

# **LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOGS**

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North Valley Dairy Goat Association

## **Goat Education Day**

November 6, 2010 • 1-2 pm



### Common Questions:

What type of animal should I use to protect my herd?

What breed of livestock guardian dog should I use?

How do I train my dog/puppy to guard my herd?

*Presented by Sue A. Hobby*

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# COURSE OUTLINE

## I. Introduction

### A. Instructor: Sue A. Hobby

1. Self-employed livestock rancher, Hughson, CA, ~ near Modesto (central CA)
2. Welcome questions
3. Biography; started dog obedience when I was 12 years old in Durant, Iowa; 4-H dog obedience leader for Stanislaus County since 2001; started raising meat goats in 2001; first livestock guardian dog acquired in 2002; have reared and trained five sets of puppies.

### B. Students

1. Brief survey of level of students' experiences with large guardian dogs
2. Personal goals for this class

### C. Purpose

1. Provide a broad base of information about livestock guardian dogs
2. Provide an opportunity to allow participants to ask specific questions.

## II. Livestock Guardian Dogs

### A. Commonly asked questions

1. What type of animal should I use to protect my herd?
2. What breed of livestock guardian dog should I use?
3. How do I train my dog/puppy to guard my herd?

### B. Breeds of Livestock Guardian Dogs (see page 3 FMI)

## III. *Internet* Introduction = ***What a resourceful tool!!***

### A. One very good web site that I recommend: **www.lgd.org**

***Their introductory paragraph:*** "Livestock Guardian Dog (LGD) breeds have been used for centuries to protect livestock from predators in Europe and Asia. The most well-known of these breeds in the United States are the Great Pyrenees, Anatolian Shepherds, Akbash and Maremma. Many also work as family and home guardians, and several are assistance dogs to their disabled owners, as they are sturdy enough to provide physical support. ***With the right socialization, training and physical environment, LGDs can be successful family pets and home protectors. They are generally aloof toward strangers and their size alone is rather intimidating. Though strong, independent-minded and protective, they are normally gentle with children and livestock alike. A common saying among LGD owners is "LGDs are like potato chips - you can't have just one".***

## IV. Conclusion

### A. Questions / Review

### B. Research opportunities

1. LGD web site: [www.lgd.org/](http://www.lgd.org/)
2. LGD chat groups: [www.lgd.org/lgdl.html](http://www.lgd.org/lgdl.html) or Cal Boers Yahoo Chat Group
3. Local breeders and/or obedience classes
4. Extension Agents
5. **Word-of-Mouth** ~ask other producers what breed/bloodline is working for them
5. Future Goat Education Days

## V. Thank you for coming to our "Livestock Guardian Dog" Session of Goat Education Day!!

### A. Please email me at **wphobby@aol.com** & I'll answer specific questions. ~Sue Hobby



Akbash Anatolian Pyrenees Komondor Kuvasz Maremma Tib.Mastiff

# Livestock Guardian Dogs

*brought to you by the Livestock Guardian Dogs Association*



<http://www.lgd.org/>

## Step 1: Do You Need a Livestock Guardian Dog (LGD)?

Are livestock guardian dogs (referred to often as LGDs) necessary to raising small livestock species such as sheep and goats? Many people believe so... Yet they must be trained properly, beginning from the breeder all the way to the new owner and/or herdsman.

**There are many factors to consider when evaluating your need for LGDs.**

1. Amount of land/animals ~

Many breeds require enough land/animals to keep them “busy” or they may become bored; i.e. the Maremma Sheepdog need to keep occupied!

2. Your ability to work with dogs ~

If you have time to train your LGD to protect your herd, patrol the area you want, and to correct bad habits they may start IMMEDIATELY, a LGD is a promising option for herd protection. The dog may have good instinct and initial training, but you have to enforce it!

3. Fencing structure ~

Many have stated that goats can get out of almost any fence... Many feel that LGDs are about the same! If you need your LGDs to stay in your fenced area, make sure you have it secure. Hot wire works GREAT, tall fences are often a (fun) challenge for LGDs to get over to get that predator on the other side. Our dogs run the perimeter of our property and know (most of the time) where their limits are!!

4. Temperament ~

Many breeds have “stereotypes” that the Pyrenees are more of a family dog, Anatolians are more aggressive, Maremmas are easily distracted, etc... Yet every bloodline can be different. Visit with the breeder and find out family histories and/or particular behaviors of each dog.

2. Hair coat ~

Some people do not want long hair when having to deal with foxtails, burrs, etc. Many times a mix of Anatolian/Pyrenees are a good solution.

3. Puppy or adult dog ~

If you have time to devote to continuing the breeder’s initial training, a puppy growing up with your herd often makes a good bond. Some breeds do not mature until 2 years of age!

4. Breeds - what breed will work best for you? See the following 2 pages about several breeds.

The following is an **EXCELLENT** source of information from **Purdue University** found on the web at:  
[http://ag.ansc.purdue.edu/sheep/ansc442/semprojs/2002/predation/guard\\_dogs.htm](http://ag.ansc.purdue.edu/sheep/ansc442/semprojs/2002/predation/guard_dogs.htm)

## Livestock Guardian Dogs for Predator Control ~ Working Dogs (AKC)

Predator Control is a very large concern for most livestock breeder, especially those in less populated regions of the US. Traditionally we think of coyotes as a major predator of sheep; however, **the common domestic dog can pose just as great of a threat.**

In an attempt to curb predation of our flocks, guard dogs have become a popular solution for many sheep producers. As a result guard dogs have become very effective in controlling predators. Guard dogs are not 100% effective; however, they will reduce the risk of predation greatly. There is some variation between the different breeds of dogs used for predator control, such as **size, disposition, and handling techniques**. Mishandling of the young dogs (and their new owners) is one of the greatest errors make that leads to a guard dog failing. Guard dogs must be properly trained in order to be successful. Patience, perseverance and discipline are needed to teach a guard dog to bond and accept the responsibility of guarding a flock. For more information on how to select and what to expect from your guard dog, go to the University of Missouri Web site at <http://www.case-agworld.com/cAw.LUgdogs.html> this is a paper titled Guard Dogs for Predator Control written by Helen A. Swartz, Ph.D. the Missouri State Sheep, Goat & Small Livestock Specialist.

Some of the more popular breeds of guard dogs are **Great Pyrenees, Komondor, Anatolian Shepherd, Akbash Dog, Maremma, Kuvasz, and Sharplaninac**. Below I have given you a brief outline of their history, and some details about each breed. The associated links many be used to learn more about each of them. In general the AKC web site may be most useful for a reference. <http://www.akc.org/index.cfm>



### Great Pyrenees

The Great Pyrenees is one of the most popular breeds of guard dogs in the US. Originally known as the "Dog of the Mountains." They took their name from a mountain range in southwestern Europe. In the UK and on the continent of Europe, they are known as the Pyrenean Mountain Dog. France is their native country where they have long been used as guardians of flocks. In the United States we best know these dogs as Great Pyrenees.

The Great Pyrenees is a large white dog that ranges in size from around 25-32 inches at the shoulder, and weights between 85-140 pounds.

### Anatolian Shepherd



The Anatolian Shepherd Dog is said to be one of the most majestic and noble animals in the service of man. These dogs are still heavily used in the rural districts of Turkey. They serve as the front line of defense form predators, for the Turkish shepherds. Without the aid of the Anatolian Shepherd, the Turkish shepherds would have a hard time protecting their property and flock from wild animals. The Anatolian Shepherd can be found from the Turkish Anatolian plateau to Afghanistan.

The Anatolian Shepherd has extraordinary speed and agility, which allows them to run down a predator with relative ease. A common practice of Turkish Shepherds is to equip their dogs with iron-spiked collars to protection them against attacking animals that might grab for their throat. Although this is not a practice commonly used in the United States, I am sure you can imagine this impressive dog protecting his flock.

These dogs can be seen in a range of brown colors from somewhat dark to light. General balance is more important than absolute size. Dogs should be approximately 29 inches at the shoulder and weigh in a range from 110 to 150 pounds proportionate to size and structure. Bitches should be approximately 27 inches at the shoulder, and weigh between 80 to 120 pounds, proportionate to size and structure. Neither the male nor the female should appear fat.



### **Komondor**

The Komondor is an ancient guardian dog, whose homeland is Hungary. They are thought to have descended from the Russian Owtcharka and brought to Hungary by invading Magyars. The Komondor is considered to be the chief of the herdsman's dogs and was used to protect the herdsman and his animals. Komondors have been used in the United States to fend off coyotes and bobcats.

The Komondors have been used successfully by both sheep and goat breeders. These hearty dogs stay with the flocks even in range situations where there is little to no shelter. They are big muscular dogs, covered with dense, white cords. However, they are typically clipped in the spring. The cords are left on for show only. Though they are large dogs they are not an extremely heavy animal. Males stand approximately 27" to 31" at the shoulder and range in weight between 80 and 100 pounds with females being slightly smaller.



### **Akbash**

The name of the Akbash originated in the Turkish word meaning white head. While in contrast the name Karabash means black head. The Akbash Dog now found in rural Turkey, where it has been serving as a livestock protection dog for up to a millennia. In today's Turkish society the way of life is as it was a hundred years ago, so the use of the Akbash Dogs is a very common practice. They are most often calm dogs, with a keen protective instinct for flock and property.

A mature Akbash Dog will range from 28 to 31 inches at the shoulders, while the females will range from 27 to 29 inches. Their weight should be in proportion to size and bone structure. Mature dogs in trim condition will weigh between 90 to 130 pounds, while the females will weigh from 75 to 100 pounds.



### **Maremma**

The Maremma Sheepdog is an Italian guardian, bred for generations in the Maremma and Abruzzi regions of Italy to protect both flocks and estates. Today the breed retains the same instincts and qualities that have made it a successful guardian for so long. Some of their greatest attributes are loyalty to their own intelligence, courage, and a strong distrust of strangers. The Maremma make reliable flock guardians as well as protectors of home/family.

The Maremma Sheepdog are strong, active, and very athletic dogs. Maremmas are truly a working dog that needs a job to keep them occupied. They tend to run about 25.5 - 28.5 inches at the shoulder and weigh between 77 - 99 lbs., while females will measure between 23.5 - 26.5 inches at the shoulder and weigh between 66 - 88 lbs. They can be a solid white color or shades of ivory, pale orange or even lemon is tolerated in certain limits.



### **Kuvasz**

The Kuvasz is an ancient breed who is among the oldest of all breeds. While the exact age of the dogs is in question it is well accepted that the dogs trace back too as far as Mesopotamia. However it was in Hungary that the breed achieved its present appearance. The Kuvasz is a guarding dog, originally used to protect livestock such as horses, sheep and cattle.

The Kuvasz male should be range between 28 to 30 inches tall at the shoulder and weigh between 100 and 115 pounds. The female should measure between 26 and 28 inches tall, while weighting between 70 to 90 pounds.



### **Sharplaninac**

Among the rare species of sheep dog the Sharplaninac is hard to be found today, faces total extinction. It is believed the home of Sharplaninac is Asia, but other researches points to the Balkans as their homeland. Now adapted to the severe ambiance of the Macedonian Mountains the Sharplaninac have been living and surviving in this reservation for centuries.

Sharplaninac dogs are well known for their ability to cope well in difficult environments. They have a strong loyalty for their master, and an ability to be very protective when provoked. The Sharplaninac is a strongly built dog with calm temper, good-natured but very rough. He is faithful to his master and uncompromising. They should be well-balanced dogs who should range from 62 to 56 cm tall, with the females range from 58 to 54 cm. The male dogs should weight between 35 and 45 kg, while the females should be between 30 and 40 kg.