiger cubs given to him by the Sultan of Oman, but Congress made him send them to a zoo. At right, you see the family of Benjamin Harrison, president from 1893 to 1899. Harrison's family had dogs, but also a billy goat named Old Whiskers. Besides a series of dogs, and a cat named Tige, Calvin Coolidge kept all manner of animals at the White House, including Rebecca the raccoon seen here with Mrs. Coolidge. President Coolidge reportedly once said, "Any man who does not like dogs ... does not deserve to be in the White House." **What do you think he meant by this? Do you agree?** NEXT

# Presidential pets have come in all shapes and sizes (cont'd)



In more recent decades, presidential pets have drawn hordes of photographers.

## BASIC

At left is our 35th president, John F. Kennedy, and his children, little John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline. With them is Caroline's pony, Macaroni. **Is this a good name for a pony?** Macaroni was a gift from Kennedy's vice president, Lyndon Johnson. Johnson, who became our 36th president in 1963, had two famous beagles named Him and Her. Here, you see President Johnson walking Him and Her on the White House grounds. **Do you think any of the presidential pets understood that they were**

**famous?** In the bottom right photo is

a cat named Socks. Socks was the beloved pet of Chelsea Clinton, daughter of former President Bill Clinton. In this photo, Socks is trying to take a stroll on the White House lawn, but has met up with a bunch of photographers. **What does it look like Socks is thinking? Can you think of some other famous presidential pets? Why do you think the public is so fascinated by presidential pets?** END

## GENERAL

At left, you see a very popular "first family." It's John F. Kennedy, our 35th president, and his children, little John F. Kennedy Jr., who was often called "John John," and Caroline. With them is Caroline's pony, Macaroni. **Is this a good name for a pony?** Macaroni was a gift from Kennedy's vice president, Lyndon Johnson, who became president after President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Macaroni was able to roam the White House grounds and also received thousands of fan letters from the American public. **Would you write a fan letter to a presidential pet? Do you think Bo Obama will get fan mail?** The top photo shows a famous pair of presidential beagles, who were the pride and

joy of President Lyndon Johnson. These beagles were brother and sister, and President Johnson named them Him and Her. President Johnson once made headlines by lifting Him up by the ears, which some dog lovers thought was unkind. **Does anyone know the name of the pet in the bottom right photo?** (*Socks the cat, who belonged to the family of former President Bill Clinton.*) Socks was Chelsea Clinton's pet, but he did not get along with President Clinton's chocolate Labrador Buddy, so the two had to be kept apart. **What does it look like Socks thinks of all the media attention? Can you think of some other famous presidential pets? Why do you think the public is so fascinated by presidential pets?** END

## ADVANCED

**Who can identify the president in the**

**left photo?** It's John F. Kennedy, our 35th president, with his children, John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline. With them is Caroline's pony, Macaroni, who was a present from Kennedy's vice-president, Lyndon Johnson. Macaroni roamed freely around the White House grounds and received thousands of fan letters from the American public. Caroline also had a famous dog named Pushinka, who was given to her by the head of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev. The top photo shows a famous pair of presidential beagles, the pride and joy of President Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy after his 1963 assassination. The brother and sister hounds, Him and Her, were often photographed walking with the president on the

White House grounds. In 1964, President Johnson caused a media ruckus when he was photographed lifting Him by the ears. **What else do you know about President Johnson?** And at bottom right is a more recent inhabitant of the White House. Socks the cat was the pet of President Bill Clinton's daughter Chelsea. In the photo, you see Socks confronting the White House press corps, and looking quite nonplussed by the barrage of cameras he faced for trying to take a simple stroll. Socks and Buddy, President Clinton's chocolate Labrador, famously did not get along and had to be kept apart. **Can you think of some other famous presidential pets?** (*Nixon used his dog Checkers as part of a famous speech; Barbara Bush ghost-wrote a best-selling book in the voice of her dog Millie, and so on.*) END