Amazingly preserved puppy with whiskers, eyelashes, hair and velvety nose intact puzzle scientists

By Anna Lisowska, Svetlana Skarbo

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DNA tests on the 18,000-year-old Siberian canine cannot define if it's a wolf or a dog.

'It's 18k years old! So far, we have sequenced it's genome to 2X coverage. But we still can't say if it's a wolf or a dog. Maybe it's the common ancestor? More sequencing needed! Picture: Sergey Fedorov

The male puppy with its arrow-head milky teeth was less than two months old when it died.

It was found in summer 2018 inside a lump of a frozen ground near Indigirka River, north-east of Yakutsk, its full body, muzzle, and even whiskers and eyelashes preserved by permafrost.

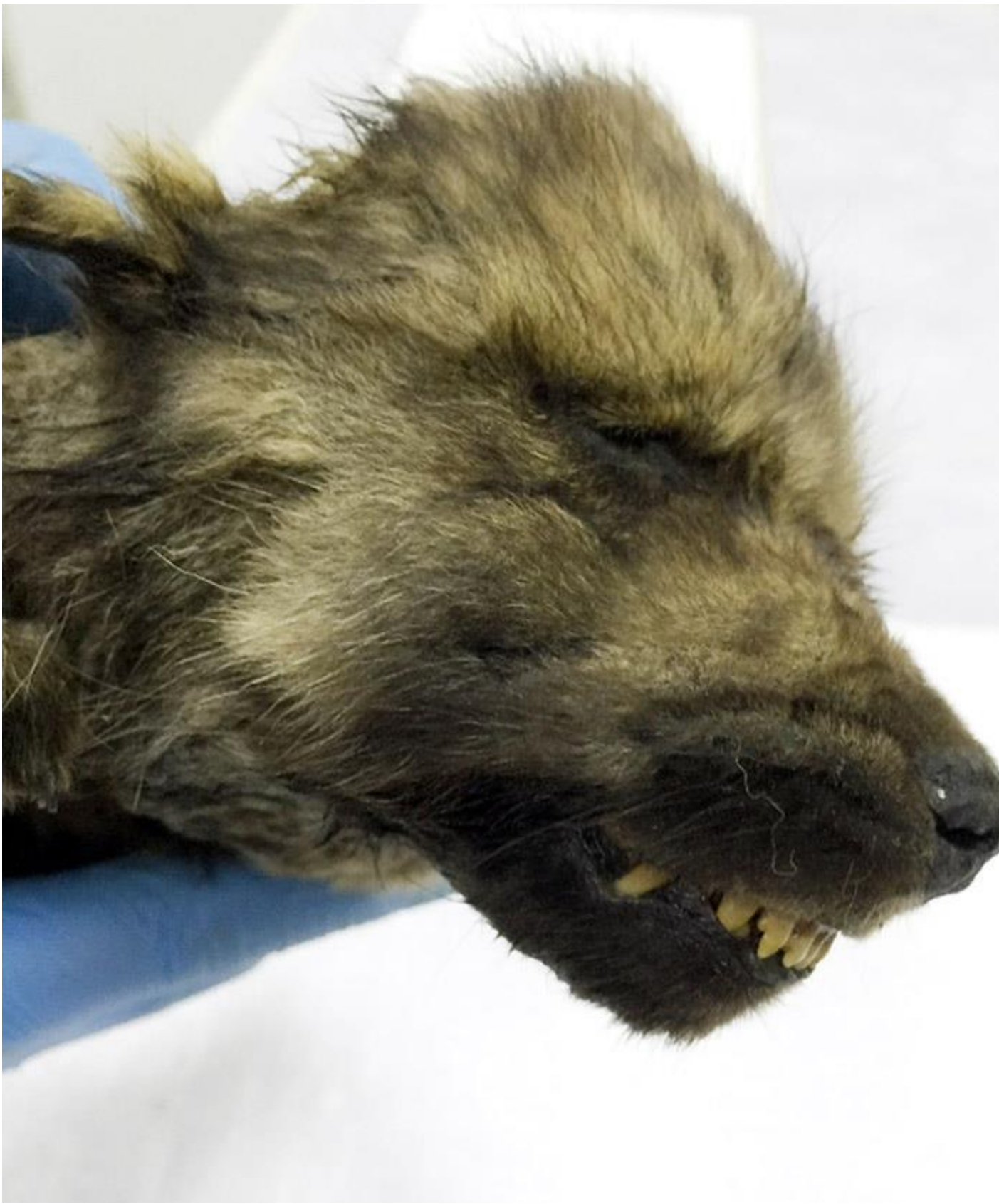
The reason for the puppy's death has not been determined yet, although its position did not suggest distress, unlike of the **earlier discovered Tumat puppies**.

Initial genome sequencing carried by **Swedish Centre for Palaeogenetics** (CPG) surprised researchers in that it failed to define if the 18,000 year old puppy was a wolf or a dog.

'Love Dalén, professor of Evolutionary Genetics, said that usually first DNA tests make it clear if this is a wolf or a dog.

'The Centre has the Europe's largest DNA bank of all canines from around the globe, yet in this case they couldn't identify it from the first try.

'This is intriguing, what if it’s a dog? We can’t wait to get results from further tests’, said Sergey Fedorov from the Institute of Applied Ecology of the North, part of the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk who took these stunning pictures.



Amazingly preserved puppy with its whiskers, eyelashes, hair and velvety nose intact puzzle scientists. Pictures: Sergey Fedorov

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Fedorov's words echoed the excited tweet by the Swedish scientists who said: ‘Dave Stanton* is working on this specimen together with Pontus Skoglund**.

‘It's 18k years old! So far, we have sequenced it's genome to 2X coverage. But we still can't say if it's a wolf or a dog. Maybe it's the common ancestor? More sequencing needed!’

The assumption is that this can be a puppy of either a wolf, a dog, or the so-called wolfdog/early dog, a transitional stage from a wolf to a dog.

The puppy was christened Dogor which in Yakut means ‘Friend’ but in English plays beautifully into a question of what is it, a Dog or…..?


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The earlier-discovered Tumat puppies in Yakutia. Pictures: North-Eastern Federal University, The Siberian Times

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*Dave Stanton is from Department of Bioinformatics and Genetics, Swedish Museum of Natural History.

**Pontus Skoglund (born 3 March 1984) is a Swedish population geneticist, currently at the Francis Crick Institute and formerly at Harvard Medical School.

Gray wolves and dogs diverged from an extinct wolf species some 15,000 to 40,000 years ago.

Last summer, research reported in Nature Communications pushed likely dates for domestication further back into the past, suggesting that dogs were domesticated just once at least 20,000 but likely closer to 40,000 years ago.

https://siberiantimes.com/science/others/news/amazingly-preserved-puppy-with-its-whiskers-eyelashes-hair-and-velvety-nose-intact-puzzle-scientists/