

**Livestock Guarding Dogs**  
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**Bountiful Farm - Shady Point, Oklahoma**

**Unit Objective**

After completion of this module of instruction, the producer should be able distinguish between a guardian dog and a guard dog and state factors a producer should consider when selecting a guardian breed. The producer should be able to state procedures for introducing a new guardian pup to the goat farm and into the goat herd. The producer should be able to score a minimum of 85% on the module test.

**Specific Objectives**

After completion of this instructional module, the producer should be able to:

1. Identify the number one predator killer of livestock in the United States.
2. State some known predators that could be a problem for your goat herd.
3. State the three preferred animals that are used for predator control with goats.
4. Distinguish between the word guardian and guard.
5. Identify the most common breeds of guardian dogs used for protecting goats.
6. State some factors a producer should consider when selecting a guardian breed.
7. Identify questions that a producer should ask prior to purchasing a guardian dog.
8. State how a producer should introduce a new puppy to the goat herd.
9. State some physical preparations needed prior to bringing a guardian puppy home.
10. Select the appropriate dog food considering protein and fat that the guardian dog should be fed.
11. State considerations for introducing a guardian dog to the goat farm.
12. Identify acceptable characteristics of the guardian dog.
13. Identify factors to consider when grooming and providing health care for the guardian dog.
14. State considerations for feeding the guardian dog.

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## Making the Decision

Here's your situation-you have, or are planning to have a herd of goats. An integral part of your business (or hobby) plan is keeping your goats safe, whole, and healthy. You need to consider housing, feed, medications, breeding, fencing, and ... protection.

"Goats are tough, they have big horns and can protect themselves." "We've never had any problem." "Our house dogs will chase away anything that threatens our place or our animals." "We just don't have any predators here." "We have good fences, they'll keep anything out." "I'll take care of any predators." These are a few of the lines we've heard from people considering the protection aspect of their business plan. Some are said in good faith; some are delivered in sublime ignorance; and others are excuses to do nothing.



The fact is that if you raise goats, sooner or later, you will have predators attack your herd. Since 1980, the population of the United States has increased to roughly 286 million people according to the 2000 census. These 286 million people own about 53 million dogs. If everyone restrained their dogs with fences or leashes they would pose no problems for stock owners. As it is, domestic dogs are the number one stock killer in the

United States. The chances of meeting your neighbor's dog over the body of one of your goats just keep growing, right along with the population. Along with the growth of the dog population, coyotes (the second most common predator in the United States) have been forced to adapt to the encroachment of humans and they've done a splendid job of it. The coyote population has not only grown, but become much wiser in the ways of humans. Coyotes also sometimes breed with domestic dogs to whelp a canine (called coydogs) that embodies the worst of both worlds, a wild predator that has no fear of humans.

Add to the dog/coyote mix, the fact that the Endangered Species Act, coupled with federal re-population programs involving cougar, wolves, and bear have not only increased the traditional large predator population and moved it into areas where they were formerly extinct, but makes dealing with these predators more a process of having a good lawyer rather than a good rifle. Throw in a few of the smaller wild predators like bobcats and foxes and you have a total combination that virtually guarantees that you, at some point, will be the recipient of some predator's attention.

The question really becomes, not, if you'll be visited by a predator, but, "When will it happen and what will I do about it?" Your choices, as with so many things these days, are legion. You will find people using llamas, donkeys, non-LGD dogs of many different breeds, and LGDs of every breed and mix of breeds that you can imagine. The interesting thing is that almost everyone thinks their idea for protecting their herd is the "best."

You'll first need to decide if you want a dog or a llama or a donkey. Rest assured that llamas and donkeys can work effectively as guardians. You can find many people who use them and are well satisfied. If you go this route, be sure to talk to people who have successfully used the species of animal you want to use and listen closely to what they have to say. We chose dogs for

two reasons: 1) we belong to the group of people who have used these animals unsuccessfully - through ignorance no doubt, and 2) we realized that carnivores not only would think llamas and donkeys are tasty but with pack size or brute strength and agility be able partake of that tasty meal.

## **Narrow Your Choices**

Let's assume you've decided you actually need and want a dog to guard your livestock. How do you choose one? Where do you start? How much will it cost? How do you know it will work for you?

These are some of the initial questions most people have when faced with the myriad of potential decisions they'll soon have to make about getting a Livestock Guardian Dog. Notice I say "guardian", not "guard" dog. Not everyone agrees that this word choice is important but we bring it up here because it is quite significant in the conceptualization of what this dog will do for your herd. A guard dog guards. To us, it brings to mind junk yard dogs, attack trained dogs, sentry dogs and others of the same ilk. Guard dogs generally guard, first and foremost, against human beings. Guardian dogs, on the other hand, guard primarily against other animal predators. Guard dogs are bred and trained to please their human masters. Livestock Guardian Dogs are bred to be self reliant about the question of whether to attack or not. In fact, LGDs make lousy attack dogs because they, not you make the decision to attack; and they, not you make the decision to stop attacking. In other words, they're often hard to call off. LGDs, in general, are affectionate toward their owners but make a point of not being dependent upon them.

This difference between a normal guard dog and a livestock guardian is not the only difference between them. A guardian also nurtures its animals, especially lambs or kids. A guardian will help a first time mother clean and dry her kids, even if the mother is so panicked by her new experience that she doesn't let her instincts guide her to care for the babies. She may even abandon them and, if she does, the LGD will be there to keep the newborns safe until help comes. In the rare instance when we have a new mother without her kid, we go for a walk in the woods and look for a big white blob among the trees. The blob soon turns into a Pyr, curled around the kid(s) keeping it safe and warm.

Do people use guard dogs with their stock? You bet. We've heard from folks who use Dobermans, Rotweilers, even wolf crosses and swear by them. Do we recommend the practice? Not on your life, or more properly, not on the lives of your animals. Anyone who uses dogs with high prey drive to guard their livestock is risking a bloodbath in the stockyard and for those who do it knowingly, that's their own business. Even people who use working dogs without a high prey drive such as Aussies are taking a chance. How many times a day would you like your herd run into the barn and back to the pasture? Most dogs will do what they were bred to do and, although there are always exceptions, we can only recommend a dog that has been bred to work as a Livestock Guardian Dog. No matter which of the many histories of the LGD that you may read, they all agree on one thing - these dogs have been bred for thousands, yes thousands, of years to do the job of protecting the animals that are important to you.

Now that you have decided that a Livestock Guardian Dog is what you want, what next? You may not want to hear this but your work has just begun. There are probably hundreds of breeds of dogs that are bred for livestock protection. We keep hearing about breeds new to us on a regular basis so we certainly don't have a definitive answer. If you want to browse breeds we can recommend Molosser World (<http://www.moloss.com/>) and Livestock Guardian Dogs (<http://www.lgd.org/home.htm>). Even these two extensive sites are not exhaustive but they give it a good try.



At this point we believe that Great Pyrenees, Anatolian Shepherd Dog, Akbash, and Maremma are the most common working livestock guardians in the U.S. We are NOT saying they are the best; we are NOT saying ignore all the others; we are simply saying that we think you can find a source for good working dogs of these breeds fairly easily. "OK," you say, "which one do I choose?" Without question, the only sane answer is "Do your homework". All of these breeds have an intensely loyal group of supporters and there is no way we would call their wrath down upon us by saying one of these is "better" than another. In fact, we don't believe that any breed is "better" than another. We do believe that one breed will fit your specific circumstances more precisely than the others and it will pay you for your efforts in researching a hundred times over what you spend if you will examine your choices until "your" breed jumps out at you and says, "Here I am!"

Here are some factors that may influence your choice of an LGD breed:

- What are their characteristics when guarding?
  - Do they aggressively go after predators or do they warn predators off? No matter how aggressive or non-aggressive they are, all LGDs will fight, kill, or die if necessary to protect their animals.
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- Do they tend to be human aggressive?
- Do you want long or short-haired animals? What kind of maintenance grooming is required of a specific breed?
- What is the health history or tendency of a particular breed?
- How does the breed take to the climate where you live?
- Does the breed you like tend to guard territory or its herd, or both?
- What is your physical set up and location? How will that breed fit your situation?
- How big do dogs of this breed get?

Finally, cost. An LGD is worth what you think it is; rare breeds will usually cost more than the more common ones. Registered dogs will usually cost more than unregistered dogs. Adult LGDs of any breed will cost considerably more than pups. The price range is extensive although it is usually somewhere between \$50 and \$1000, with pups from \$50 to \$600. That's still leaves quite a bit of room for personal budgets and ideas of quality.

There are some people who are convinced that mixing two or more LGD breeds provides them with the perfect dog for their situation. This possibility has both pros and cons for the stock owner and we recommend you learn all you can about the breeds of LGDs before you consider mixing.

You may be able to think of more factors that will influence your choice of a breed. Go ahead and try. The more you think about, at this point, the more certain you will be when you make your decision.

Once you have found your breed, or maybe just narrowed it down to two or three choices, we strongly recommend that you find some working dogs of this breed and go visit the farms or ranches where you can actually see them working. These don't have to be breeders, just people who are using these dogs to protect their stock. If you can't find a farm to visit in person, at least do a virtual visit on the net and then talk with the farmers about their operation and how their dogs fit into it.

After you have done that, you're ready to make your final decision and to start shopping for your new LGD.

## **Buying Your LGD**

Now that you've completed all your homework and research, visited farms with working LGDs of the breed you have chosen and talked to the farmers there, you're ready to acquire a dog, right? Almost. You really should decide if you want (need) an adult, an adolescent, or a newly weaned puppy.

Just owning an LGD does not guarantee your stock won't be ravaged by predators. Owning a puppy certainly won't. You'll need to balance your need for immediate protection against the increased cost of an adult guardian. Adult guardians are somewhat more difficult to find just when you need one and many people opt for the puppy on that basis alone. At this point, let's assume you're starting with a pup.

To locate a breeder, we recommend asking people you know who use that breed to refer you to a breeder they trust. You can also locate breeders on the internet and through breed clubs. However you locate one, here is a list of questions we feel you would do well to ask:

1. "Do you guarantee your dog's working instincts?" Remember, you're buying your dog to work, no matter what else there is about the dog, if it won't work, it's worthless to you. Most buyers try to satisfy themselves by buying only from working farms. This is a good method but a respected show breeder with a long list of good working placements will also work. Either way, ask for references and see what other customers had to say about this breeder's dogs. References combined with the guarantee should keep you from being stuck with a non-working dog.
2. "Do you guarantee the dog's health?" If the dog is ill when you buy it, even if you don't know it, all you'll get will be problems. If you spend the money for a good LGD, you

deserve to start with a healthy one. Most breeders will recommend you take your new pup to a vet and have it checked in the first couple weeks you own it to insure you're starting with a healthy dog.

3. "Do your breeding dogs have OFA certification?" Large and giant breed dogs are subject to joint problems, primarily hip dysplasia. Through x-rays and OFA certification of the sire and dam you can reduce the possibility of getting a pup that is genetically inclined to these problems. OFA certification is definitely no guarantee but it does give an indication both of the joint health of the breeding dogs and the care the owners give their dogs.
4. "Do you guarantee your dogs against genetic defects until they reach maturity?" Many problems that are genetic do not show up until the dog reaches maturity. These breeds usually do not mature until around two years of age. A working dog that can't see due to entropion (a condition where the eyelid turns in toward the eye) or that can't move due to joint problems is of little use to a stock raiser. There is no sure way to avoid these problems but buying a pup from a breeder who knows the line is free from these defects and will guarantee it, can increase your probability of owning a healthy dog in the future.
5. "Are these guarantees in writing?" "How do you plan to satisfy the guarantee if it becomes necessary?" "Is this in writing too?" "What do I have to do to satisfy the requirements of your guarantee?" Don't be afraid to demand a written money-back guarantee. All the soothing guarantees in the world are meaningless if you can't show later that they were actually given.
6. "Do the puppies all have the appropriate shots for their age?" "Do the sire and dam have the appropriate shots?" If the breeder doesn't care enough to spend the time and money to keep the dogs and their pups healthy, go elsewhere.
7. "How do these pups differ from each other in behavior?" Not all pups in a litter have the same personalities. Some may be more aggressive than others, some may be better problem solvers, and occasionally, some may not like either humans or stock animals. It is a good idea to pick a pup that is moderate in its behavior, neither aggressive nor docile. A bright-eyed pup that is outgoing but not overly so is what you're looking for.
8. "Will you be available to help me through problems if they arise during the time we own this pup?" "What is your experience with working LGDs?" These dogs are neither machines nor robots; they are all individuals and, especially as juveniles or adolescents, may act in unexpected or unsettling ways. Although their instincts may be solid, they may need to be taught what is unacceptable behavior. Rough play and dominance behavior with the stock are the most common adolescent behaviors which cause problems. This behavior can be upsetting and costly to you if you do not know how to treat the situation effectively.
9. "Do you expect specific actions from me in regard to this pup after I take it home?" What are they?" Most responsible breeders will expect you to care for the dog and keep it

healthy. They'll be glad to talk to you about how to do that as well as asking for a promise to take care of the dog.

10. "How do I get the dog to my house?" Hopefully you can just drive over and pick it up on the day the breeder releases it. Maybe you did virtual visits on the web or even via telephone. Before you commit to a particular purchase price, find out what it includes. Is shipping included? Usually not. We sell our dogs FOB our farm and shipping is the responsibility of the purchaser. We will work with the buyer and transport the dogs to the airport at no extra charge as will most reputable breeders.

If you think about it, you may be able to come up with more questions that you'll need or want answered. Do not be embarrassed or hesitant. Ask questions until you are comfortable that you know all you need to know at that time. If the breeder resents the time and effort you're asking for, go elsewhere. Most breeders we know will talk all day long about their dogs and be happy to find someone who'll listen.

When you're comfortable with the breeder, you've agreed upon a purchase price, and all that's left for you to do is to wait until your pup is old enough to leave its dam, you're ready to move to the next step: preparing for your LGD to arrive.

### **Preparing for Your LGD**

The first step in preparing for your LGD is your own mental preparation. You are not getting a pet puppy. Yes, LGDs are dogs, but they're not like any dog you've ever met. Decide now that the day you bring your puppy home it will go directly to the barn without making a stop at the house. It definitely shouldn't spend its first night in the house, no matter how cute, cuddly and forlorn it looks. Your pup most likely was born in a barn and has spent its whole short life in the company of livestock of some kind. You won't be doing it any favors by taking it into a strange place like your house where there is absolutely nothing familiar. By introducing it immediately into the environment where it will spend all its time, you'll be doing it a big favor

The next mental step is to understand that, just because the pup is small, it doesn't need to go in with baby livestock just yet. Puppies need to grow into their situation. Without their dam to teach them, they very probably will make some missteps along the way. When a pup is in its litter, it learns to play with its littermates in a rough and tumble process that teaches it some elementary things about fighting, how to relate to other dogs, and helps develop its growing muscles. When a pup is moved from a litter to other babies, like kids or lambs, it will tend to interact with them just like it did with its littermates. The results can be disastrous for the kids and the pups. Playing with kids like that will probably kill them if it goes on very long at all. You'll lose the value of the stock and probably of the pup when you decide it's unfit to be an LGD and kill it or put it in rescue.

Normally, the dam will teach her pups how to act around the stock, but since you've just removed the pup from its dam's influence, you'll need to find a new teacher. Your best bet is to select a few of your older does. You'll need to select carefully; these does shouldn't be dog aggressive but should be assertive enough that they won't put up with any "garbage behavior

from a stupid little puppy”. These does will eventually teach your pup its manners around stock. They won’t hurt the pup but will certainly let it know the results of inappropriate behavior. Remember, the pup’s dam often looks and sounds like she’s about to kill her pups when disciplining them, so a little light bashing from a gentle goat will just be par for the course as far as the pup is concerned.

If you don’t own at least one goat or sheep that will teach the pup manners, buy one; it’s worth it if you can find one. If you’re not able to do that, guess who wins big in the motherly discipline department. The time to learn about disciplining a pup is before it arrives. Prepare yourself to spend some time with the pup and teach yourself about a puppy’s concept of discipline. If you can manage to visit a newly whelped litter of about four weeks or older, watch what happens when a pup runs afoul of its mother. The pup screams and cries like death itself is about to visit. Momma growls, snarls, and puts her pup on its back and her mouth on its throat. It doesn’t last long but it is a very effective method to teach pups not to do certain behaviors. You really don’t need to act like you’re going to rip the pup’s throat out with your teeth but the growling and snarling is good. Putting the pup on its back affirms that you’re the boss and putting your hand lightly on its throat will serve that same purpose as teeth. Make sure this only lasts a few seconds, until the pup acknowledges the correction. Please understand we’re talking about young pups only. Most pups will submit easily but any dog, even a young pup, has the potential to contest a claim of the alpha position. If you claim it with an older dog, you’d better be prepared to prove it in no uncertain terms or you may very well have an uncontrollable dog that will need to find an alpha human if it is to lead a productive life around humans.

Now here’s the tricky part, you can only do this when you catch the pup in the act of “bad” behavior and interrupt it. This is where using the goat as a teacher has the big advantage because if you don’t use her, then YOU have to be there when the behavior happens if you want to stop it. Learning this fact when the pup is already at your farm can be quite disheartening. If you work all day and no one is available to be a “mom” to your pup, don’t despair, you can do it in your spare time. It will just take longer.

Another aspect of mental preparation is to decide now that your house-dogs and pets will remain just that. They will need to stay out of the goat yard and segregated from your LGD. Allowing your Non-LGD dogs access to the goat yard will provide the potential for a variety of tragedies. The results of not segregating your other dogs can be that of teaching your LGD that dogs are allowed into the goat yard and, consequently, that whatever they do is allowed to happen in the goat yard. It can also teach your LGD that playing with others dogs is acceptable, as is either leaving with them to play or inviting others in to play. Either of these unacceptable behaviors may eventually litter your goat yard with bodies. Most problems with LGDs are problems that we have created by inadvertently training the LGD in ways we never intended.

We even had a situation where two of our dogs arrived at their new home at about the same time as a neighbor had a litter of Pyr/Chow cross pups. The fences were leaky and, consequently, the LGDs were around these puppies almost from birth until the pups were big enough to come over and play with the goats. When the goats started to not survive the pups’ games, we received a call about the problem and that brings us to the greatest mental preparation of all: YOU are still responsible for the safety of your goats!

LGDs were developed over thousands of years. The shepherds also lived with the flocks during most of that time and helped fight the bears, wolves, and brigands that preyed upon the flocks. These dogs were not bred to be automatons; they were bred to make their own decisions about when and where to fight and to do a great job of it. Mostly, the shepherds didn't have neighbors because they worked communally in large family units or villages. The dogs had no problems telling friend from foe. Today, in some areas, it gets a little complicated.



Not recognizing the subtle shadings of relationships in the modern world, LGDs accept others as threat or non-threat. It is or it isn't; there's no middle ground. We still have the responsibility to insure that our dogs understand our point of view on predators. When you kill a goat, it's ok; when a dog that goats have been allowed to accept kills a goat it isn't ok. When there is any confusion like this on the part of your LGD, sometimes a rifle is the best way to remove it. When your LGD sees you kill the killer-dog, it will learn and you will have solved that particular problem. While wild predators pose no problems for the LGDs, the intricacies of neighborly interaction and the unaccountable teachings of their owners sometimes can cause seemingly inexplicable behavior. Some farmers, today, want dogs that will not hesitate to attack any intruder, no matter how many legs it has, while others prefer a somewhat less aggressive dog. One reason why there are so many gradations of aggressiveness in the different breeds of LGDs available today is that the shepherds in the various isolated areas of the world where these dogs developed had slightly different problems. In some, brigands and bands of thieves were commonplace; in others, they were not. Just as it was then, so it is now in the sense that some of us want or need more aggressive LGDs than others.

Now let's take a look the physical preparations you'll need to make before the arrival of your LGD to insure that both you and the pup have the easiest transition possible.

First, and perhaps most importantly, your pup will need a "safe place". If this is your first LGD and the first one for your stock also, your pup is going to need a haven where it can get away if the stock gets too rough with it. Remember, your pup is eight to ten weeks old and is too small for you to count on it taking care of itself totally. If it came from a farm, the dog is used to staying out of the way but probably not used to stock being dog aggressive and actively trying to injure it. Even if you properly introduce the pup to your stock, there's no guarantee they'll take your word that the new dog is their friend; you may have to give them some time to adjust. In the meantime, your pup may need to escape in a hurry. We recommend something built along the lines of a creep feeder pen (meaning a pen with a small entry hole to allow the pup in and out while denying access to the larger goats) stout enough to withstand a determined goat's bashing but not overly large. The pen should be arranged so it is convenient for you to get to as it will be where you initially feed your pup. It should also be where the pup will be among the goats, even when it's in its safety zone.

When making the pen, it would be advisable to build it with a top and bottom also, as well as a way to close the entryway and latch it. This will make it dog-proof and enable you to use it for a "jail" later if necessary. The potential for "jail time" arises from the fact that adolescent dogs

often have no more sense than do adolescents of any other species. After your dog has bonded to its goats, separation from them for short periods can be an effective punishment for rough play and can often cure undesirable behavior with only one application. This option is easy and quick; IF you have the jail available at the time you need it. You can trust that somewhere along the line you'll want a dog proof pen, even if it's just to keep the dog out of the way when you're working goats.

Your next item will be to check your fences. If you have goats, they're probably already in pretty good shape but LGDs can make it through fencing that will stop a goat. Some LGDs tend to roam, while others want to make sure their borders are safe beyond the perimeter of their enclosure. Fixing your fences before the dog finds out it can get out is well worth the effort. In some cases, you may feel that it doesn't really matter if the dog is in or out as long as it stays attentive to the goats. If you hold your goats with barbed wire, you might as well accept that it will leak dogs any time they want it to. The problems that may arise from leaky fences have more to do with protecting your investment in the dog than with keeping the dog with the goats. After bonding, the dog will not be too far away from them. LGDs, however, are not generally familiar with traffic and cars are a pretty common cause of death for LGDs. Other potential trouble for escaping LGDs can come from unfriendly landowners, law enforcement, or thieves. All in all, you'll probably sleep easier if you make sure your LGD will remain on your property.

You'll also need to check with the breeder to see what kind of food your pup is being fed. We recommend that you continue whatever it is and then make the transition to the food you've chosen on a gradual basis. We really have only one hard and fast rule about feeding: Watch your animal and if it shows indications (extreme weight gain or loss, bowel movement not healthy, personality and temperament swings, condition of coat) that something may be wrong, consider diet a prime suspect after you've looked at and discarded the more obvious things. There are a tremendous number of theories about feeding LGDs and we'll try to cover some of them here.

1. You don't need to feed it anything; it can live off the land. This is actually true if you want your LGDs to eat your goats. They can't live off the land without feeding somewhere and your herd will be their only choice. It's either that or have them gone, off hunting instead of guarding, and since they have an extremely low prey drive, that concept would be a total failure. Historically, some LGDs were used to cull the herd and nourish themselves at the same time. If you don't feed your dogs intentionally, please don't shoot your dogs when they feed themselves on the only food available to them, your stock.
2. There is a position that since dogs are carnivores, they should be fed a RAW diet. The idea is to feed entire animals, not just meat so that the dogs get the entrails, organs, skin, and bones. This is supposed to give them a balanced diet and keep them healthy. We kind of like the idea but it is terribly expensive unless you have a cheap source of animals to feed. Even our wethers are worth too much to use for dog food.
3. Some people cook a mixture of meat and vegetables and, essentially make a "home designed" dog food they feel is healthier than commercial foods.

4. Commercial dry dog food, called kibble, is the most common form of dog food for LGDs. You can find many different theories about how much protein and fat is enough or too much to feed your dog. With large or giant breeds, over feeding young pups may cause them to grow faster than their frame will develop and, consequently, they'll have joint problems. Since the dogs are extremely active, not feeding enough will cause slow growth, weight loss, or malnutrition. In cold weather, these dogs need a higher protein/fat intake to provide the energy to survive and work in cold temperatures. We currently feed our dogs free choice with a 26% protein and 14% fat dog food. It works for us but it may not work for everyone. Start with what your breeder says works for them and go from there.

Another concern about commercial dog food is the ingredients. Some foods use a filler that has no nutrition but provides soft stools for the dogs. Other use "animal by-products" which could mean the food is largely composed of ground up feathers. Still others are mainly corn and vegetable products. All we can tell you is to read the labels and do a little research. Beyond that we go back to our first rule, "Watch the dog and see how it's doing. If it's obviously in radiant good health, don't fix it. If it has problems, and you can't see an obvious cause, try changing the diet."

Once you've made all these arrangements, you're ready for your pup.

### **Introducing Your New LGD**

As the "new kid" on the block, your LGD will need to be introduced to everything about its new home. A proper introduction will help ensure that your dog will become the guardian you want and need rather than a "problem child" demanding too much of your time and effort re-training and re-orienting it to do the work of guarding your stock.

There are many aspects of introducing your new LGD; let's look at them one at a time.

If your new LGD is a puppy, a natural tendency is to bring the cute little thing into the house so it won't be lonesome and afraid in its new surroundings. **DON'T DO IT!** Your puppy has lived in a barn around goats since birth. Your barn will not only provide a familiar environment for the pup but will start from the beginning teaching it that its home is where your stock is, not where its humans are.

#### ***The area***

If your new LGD is an older dog, provide a secure place such as an escape proof pen for its first night. Take it for a walk on a lead around the perimeter of your pen(s) or pasture so it will understand the limits of its new area. You may need to do this several times before the dog shows an understanding that this is its new area to protect. Your sensitivity to the animal will help you decide when the dog is ready to be released into its new area.

### ***The animals***

Although there are headings for the different situations you may have, only the new elements to be considered are addressed in each category.

### ***Other dogs***

There are several categories of “other dogs” that may be associated with introducing your new LGD.



1. LGDs. If your dog is a puppy, your adult LGDs should accept the pup almost immediately. You may have to witness a short explanation of “I’m the boss and you’re the puppy,” but there should be no serious problem.
2. Great Pyrenees are a special case in the LGD world at this point. Pyrs are generally not same gender aggressive if one or both of them is spayed or neutered. Introducing Great Pyrenees in this case should be easy and simple, needing little time but still requiring you to be alert for anything more than a short alpha demonstration.
3. Introducing intact same gender Great Pyrenees or the same gender of another LGD breed regardless of reproductive status can be a risky and traumatic business. We recommend that you do not try it initially. You can try penning them in adjoining pens and see how they act. If you just have to put two adult LGDs of the same gender together, wait until they have had time to adapt to their new home, but be prepared to break up a “for real” dog fight. With younger dogs the fight is sometimes not too serious, other times, especially with fully adult dogs; it can be a fight to the death. If you plan on same gender intact dogs working together, start with only one adult and let the puppy(ies) grow up with the adult. There will still be fights as the pups go through adolescence and become adults but the chances of lethal fights will be greatly decreased.
4. Pet dogs of any breed. Do not let them into your stock pens, introduce them to your new LGD, or encourage your new LGD to accept them. We strongly recommend total segregation of pets from LGDs. We understand that people often let their pet dogs associate with their LGDs to no ill effect. There is always the possibility, however, that either latent instincts of the pets will come to the fore or that the LGDs will learn to accept other dogs as “OK”. If you decide not to segregate your pets from you LGDs, you are opening yourself and your stock to the possibility of carnage and mayhem on a large scale. We feel it’s just not worth the gamble.

### ***Goats familiar with guardians***

If you raise goats that have been around dogs before, you’ll have very little to do in the way of introducing a farm raised or already working LGD to his or her charges. Simply put the dog on a lead and take it into the area where the goats are. Observe both the dog and the goats and when they are all comfortable, release the dog and observe some more to ensure everything goes well.

The entire process may take as little time as five or ten minutes but do not take that estimate for granted; stay there, observe, and don't leave until you and the animals are at ease with the situation. If the dog is mature, or close to it, that may be all it takes. Some dogs, however, require some time to accept new stock, even if the stock is dog friendly. You'll never know for sure until you watch all of the initial behavior. You may need to pen your new dog in the area of the stock for a while until it understands that this is its new home. (A note here: it is also wise when introducing a new goat into your herd to insure your LGDs accept it. Some dogs require time and you may need to pen the goat in an adjacent pen while the dogs get accustomed to it.)

An immature dog or puppy may become excited or exuberant about all these new friends and want to sniff them all immediately. If this happens, and you're lucky, a mature goat will teach the pup some manners and decorum and that will be that. If that mature goat isn't available, you need to take its place. When you observe inappropriate behavior by a pup, immediately interrupt that behavior by shouting harshly and/or exhibiting some form of threatening behavior of your own. Make it short and to the point, stopping immediately when the pup changes its behavior. If you observe this behavior from a pup, you need to ensure that the pup knows it will not be tolerated. The closer you can copy its mother's behavior in correcting it, the more effective it will be.

In any discipline, immediacy is paramount. If you don't interrupt the behavior, there's a good chance that the pup will not know why you're being "mean" to it. If you believe that the undesirable behavior may continue, secure the pup in an escape proof pen in the immediate area of the goats, preferably in a holding pen close to the barn, and release the pup when you can observe it until you're satisfied that it will behave appropriately.

### *Goats unfamiliar with guardians*

If you raise stock that have no experience with dogs, you must protect pups and younger dogs from them initially. An older dog will sense the fear and hostility in the goats and should treat them gently while avoiding any confrontations. A panicked or dog-fearing goat will attack a dog and can injure them badly. Many LGDs will not fight back and, if the dog doesn't understand it is endangered, it will not know about avoiding attacks until it learns by experience. Other LGDs do not tolerate that kind of behavior and will put a stop to it immediately. To say the least, this may lengthen the time you need to accomplish the introductions. Your presence and awareness are paramount during the introductions so that you can avoid this type of potential disaster. Some pups have never had to deal with this situation and will need to be protected. We recommend securing the pup in an escape proof pen in the center of the goats' area. The goats can make the adaptation to the presence of a dog and you can take the dog among them on a lead until you see that everyone has accepted the situation. Even then, providing an area where the pup can escape an attack is prudent. The stock should adapt fairly quickly, within hours or a few days at the most. Again, you need to be sensitive to the attitudes of your animals and observe their relationships.

### ***Guardians unfamiliar with your species of stock***

If possible, it is always easiest to buy your new guardian from a farm that raises the same type of animals that you do, otherwise there is a chance your new LGD will consider them as predators initially. Take your dog in among the animals on a close lead and explain that these are its new charges to guard. Make sure it understands that you expect it to take care of these strange new critters. In this case, the escape proof pen in the center of the herd is a virtual necessity. Your dog will live in close proximity to its new charges until everyone seems to accept the situation. If your stock has not been around dogs and shows aggression toward your LGD, once again, pen the dog in the center of the herd, taking it out into the herd on a short lead regularly until everyone is accepting of the situation

### ***Chickens and other fowl***

We don't know how they decide but some LGDs want to chase chickens and others don't. If this is important to you, let your breeder know in advance and have him help you select a dog that shows little to no interest in chasing chickens. If you are getting a puppy, the odds are that you will need to pay particular attention to introducing your dog to your fowl if they will come into contact, or for that matter, if you plan for the dog to be guarding fowl. When the dog gets to your farm, have some chickens penned so they are available to you and set the dog in the pen with them. Explain that they are to be treated as animals to be guarded and stay with the dog to ensure it leaves the fowl alone. If you have free range chickens, after penning the dog with some chickens for a short time, arrange for chickens to be in the stock area where the dog will be living. Be alert to its reaction to the birds as well as your other stock and correct any tendency you see for chase behavior. With any undesirable conduct, early detection and fast, interruptive action are the most important factors in stopping this behavior before it becomes a major problem.

### ***Planning for future stock but none are present***

If you are starting a stock operation and want a Livestock Guardian to protect them when they arrive, make your arrangements to receive the stock and the dogs at about the same time. If you must acquire one before the other, get the stock first, then the dogs. LGDs need to be "with" their stock, not locked up alone and waiting for them or treated as a pet until the new animals arrive and then expected to turn into an LGD. Getting your LGD early is asking for problems.

## **General Characteristics of LGDs**

Earlier we mentioned that your new LGD is not like any dog you've met. This is true enough that people with years of experience with dogs often, after acquiring their first LGD, find themselves facing situations they never imagined existed. We'd like to address some of these differences here. At this point we need to tell you that we raise Great Pyrenees and have never raised or owned any other breed of LGD. Rather than make the brash statement that all of the LGDs will conform to the behaviors we're going to talk about, we'll say right now that they won't all fit into one neat mold. We will say that it is our opinion that the more common breeds of LGDs will generally fit the behaviors we'll mention to a greater or lesser degree but we offer

these to you so you'll recognize what's happening when you come across one of these behaviors, not to say that it is a "one size fits all" description of LGDs.

Independence is, perhaps, the single most obvious and sometimes irritating characteristic people notice with their first LGD. We've even had people tell us that LGDs should all be obedience trained so that the owner should have control of the dog instead of letting the dog do what it wants when it wants to do it. This is an idea we applaud when it's aimed at pets and dogs that work in close concert with humans. With LGDs it is asking for total disaster.

Your LGD is the result of thousands of years of breeding to teach it to evaluate threat situations in an instant and to act in a way that best counters the perceived threat. Even if you, the dog's owner, wanted to live with your goats on a 7/24 basis, you could neither see nor hear the threats as effectively as your dogs could. You couldn't communicate directions to one dog fast enough to counter many of them, and you surely couldn't be with several dogs simultaneously to guide each one through various behaviors. These dogs are there so you don't have to live with your stock on a 7/24 basis.



Another result of this breeding is that LGDs just don't fall all over themselves to please you when you give them commands. You can teach them basic obedience if you choose, but it will never be like watching a Border Collie drop to the ground the second you tell it to. Opinions vary among stockowners about just what kind of obedience their dogs should learn. However it's phrased, usually the owners will have the dog come when they need it, be quiet long enough to administer medications like wormer when necessary, and not beat them through the gate every time it's opened. More than that is frosting on the cake.

Your LGD should be bonded to the stock and be glad to see you in the pasture, not the other way around. Some dogs will be more willing to be pets than others, but all should bond to the stock if given the correct environment. This means that you can pet them and give them treats if you want to, but do it in the goat yard, where the goats are. DO NOT do it outside of the goat yard or even by the gate if the goats are not there too. We cannot say often enough that most LGD failures are the result of inadvertent training for failure by the owners and teaching your LGD to expect human attention when they leave their stock is definitely failure oriented training.

LGDs often have dominance issues with each other and sometimes with humans. You want to ensure that your LGDs understand that you are Alpha. If you raise them from pups it shouldn't be too hard, but we make a practice of regularly standing over our dogs (meaning we stand astride their back-a superior position) of either gender, holding them, and for short times physically controlling their movements. We do this so that if the time ever comes when we must exert a physical superiority over any one of them, they have already given their consent to be treated that way. When you need to work with an injured dog, or in some other emergency, you may not have the time to assert dominance over them.

## Multi-Use LGDs

These dominance issues between dogs will often lead to fights, especially at feeding time, if you allow it. Pups and adolescents will fight and may even draw blood but it is seldom serious. On occasion (the occasion being they're able to get to each other) adult dogs (strangers or dogs that are always separated, not necessarily those who have grown up together) of the same gender will fight and these altercations may be lethal. We would advise that you break these fights up if possible although your personal safety is critical here. The dogs will not be aware of you



and, if you should place one of your body parts where teeth are being used, you could be injured. Here are some ways that have worked in the past to break up fights. If there are two people available, each of you grab a tail (preferably a different one for each of you) and hold the dogs apart until they calm down enough for you to assert physical control over them and take them to separate pens. We have heard of hitting the dogs over the head but don't recommend it. If you are alone and are lucky enough to have a hose handy, spraying as high a pressure water as possible in their faces will sometimes cause them to stop long enough to get them separated. As a last resort, hitting and pushing them apart with a 2x4 can work although it can be difficult to do and maintain your personal safety. If the fight is truly lethal, almost any means your imagination can come up with, other than placing yourself in the middle of it, is better than losing a dog.

LGDs will sometimes amaze you with the way they respond to the goats. During kidding season, they will often help clean and dry new kids if the mother goat will let them. Some individual dogs will be so protective of new kids that they will not allow the mother to approach it. This is not a breed trait that we know of but individual dogs of different breeds have been known to act this way. Obviously this is not to be allowed and the dogs seem to understand when you correct them.

It seems that many LGDs have an affinity for babies and often you'll find kids leaving the mother at night and curling up with the dogs. When a goat leaves her kids in the woods and then forgets where she put them, we'll often find a dog curled up with them, waiting for us or the mother to come back and claim them.

There are, perhaps, more differences between the guarding behaviors of the different LGDs than in any other single thing. Some dogs guard property as their personal territory while others don't care where they are as long as they're with their stock. Some have combinations of these two behaviors. Here is a typical guarding behavior for a Great Pyrenees.

First, they'll warn all predators of their presence through barking and "marking" their territory. In most cases, a wild animal will not attack stock when it's protected by dogs and the warnings are sufficient. Wild predators that have no other options will fight to get access to the stock, as will domestic and feral dogs on a killing binge. If the predator persists, the Pyr will threaten and see if the predator will leave. If not, the Pyr will stay between its stock and the predator to protect the stock and deny access to them by the predator. Great Pyrenees will fight when necessary to protect the stock but they are not as aggressive about this as some of the other LGDs

who will choose to fight if the predator doesn't heed their early warnings. This is a case where a Pyr will definitely herd its animals while it holds them in a group and keeps them away from the threat. Pyrs and other LGDs will usually work as a team when there are multiple dogs available, some doing guard duty with the stock while others advance to meet the threat. The way that they divide the duties appears as if they had held long meetings, deciding just who would do what and go where. While this is obviously not what happens, their coordination can be amazing when working as a pack.

While this is certainly not an exhaustive collection of LGD behavior, it can give you some idea of what to expect from your new LGD.

We often hear that people want their LGD to do double duty; on one hand they need a livestock guardian and, on the other, they'd like a yard/house dog to keep them company. Right up front, let's acknowledge that this can work, but we don't think it can work well. There are two distinct aspects to this idea that need to be examined before you make a decision that may be irrevocable and find that you have a situation you didn't quite expect.

First and foremost are the laws of physics. No dog can be in two places at the same time. Almost as important is the fact that no dog curled up in a nice warm closed-up house will be as alert or as able to detect and react to predators as a dog out in the pasture with the goats.

The simple fact is, when you have the dog with you, it's not with the livestock. This may seem obvious but we get the impression that not everyone actually considers this when thinking about dual-purpose dogs. Even if the dog does alert to predators while in the house, the reaction time to let the dog out of the house and move to the area where the stock are threatened may take longer than the predator needs to "grab a quick bite" and be on its way. This lengthened reaction time will hold true in varying degrees whether the dog is in the yard, in a house with a "doggie door", or shut in.

Most people want the company of a dog in the evening when they're home. This companionable interlude happens at the same time that the hunters begin their daily quest for dinner so at the exact time when your guardian is most important, it's in the house. By the very nature of the job description, a dual-purpose dog cannot perform both jobs constantly and effectively. The argument may be made that wild predators will sense the lingering presence of the dog and avoid the place. This overlooks the fact that dogs keep most wild predators away by their immediate presence and the threat of forcing a fight for the opportunity to chase prey. It also overlooks the fact that feral or domestic dogs don't give a fig if they smell your dog; unless it's there to confront intruders, other dogs will ignore it. For those who say they have a dual-purpose dog and they are happy with the arrangement, we can only wish them luck and hope that nothing with big teeth or sharp claws falls through the holes in their defensive plan.

Part two of the consideration has to do with the individual dog and its ability to live two separate lives simultaneously. Some dogs can, some can't. Some LGDs are not suited to live in a household and some can do it. The fact is that your LGD was probably raised in a barn with stock. This is what it has been conditioned to and what it is used to. Your dog, if it is an adult, should be bonded to your stock, not to you. When you teach the dog to value your presence more

than the stock's presence, it can be very difficult to keep the dog's focus on the stock during those times you want it with the goats. If your dog is a puppy, it should adapt to both you and the goats easily, but it will have a preference. Persuading the pup to accept living in the non-preferred style, while allowing it access to its preferred style on an intermittent basis, can be a Herculean task.

We have also found that LGDs are often quite uncomfortable when brought into a house. They aren't used to it and usually whatever purpose you had in mind is thwarted before you can even begin. If you adapt an LGD to the house, it will still gladly go into the pasture but getting them to stay there while you go to the house can be a problem. As we said earlier, some dogs can handle this schizophrenic lifestyle while other dogs can't. The problem is that your dog may be unable to make the sudden and repetitive adaptations between both kinds of existence. If this is the case, there is a good chance that by the time you discover this inability you'll have lost a good LGD.

### **LGD Grooming and Health Care**

One of the things we hear fairly often is, "I don't want a dog with a long coat because I don't have the time to take care of it." Think about this: "Did the shepherds of long ago spend any time brushing their dogs?" The real answer is, "No one really knows." It is hard to imagine that they did though. A long coat on a pet or show dog is not the same as a long coat on a working dog. At least with a Pyr, the coat is pretty well self-cleaning and self-maintaining. Sure you can cut out matted hair every few months but the dogs will lose their coat at least on an annual basis and the mats will fall away. Since these dogs live outdoors and often have no manufactured shelter at all, their coats have natural oils that help protect them against the weather. One of the implications of this is that you certainly don't want to wash an LGD as it will reduce their ability to withstand the sometimes driving rain or other wet or cold conditions in which they may live. Although you do need to notice the condition of your animals and insure they stay healthy on the outside as well as on the inside, all-in-all a long coated LGD doesn't need the excessive care that other long coated breeds demand.

Goats are often raised in parts of the country where the temperatures can get pretty high. We often hear that a long coated dog will get too hot. Although there is some accuracy in that statement, the coat doesn't play as major a role in heating and cooling as you might expect. Dogs don't sweat like people. They sweat through the pads of their feet. They also expel heat through their mouth, primarily using their tongue as a radiator and, consequently, they have some trouble throwing off heat during the hottest parts of the year because the tongue isn't a particularly large part of the body. A dog is pretty inefficient as a cooling machine so most dogs can use some help during hot weather if we expect them to stay active. Some folks actually shear their dogs for summer to help keep them cooler but we don't recommend it. The coat is a marvelous protection against the sun (a shorn dog can sunburn easily and white is actually a highly reflective color). It's also protection against teeth, claws (remember other dogs are predators too, not just the relatively shy wild predators), briars and sharp branches which are possible in much goat country. There are not too many parts of the country where sudden summer storms are unknown so, even during the hot season, they may need their coats intact to keep them dry and warm in a storm. A shorn coat can also open a dog up to attack by various insects that normally can't penetrate the thick hair. Timing can play a major role here too; if cold weather comes before the

coat grows back in, then your dog will surely have trouble coping with the elements. A partial measure is to shear only the stomach so the dog can get closer to the coolness of the ground when they dig a new bed.

First and foremost to protect your LGD in hot weather, we recommend water. There's nothing like a dip in a pond, tank, or even a large watering trough to cool off a dog that needs to get rid of some extra heat. The constant availability of water for both internal and external use is the single strongest tool you have to keep your dogs healthy throughout the summer.

On occasion, you'll find an inflamed area on a small patch of your dog's skin. Usually the dog will bite or scratch at it and remove enough hair in a roughly circular spot that you can see the red and possibly oozing skin. These are called "hot spots" and usually are caused by external parasites or allergies. Fast treatment is urgently needed as these are minor problems that will probably grow rapidly and/or develop infections. There are several remedies for hot spots. Commercially, Sufodene, available in the pet section of department stores, and Cut Heal, available in the horse section of farm stores, are quite effective. We've also used corn starch (simply pack the hot spot with it) and found it as effective as the commercial products. The hot spot will usually dry up in two or three days with a daily application and there is no lasting effect. As always, if you have questions about this condition or if it doesn't go away quickly once you treat it, check with your vet. In fact, we recommend you check with your vet before you have this condition, or any of the others we'll talk about, so you'll be prepared with expert advice from your own vet.

Let us add here that everything we say about dog conditions, problems, and medication is either from our limited experience with our own dogs, anecdotal from other breeders, or from our vet for our specific situations. We are not veterinarians and the things we'll mention here are more for your awareness so you can have preventive consultations with your vet rather than to lead you through any veterinary procedures.

You'll need to be aware that there are other skin problems your dog may experience including any of several different types of mange. If you have questions regarding any abnormalities in your dog's appearance, the safest bet is to consult your veterinarian.

External parasites can also cause your dog severe problems, including death, if there are too many of them. Fleas and ticks are the most common and we use Frontline brand flea and tick treatment that we get from our vet. It can get expensive but nothing we've found seems to be as effective. Dipping your dog in various brands of poison made for dipping can kill the fleas and ticks if you can get it soaked through the coat (a difficult job at best with some breeds) but it wears off quickly, especially in wetter areas, and it is a real hassle to dip most LGDs. There are other types of treatments for dogs and off-label drugs that we've heard recommended but before you use them, once again, please consult your vet.

The most dangerous of the internal parasites of which we are aware are heartworms. These things can degrade the quality of your dog's life as well as shorten it. Our vet tells us to start heartworm treatment on pups at about four months; check with yours about it if your LGD is a puppy. If your LGD is an adult, insure that you know whether it has been given heartworm

treatment before you acquired it. If it didn't, and has heartworm, if you treat it, you'll kill the worms and they can create a blockage in the heart that can be fatal to your dog. Your vet can test for heartworm if you're not sure of your dog's history and it's the only sensible thing to do if you don't know and want to start treatment. As far as we are aware, there are two different types of treatments for heartworm. There are heartworm-specific medications called Heart Guard and Revolution and there is Ivermectin (we need to stress it's not Ivomec Plus). Ivermectin is significantly less expensive than the heartworm-specific medications but it is off-label usage and may be lethal to collie type dogs. (We have often been made aware that some folks give their collies this medication with no ill effects but that doesn't change the fact that it may be lethal to them). We give one cc per hundred pounds orally on a monthly basis but we checked with our vet before we started and suggest that you check with yours. Ivermectin also will generally keep your dogs free of intestinal parasites other than tapeworms. Once again, however, you must look at your dogs on a regular basis and, if their coat looks poor, they seem to start losing weight for no reason, or their gums lose color, have your vet do a fecal exam if you don't have the equipment to do it yourself.

There are several vaccines which are generally recommended to keep your dogs healthy. We use a seven-way shot (there are some differences in brands but ours covers Distemper, Adenovirus Type 2, Coronavirus, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus (MLV & KV), and Leptospira Bacterin). We order from a supply house. It's much less expensive to give the shots yourself but your vet should be willing to guide you through it and tell you exactly what vaccines to purchase. At this time, multiple puppy shots with annual boosters for adults are generally recommended although there is some talk about not needing to vaccinate adults that often. We still do the annual boosters and will continue to do so until our vet tells us that the new evidence is clear that we need to change.

Rabies vaccine is a virtual requirement for your dogs. Their job is to stand between your stock and predators, all of which may possibly be rabid. You can get the vaccine and give the shot yourself, but in Oklahoma as well as several other states, the law considers the dog as unvaccinated unless the shot is given by a veterinarian. As usual, dog owners and breeders will argue about which way is best but the answer is, of course, "Whichever way you feel fits your situation" and that is a question no one but you can answer.

Finally there's the question of spaying and neutering. It is a question as much of effectiveness for your LGDs as it is a social or health question. A "fixed" dog tends to keep its attention on the job much more consistently than does an intact dog as well as the fact that a bitch attending to her pups is not out guarding.

A second and quite major consideration is: "What effect will excessive testosterone have on your intact males?" We found to our dismay that one of our dogs who had been an excellent guardian as well as stud dog couldn't take the pressure when he reached the age of four years. He was in with a bitch in heat as well as a very ratty buck and several does that were in heat. The particular combination led him into aggressive dominance driven behavior towards the buck. As a result, we have one buck that was mauled and we felt after trying several different interventions that we needed to castrate our stud. We kept him away from all the other animals for a month while the

heaviest testosterone levels subsided and have since placed him back as a guardian to insure his appropriate behavior before offering him for sale as an adult guardian.

There quite often is a big controversy about spay/neuter any time you gather dog owners and we won't get into the social aspect of it right now. The health part of spay/neuter you can discuss with your vet. Spaying is a surgical procedure and we have our vet do all the spays for our dogs. Castration can be done on the farm with the same elastrator and bands you use for goats. Again, check with your vet for the details and make sure you vaccinate the dog for tetanus if you do it yourself. Early spay and neuter is a concept that is readily accepted among most vets at this time. One of the big advantages to the dog owner is that the vet often charges a fee for the procedure that is based upon the size of the dog. With LGDs, eight to twelve week old puppies are a lot smaller and, consequently, the procedure is a lot cheaper than with adult dogs.

We recommend that you take a close look at the question of spay/neuter for LGDs and for pets. It isn't going to go away and PETA is getting more heavily involved in trying to force legislation to mandate it. It's a complicated issue and when you add the "Animal Rights" agenda, the facts of the issue can get obscured pretty easily. We think that it's far more than a question of budget or attitude; it's a question of "What's the best action that we, as individuals, can take for ourselves, our dogs, our stock, our pocketbooks, and our personal freedom?" Often the answers to these questions seem to contradict each other and we believe that LGD owners have a responsibility to look deeply at the whole issue. If you do, you may very well end up with the same position that your first reaction led you to but at least you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you reached a studied conclusion.

## **Dog Food Delivery Systems**

Perhaps one of the most common issues that people with LGDs have questions about is feeding their dog. We've talked about your feed choices earlier so here we'll address the question of delivering the food to your dogs rather than your goats. Some LGDs will protect their food from all comers while others are real wimps and stand back while even young goats gorge on delicious high dollar food.

For those worried about the goats, our advice is, don't be. If the goats clean up the dog food, the only real victims will be you and your budget because dog food sure ain't hay and you'll keep replacing it until your dog actually gets to eat. If the dog protects its food, it may sound like your dog is going to kill something but, if you'll watch without panic, you'll see that there is a lot of threat noise and posturing but no grabbing or biting. (At least there had better not be or you have some heavy re-training in your future!)

Especially if you have multiple LGDs, the most efficient answer we've found to feeding working LGDs is to use self-feeders. This will keep you from being locked into a specific time to feed the dogs. It also means there is always free choice food available to the dogs so they're never stacked up at the gate waiting to be fed just as the goats decide to go back out to forage. We have never had to hold food back from any of our working dogs because they were eating too much and they seem to stay quite healthy choosing when and how much to eat without our interference. In

addition, alpha and dominance issues in regards to food can be resolved according to the dogs' schedule, not yours. It seems to be somewhat less violent that way.

Self-feeders are easy to locate. Usually everyone from the local feed store to the local pet store will have some variation of the self-feeder for dogs. We find that the size that holds about 50 pounds works well for us, but if you have a single dog, you might want to try one a bit smaller. You'll need one with a capacity that will hold enough to feed your dog for as long as possible without molding in the feeder. The quantity your dog eats daily, the humidity, and the insect activity in your area are the major issues affecting the amount of food you can effectively store in the feeder and still provide quality food for your dog. If you can find someone who manufactures or assembles the actual feeders, you may save a good deal of money buying seconds. These feeders can be classed as seconds for a marred finish on the metal or other similar inconsequential irregularities. We bought ours several years ago for about half the price we would have paid in a retail store. If you have chickens, you'll need to raise the feeder by placing a milk crate or similar item under it to prevent the chickens from getting the leverage they need to open the door and eat if they manage to find the feeder.

Simply using a self-feeder is not, unfortunately the complete answer. If your goats like dog food, a little thing like a gravity activated swinging door won't stop them. They'll have it figured out as fast as your dogs do (if not a little faster, the dogs aren't as greedy about their feed as the goats are.) You'll have to allow your dogs access to the feeder while denying access to the goats. Although it sounds difficult to imagine such a thing, the method is quite simple: surround the feeder with a sturdy fence, cut hole in the fence too high and too small for a goat to jump through but placed just right for your dog and, presto!, you have a goat proof dog feeder.

We have placed hog panel, cattle panel and utility panel (but a wooden fence or any barrier too high for goats would work) around the feeder and cut a hole in the panel about 14 inches off the ground with the hole being 9 inches to 1 foot square. The dogs can get through the hole to get to the feeder and the goats can't. Make sure any sharp edges or points are smoothed off to protect the dogs when they go through because it is a tight fit. Variations of this method include making a hole for the dogs to crawl under or teaching them to jump in over the top. We don't use these variations because we feel it teaches and encourages the dogs to use skills helpful in circumventing our fencing.

To teach the dogs to use the feeders, put them in the 'pen' show them the food, and lock them in. They can almost always figure out how to get out. You do need to check though; we've had some rescue dogs that would have stayed in there forever if they weren't released. You may have to do this two or three times before they catch on.

On occasion, you'll find that a goat or two will figure out how to get in to a specific feeder. In that case, you'll have four choices:

1. Reconfigure the feeder fence with a different height from ground and a smaller hole.
2. Sell the goat or otherwise physically remove it from the pen where the feeder is located.
3. Feed the dogs individually.
4. Resign yourself to feed that goat dog food.

We have never found a way to un-train the goat from getting into the feeder without either making changes in the way it's built or making it just as unusable for dogs as it becomes for goats. (i.e. electric fence to keep animals away is just too inclusive!) The goat will learn easily that it is a "bad thing" to be in the feeder but that just means they run when they see you coming. With a little patience because the really determined goats will provide excellent quality control data, you'll have a goat proof dog food delivery system that will provide your LGDs with quality food on a continuing basis.

## Closing Thoughts

We have tried to share in this module most of the major points we've learned from our experience with our dogs, other LGD owners and breeders, and a variety of written materials. Below we'll list a few of the sources we have used and some we still refer to on a regular basis.

Bountiful Farm

- <http://www.bountifulfarm.com/Introducing%20your%20Pyr.html>
- <http://www.bountifulfarm.com/Dog%20Discipline.html>

Livestock Protection Dogs by Orysia Dawydiak & David Sims, 2004, ISBN 1-57779-062-6

Three Excellent Web Sites

- <http://www.lgd.org/>
- <http://www.canids.org/occasionalpapers/livestockguardingdog.pdf>
- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/companimals/guarddogs/guarddogs.htm>

E Mail lists that you can join by going to <http://yahoogroups.com>

- [GoatandSheepRancher@yahoogroups.com](mailto:GoatandSheepRancher@yahoogroups.com)
- [workingLGDs@yahoogroups.com](mailto:workingLGDs@yahoogroups.com)

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