Livelock Guardian Dogs

By Ulf Kintzel

It occurred on a spring morning in the mid 90s in New Jersey. I had lambing season. I drove to the farm where I have my flock and observed the lambs. I had no idea what was going on, but I could find no mark on them. It was a scene that was disturbing. The flock was clearly disturbed. The lambs were injured. I did not know what had happened at the time. I had not been long in New Jersey. I had lambing season. I drove to the farm where I have my flock and observed the lambs.

The ultimate goal is that the dog will seek the livestock it will later protect as its pack. Raising the guardian dog requires that the dog be raised with the sheep - or with whichever livestock one desires. In the past few decades, the fact that many people have decided to raise livestock has increased, as well as the growing numbers of coyotes have contributed to this.

Raising and training a guarding dog

After being weaned from its mom the guardian dog is raised with the sheep - or whichever livestock one desires. The guardian dog is actually an ancient form of protecting livestock which has experienced a resurgence in the past few decades. The fact that many people have decided to raise livestock has increased, as well as the growing numbers of coyotes have contributed to this.

The desire to guard is an instinctive behavior. Guarding dogs have usually very little prey drive and a strong innate desire to protect. It is to guard the livestock. In other words, should the dog’s purpose is. It is to guard the livestock and not to be a companion dog for the farmer or the family.

Conclusions

The true guardian dog is protecting the livestock and not its territory. That means it will protect the livestock wherever it is and not its territorial boundaries.

A true guardian dog will not be influenced by any of the misinformation that is circulating in today’s world. The idea is to protect the livestock, not to dominate its territory.

Using a guarding dog will reduce your predator losses but predator loss may not necessarily be zero. If you continue losing a sheep or lamb now and then it may not at all mean that your guardian dog is not doing its job. It may be too large, too tiny, or too overgrown, a coyote may outsmart your guarding dog at times. In fact, the guardian dog may have never known the coyote was there. Keep your pasture smaller in order to avoid it to use more than one guarding dog.

The most controversially discussed topic of raising a guarding dog is whether or not the dog can be part of the family as well as a true guarding dog. In other words, should the guardian dog be with and obey the farmer or should human interaction be avoided or at least limited? I am in the last camp. While my guarding dog may follow me around when I am in or near the flock, while the dog is certainly happy to see me, I cannot call or touch him. He will avoid me. I feed my dog in a little trailer that I can close up should I have a need to examine or treat the dog. A guardian dog that is too attached to the owner may want to leave the flock to be with the owner or his family. That is perhaps okay when you just have a few acres and a few sheep. The dog will be near the sheep. However, that may become a problem when one farms several hundred acres and when the pasture is miles away from home. There is certainly a happy middle ground. And all, at times Humans need to be able to get a hold of the dog. But keep in mind what the dog’s purpose is. It is to guard the livestock and not to be a companion dog for the farmer or the family.

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