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## Livestock Guardian Dogs

### *The Visible Fence™*

The Selection, Care  
and Development of Livestock Guardian Dogs



## Presentation Overview

- Benefits of Using a Livestock Guardian Dog
- Guardian Breeds Vs. Herding Breeds
- The Livestock Guardian Dog Breeds
- Selecting a Breeder - Choosing a Puppy
- The Characteristics of an Effective LGD
- Working Behaviors
- How Many Dogs do you Need



## Presentation Overview

- Life Stages
  - The Puppy Stage- 6 Weeks To 16 Weeks
  - The Adolescent Dog - 4 Months to 18-24 Months
  - The Mature Livestock Guardian Dog
- Liability Issues



## Dog Turns Penguin Protector

Warrnambool, Australia - Maremmas are successfully guarding a flock of Fairy Penguins!  
At the start of the project, within one month after the first dog's arrival, the number of penguins almost tripled! That dog was named Oddball.

<http://www.warrnamboolpenguins.com.au/maremma-dogs>



Movie – Oddball - An eccentric chicken farmer, with the help of his granddaughter, trains his mischievous dog Oddball to protect a penguin sanctuary from fox.



## Oddball

Oddball passed away in 2017 at the age of 15.

Oddball was part of a pioneering project developed by Allan 'Swampy' Marsh in order to protect the fairy penguin population of Middle Island in Australia's southwest Victoria from local foxes and other assorted predators.

She was the very first dog sent to the island as part of the **Middle Island Maremma Project**, and definitively proved that Maremmas were capable of protecting the at-risk penguin population.



## Understanding How LGD's Work

The experiments of Lorna and Raymond Coppinger and the studies of other specialists have shown the effectiveness of protecting flocks with the help of dogs. After the reintroduction of wolves, that were eliminated in the United States in the 1930s, American farmers were losing about a million sheep annually to wolf attacks. 76 farmers took part in the Coppingers program, which introduced European livestock guardian dogs into the US sheep breeding

## Benefits Of Using A Livestock Guardian Dog

- Reduction in the loss of livestock to predators
- Discontinuation of night confinement
- Ability to graze land that predators had previously rendered unusable
- Increased self-reliance in managing predator problems
- Discourage people from entering your property (fields, pastures, etc.)
- Peace of mind when you're away from your property or when your animals are out of sight

## 3 Easy Steps to Raising the Ideal Livestock Guardian Dog

1. Raise your dog with the animals it is going to live with
2. Supervise its actions to prevent bad habits from developing
3. Establish limits of acceptable behaviors that are compatible with your operation

### The Livestock Guardian Breeds

Among the most ancient of dog breeds

Countries of Origin

- |         |                 |
|---------|-----------------|
| Turkey  | India           |
| Poland  | Russia          |
| Hungary | Iran            |
| Tibet   | Portugal        |
| Italy   | France          |
| Spain   | and many others |



### Livestock Guardians?



Maybe this is what you're looking for  
to protect your livestock?



### The Guardian Breeds vs The Herding Breeds

#### The Guardian Breeds

- Behave towards livestock as if they were family/siblings
- Centuries of selective breeding has been done with the intent to decrease their *predatory motor sequences* – stalking and chasing their "prey" behaviors.

#### The Herding Breeds

- All herd behaviors have modified predatory behaviors. Through selective breeding, humans are able to maintain dogs' hunting skills while minimizing their natural tendency to treat cattle and sheep as prey, thereby producing effective herding dogs.



## Selecting a Breeder

- Do your homework on health issues associated with the breed you choose
- What health testing do they do?
- Ask lots of questions
- Ask for references
- Find a breeder who will be there for you after the sale



## One More Thing...

You  
Better  
Like  
Dogs!!



## Choosing A Puppy

### Traits of Future Guardians

- Gentle around the livestock they are living with – not overly active
- A pup should not appear to be timid – rather it should exhibit self-confidence
- A pup should bark as an expression of suspicion but not fear
- A watchful puppy is also something to look for. Being alert is a positive trait



## Traits Of An Effective LGD

### The Ideal LGD is:

- Intelligent
- Alert - Watchful
- Confident
- Independent
- Highly Investigative



### Characteristics Of Effective LGDs

**Attentive** - Following a moving flock of sheep or alpacas and loafing with the animals is a sign of attentiveness.



### Characteristics Of Effective LGDs

**Attentive** – Staying with a moving flock of sheep or alpacas and loafing with the animals is a sign of attentiveness.



### Characteristics Of Effective LGDs

**Protective** - the basis of protectiveness is the dog's ability to react to deviations from the routine



### Characteristics Of An Effective LGD

**Trustworthy** - The absence of predatory behavior is the basis of trustworthiness



Source: <http://predator-friendly-ranching.blogspot.com/2017/06/what-makes-igd-igtd.html>

### Other Behaviors to Expect

- Getting between potential threats and the animals they are protecting
- Body blocking – leaning into people
- They look to the sky to spot dangers from above
- They bark
  - Then they bark some more
  - More barking
- They will rarely be out of sight or hearing range of their flock



### Life Stages of the LGD

- **Puppy Stage**
  - 6 weeks to 4 months
- **Adolescent Stage**
  - 4 months to 18-24 months
- **Maturity**
  - 18 months – 4 years



### Puppy Stage - 6 weeks to 4 months

#### Expectations - don't expect much

Important Time in the Puppy's Life – referred to as the "bonding window"

The dog owner's job is to create a "learning environment"

#### Before the Puppy Arrives

- 1) Decide where it will live before you bring it home
- 2) Set up it's living/eating area

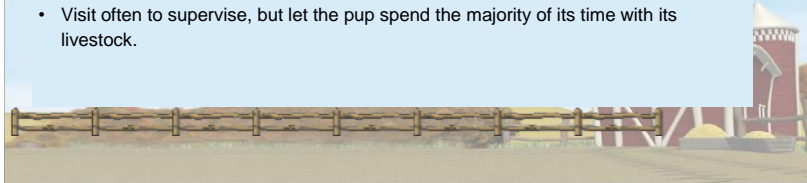
#### After the Puppy Arrives

- 1) Begin the Bonding Process – the key to an effective livestock guardian dog
- 2) Introduce the puppy to livestock
- 3) The new puppy and other dogs
- 4) Chewing
- 5) Feeding the puppy
- 6) Basic training

## The Bonding Process

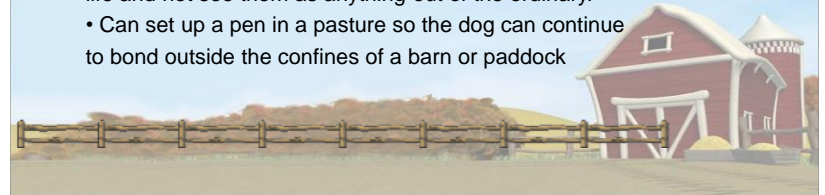
### Bonding pens work well to get pups off to a great start

- Place a few calm and gentle ewes, goats or cows into a pen, with a protected area for the pup where he can see the livestock but can escape to safety. Present the pup to the livestock under your supervision but give the pup some quiet time where it can watch its new friends.
- The pup will get to know its livestock first through watching and sniffing noses but will soon venture out for some gentle exploration.
- Visit often to supervise, but let the pup spend the majority of its time with its livestock.



## Advantages Of Using A Puppy Pen

- The puppy won't immediately think that the big animals walking around him/her are play toys.
- It won't get hurt by the animals
- You will be able to feed the puppy without the livestock eating its food.
- The puppy will come to accept the animals as just another part of its life and not see them as anything out of the ordinary.
- Can set up a pen in a pasture so the dog can continue to bond outside the confines of a barn or paddock



## Introducing the Puppy to Livestock


- Bring the puppy into the field on a lead and gradually get them used to the livestock. Leave them in a pen while out in a pasture so they do not wander off.
- Present the puppy to the livestock under your supervision.
- Let the puppy drag a long line as you observe their interactions so you can quickly intervene if necessary.
- Taking your pup with you as you do chores every day with your stock. This will expose them to all the different species you want them to eventually protect



## Introducing the Puppy to Livestock

- Never leave a pup completely alone with baby animals, new mothers, poultry, or stock that isn't used to LGDs.
- Resist the temptation to play with the puppy (for example – tossing a frisbee)
- Resist the temptation to let it crawl into your lap for extended periods of hugging
- Praise desired/good behavior.

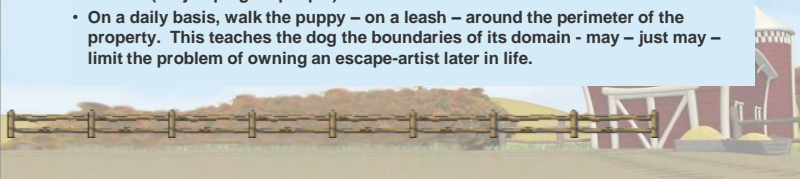




## Training the Puppy


### Boundary (Perimeter) Training

- Teach the puppy to walk on a lead
- Teach it basic commands such as:
  - Wait – start this earlier and you can prevent the pup from bolting through a gate when you open it
  - Sit and Stand
  - Come
  - Off (for jumping on people)
- On a daily basis, walk the puppy – on a leash – around the perimeter of the property. This teaches the dog the boundaries of its domain - may – just may – limit the problem of owning an escape-artist later in life.



## Socializing the Puppy to People

- Take the people to the paddock, ask them to wait to be let in
- Walk through the gate before the visitors and proceed to 'give an introduction' (you are letting the pup know that you are ok with these people coming in)
- Allow the pup to investigate the people in its own time, and suggest they stay calm and fairly still so the pup can do this
- Allow the people to pet and interact with your pup in a calm and friendly way
- Allow the people to interact with the livestock if this is applicable and desired
- When you leave, do not allow the visitors to pet the pup through the fence or gate, but simply calmly leave



## Socializing the Puppy to People

**Do NOT allow:**

- petting the pup through the fence or gate,
- anyone, family or visitors, to play rough games with your pup
- the pup to jump up on anyone - including you
- play chasing games with anyone

You do not want your dog to play rough with his flock, therefore remaining calm and not initiating rough and chase-oriented play with him (or allowing others to do so) is the most effective way of preventing your pup initiating this behavior with his livestock



## How Many Dogs Do You Need??

**the popular rule of thumb is one livestock guardian dog for every 50 - 100 animals on up to 20 acres – no one know how that number was arrived at!**

**The following factors are the most important to consider to determine how many livestock guardian dogs you need for your farm:**

1. Terrain
2. Livestock
3. Predators – what is your predator load???
4. Fencing
5. Livestock guardian dog behavior





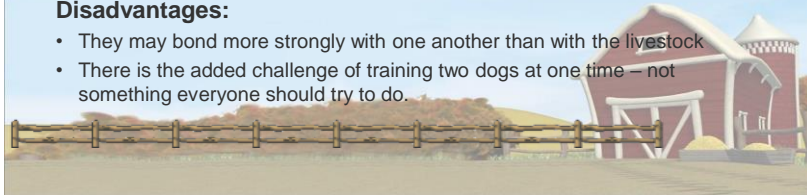
## Raising 2 Puppies at the Same Time

### Advantages

- The pups have someone to play with to use up their playful energy.
- They will learn to work together to protect the livestock and the property
- Having another dog around can alleviate boredom – which can cut down on chewing and escaping.

### Disadvantages:

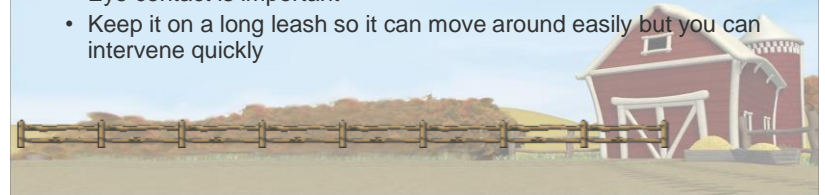
- They may bond more strongly with one another than with the livestock
- There is the added challenge of training two dogs at one time – not something everyone should try to do.



## Correcting the LGD Puppy

You need to learn how to properly correct your puppy for inappropriate behavior

- Dominance Roll
- Taking the dog by the collar and shaking the dog
- Eye contact is important
- Keep it on a long leash so it can move around easily but you can intervene quickly



## Adolescents 4 - 18 Months

As one author put it- *“All dogs go through an adolescent period in which they seem to forget everything they’ve learned, become completely rebellious to authority and rules, and apparently completely lose their minds when it comes to reason.”*

*Raising and Training the Working Turkish Livestock Guardian Dog*  
By Vicki Hughes



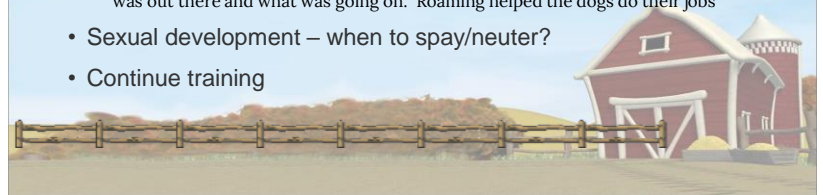
## Adolescents 4 - 18 Months

- Changes in size, maturity, and temperament
- Watch for potential problems and take immediate steps to correct inappropriate behaviors.



## Adolescents 4 - 18 Months - The Teenage Guardian

- Continue its socialization
- Dealing with overactive dogs
- Might have to deal with an escape artist
  - LGD breeds were developed to roam great distances to mark territory, patrol for predators, and basically just figure out everything they could about what was out there and what was going on. Roaming helped the dogs do their jobs
- Sexual development – when to spay/neuter?
- Continue training

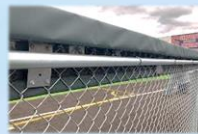


## The Adolescent Livestock - Guardian Dog

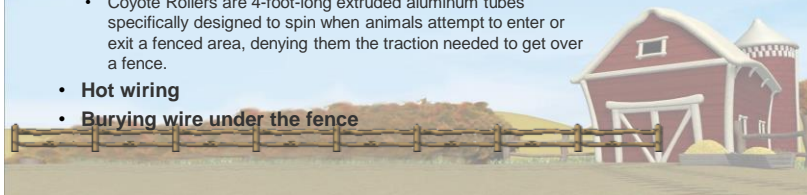
The *overactive* dog...which can lead to the dog becoming an *escape artist*.

Dealing with the escape artist...

- Using a drag
- Using a dangle (also used for overactive dogs)
- Coyote rollers at the top of a fence
  - Coyote Rollers are 4-foot-long extruded aluminum tubes specifically designed to spin when animals attempt to enter or exit a fenced area, denying them the traction needed to get over a fence.
- Hot wiring
- Burying wire under the fence



Coyote roller on fence top



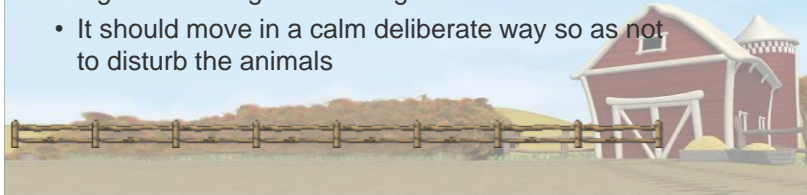
## What To Expect From the Mature LGD

- They will bark
- They will regularly patrol their domain and mark the territorial perimeter with urine
- They may choose a high spot in the pasture so as to survey their domain



## The Mature Guardian Dog

- Continue its education
- Continue its socialization
- Continue its training
- Expect a dog that is confident and rarely out of sight or hearing of his charges.
- It should move in a calm deliberate way so as not to disturb the animals



## Liability Issues

- Check your States' statutes – check “right to farm” laws
- Post your property informing visitors there is a working/guardian dog on duty



*Livestock Guardian Dog On Duty  
Do Not Disturb*



**Do Not Attempt to Enter Pasture  
Without Suitable Body Armor**



## Summary

- Select a suitable breed and responsible breeder
- Rear puppies singly (in most cases) starting at 6-8 weeks of age
- Keep human contact to a minimum
- Monitor the dog and correct undesirable behaviors
- Encourage the dog to remain near or with the livestock
- Ensure the dog's health and safety
- Manage the livestock in accordance with the dog's age and experience
- Be patient

Source: USDA (1998)



Dancer – doing her job by treeing a dangerous bear.

[1st of its kind footage shows guard dogs saving sheep from puma attack on a pitch black mountain | Live Science](#)

