

Starting a Tending Pup

By Ulf Kintzel

The very first thing before getting and raising a tending puppy is the careful selection of the pup's line. By choosing a pup out of lines that have a good record of good work ethic, good health, and other positive qualities one reduces enormously the risk of getting a dog that is not suitable. I am not just referring to the dam and the sire. They might be an exception to the rule within their line. I am also not necessarily referring to an outstanding parent. I mean a strong and consistent line that has been worked for many generations.

If I assume that I have a pup out of those lines I don't focus a lot on the fact whether the dog will be interested in sheep. In most cases they are. Although, I do introduce the pup in an age of about 8 weeks to a little lamb in order to see if it is interested in sheep. However, this is more to comfort myself. It only shows whether the pup is interested and nothing more.

Other issues are more important at this point.

Starting with the time when they can walk, hear, and see I test the pup at any point in time in order to find out who he or she is.

I occasionally surprise the pup(s) with loud and/or unusual sounds and noises. This I do to find out how sensitive or better insensitive they are to these noises.

The pup will be also put in new situations in order to see if the puppy is confident enough to handle new situation.

I don't make a judgment on a one time situation. Sometimes a pup may be afraid or careful. However, it should not be the regular case and the dog also should recover quickly.

Since tending sheep is often out in public I like to socialize and form the young dog. It should be used to all kinds of things such as people, other dogs, other animals (cats, livestock etc.), bad weather conditions, wet, muddy, slippery footing etc.

A naturally confident pup may lose some of its confidence when kept too long in a kennel. A slightly insecure dog can overcome its insecurity when handled the way I described.

I also try to build the drive when the dog is about 4 to 6 months old. This I do by having the dog running outside a sheep pen behind the fence. This way the dog sees the sheep, is close to them but cannot reach them. That means the dog can run without the need to correct the dog for wrong behavior.

One important issue is the off leash control. I start on this when the dog is about 4 to 5 months old. It is not done next to sheep yet. Until the dog will work sheep this remains the only serious training. Anything else is forming, socializing, playing, and building drive.

By doing all these things I get an idea what kind of dog I have. I try to *feel* how hard or soft, how sensitive or insensitive, how willing or unwilling, how lively or calm, how confident or insecure the dog is. This way I can adjust my training accordingly which I start in an age of about 8 or 9 or 10 months.

Many times I've been asked what I think is the most important thing in a tending German Shepherd Dog pup. The answer is: GOOD nerves.



Yes, Caro vom Quasliner Moor turned out to be a good herding dog.