



5. YOUR ANATOLIAN SHEPHERD

The Anatolian Shepherd, a Turkish dog breed, was bred to protect livestock from wolves and bears. Today these impressive dogs are bred and reared by the Cheetah Conservation Fund to serve the farmers of Namibia. Given to farmers at the age of six weeks, the dogs are raised exclusively with the flock and instinctively protects the flock from a variety of predators, including cheetah. By deterring predators, this important working relationship eliminates the need for farmers to trap and shoot this endangered cat.

As a result of the successful Namibian initiative, the Anatolian has also been introduced to serve the farmers of South Africa. To give this initiative the best possible chance of success, it is important to follow the introduction and monitoring processes advised for your dog.

An unprotected, abundant source of food (your sheep or goats) provides predators with an easily accessible resource which they do not need to hunt. This food source will encourage predators to enter your farm and will assist in increasingly successful breeding habits, with a resultant growth in predator populations. Traditional methods of control such as indiscriminate poisoning, hunting and traps often result in the removal of more beneficial animals such as bat-eared foxes, aardvark and raptors. By using this non-lethal method of predator control, you will restore balance to your farmland and reduce the predator population to a size able to exist by hunting its natural prey.

4.1 Important notes

- Always leave your puppy with some sheep or goats from the herd that he will be protecting, even if only one or two, when the herd leaves for the veld. The remaining individuals and the puppy should be securely kraaled. Do this until the puppy is old enough to travel with your herd to the veld and take up his duties as their protector.
- Handle your dog on a leash every day to allow for a relationship sufficient to enable easy husbandry and veterinary care.
- Do not encourage your dog to come to you. The goats or sheep are the family with whom he must bond.
- Feed your dog a quality dry dog food, especially while growing. Optimum health will help him serve you better. Do not feed your dog meat or meat produce; remember he is living with your herd.
- Do not allow your dog to run and play with your herd as he grows. This behaviour should be restricted by putting your dog on a light chain and run-line – do not use a drop-stick on his collar as this has been known to injure and kill Anatolian puppies.
- Check your dog regularly for illness, especially biliary – consult your husbandry manual.
- Follow parasite control protocols – consult your husbandry manual.
- Report any concerns to your local vet immediately.
- Never beat the dog; it will result in the dog losing confidence.
- Do not let family or neighbours feed or play with the puppy.

This important partnership between you and your dog requires your interest and investment during his first year of growth. His ability to appropriately guard your flock for many years to come, will repay your efforts.

4.2 Sheep dogs: Problems and recommendations

Dogs must be handled, collared and trained on a leash from a young age. This must only take place in the kraal or while in the veld with the livestock. Too much handling encourages a dog-human bond that is not desired; however, the dog must be familiar with wearing a collar and must be familiar with walking on a leash to allow future correctional training.

(a) Dogs not bonding with livestock

It is essential to place puppies with their livestock herd between the age of 6 to 8 weeks – the younger, the better. At CCF, Anatolian puppies are born in a kraal, making the transition to a new kraal easier, as they immediately settle down to the familiar and comforting sounds and smells of livestock. This transition is much more difficult for puppies without prior exposure to livestock.

(b) Dogs not accompanying livestock or returning to the kraal

Puppies must start going out with livestock early enough, but must not be made to walk too far initially. A tired, footsore puppy will resent going out and will return as soon as it is not supervised. Puppies not going out early enough (from three months of age) may adopt the kraal as their territory to guard and come back to the kraal without the livestock.

A dog returning home early, a few hours ahead of the livestock, must be taken back out immediately to rejoin the livestock. Scold him upon his return to the kraal, but give lots of praise when he rejoins the livestock in the veld. A shepherd's supervision during the time that the dog tries to return to the kraal will help to correct this behaviour. Keep the dog on a leash in the veld for a week or two, and take him off the leash to observe whether he has learned to remain in the veld with the livestock until the end of the day.

Midday heat may cause dogs to seek shade or return to the kraal. Familiarise the dog with being brushed/groomed from a young age. The winter coat sometimes grows very thick and takes a while to shed during summer. Grooming may assist in these instances.

(c) Moving livestock and the dog to new posts

When moving livestock to a new post, some farmers have reported that the dog returns to the original post. The dogs sometimes seem to adopt a particular area as their territory and will return to it despite the livestock not being there. Leash-training is essential as the dog can be walked daily with the livestock (in their new camp) by a shepherd until it learns to stay in the new territory.

The dog should be safely put on a slide wire at night to prevent it from returning to the old post. Care should be taken to tie the dog carefully as it will strangle itself if it is not used to being restrained or if the slide wire is near a fence over which the dog can jump. This only needs to be a short-term measure with care being taken to reassure the dog that leash-walking/using a slide wire is not a punishment.

(d) Dogs rejecting new additions to the herd

Introducing new stock to the herd requires observation, as the dogs sometimes reject new livestock, viewing these as 'intruders'. New livestock should be rubbed down with manure from the kraal so that they smell familiar. It may even be necessary to separate the newcomer/s together with some existing herd members and allow them to integrate for a few days before introducing them to the dog.

(e) Dogs and other livestock

The puppy must be exposed to cattle, horses, other herds of small stock, etc., from an early age so that it is taught not to regard these as intruders. The dog should be walked with its own livestock herd close to or through other livestock herds. Barking at other livestock must be discouraged by reprimanding him. Praise the dog when it ignores the other livestock. Take care that the puppy is not injured, e.g. by aggressive cattle.

(f) Relocating livestock guard dogs to new herds

It is not advisable to relocate the dog to a new herd, but should it become necessary to relocate the dog, a core group of the livestock that the dog grew up with should, where possible, be moved with him into the new flock.

Follow the same steps as described in '*Moving livestock to new posts*'. Where it is not possible to move original livestock with the dog, these same steps should be followed. An adult dog can be relocated successfully, but must be given time to adapt to the new surroundings and a new herd. Again, good leash-training and learning to be tied are essential to ensure the dog's safety and successful relocation. Dogs cannot be moved to a different type of smallstock. Move the dogs from goats to goats, but not from goats to sheep, or visa versa.

(g) Livestock guarding dogs and new-born livestock

Observe Livestock guard dogs during the birthing season to ensure that they do not get overly excited with the new arrivals and behave calmly. Eating afterbirth is allowed and helps with bonding but playful behaviour must be stopped immediately if it occurs. Sniffing and licking is allowed and should be praised.

(h) Dogs playing with and injuring/killing livestock

Take special care to observe puppies from a distance during early morning when playful behaviour is most likely to occur. Staff must be briefed and carry out impromptu checks to ensure this behaviour does not go undetected. Once established, such behaviour is hard to stop and will result in livestock damage. Puppies that do not start accompanying livestock early enough (three months of age) are more likely to take their energy out in the form of playing.

Dogs playing with livestock can be particularly prevalent at about 3-4 months and again at 6-12 months. Sheep in particular are prone to becoming unwilling playmates, as they tend to run, inadvertently encouraging play behaviour from puppies. Adult goats tend to tolerate playing less, standing their ground and butting unruly puppies.

It is essential to reprimand the puppy for this type of behaviour when the behaviour occurs and not hours afterwards when damaged livestock is discovered – the dog must associate reprimanding with the undesired behaviour.

If the behaviour persists, the dog can be restrained in the kraal on a slide wire at night when not supervised and until it outgrows the behaviour.

Some literature recommends the use of a dangle stick to correct play behaviour. A dangle stick is attached to the collar when the dog is left unattended in the kraal with the herd. This entails a stick about 30 cm long. It is attached to the dog's collar with a swivel hook and dangles from the collar. The device allows the dog to eat, drink, etc, but when it tries to run the stick bumps against the legs, thus discouraging playful chasing of livestock. This can be used on a playful pup for three to four weeks and should be removed when the dog goes out into the veld and when the playful behaviour is outgrown. **The CCF has found this dangle stick to be ineffective and states that it can also cause injury to the dogs' legs.**

(i) Livestock guard dogs and shepherds

Livestock guarding dogs need not work with a shepherd/herder, but at least during their first year a shepherd provides protection and can apply corrective training to the developing puppy. Where no permanent herder is employed to go out with the dog, one may need to apply correctional training from time to time. However, an unreliable or aggressive herder will result in the dog being reluctant to stay with the livestock or will learn undesirable behaviour such as hunting. Shepherds who encouraged the dog to bond with him rather than with the livestock, also create problems. Temporary herders used e.g. when relocating to new posts, should ideally be familiar with the dog.

Where herders are used they will play a key role in the success or failure of the dog. Particular care must be taken when employing a new herder – there have been cases where an excellent working dog suddenly abandons the flock when herders are changed. A new herder who is afraid of or aggressive towards the dog could negatively affect a dog's performance. Herders that encourage dogs to hunt, is another problem that has occurred.

(j) Socialising with other dogs

Puppies must be familiarised with resident/pet dogs to prevent unnecessary fighting later on, but must not be encouraged to socialise with them at the kraal or away from the kraal at the homestead. The puppy must learn not to let other dogs into the kraal as they could cause damage to livestock. Introduce the guard dog to the domestic dogs outside the kraal, away from immediate contact with livestock. Domestic dogs may encourage undesirable behaviour such as leaving the livestock and hunting. Therefore they should not be allowed to roam freely at night when undesirable behaviour is most likely to occur.

(k) Socialising with people

If the dog is not well socialised and familiar with only specific handlers, an untouchable and aggressive dog will be the result. However, it must be emphasised that socialising away from the kraal, e.g. at the homestead, particularly when encouraged by children and domestic dogs, is not recommended as the dog will be encouraged to leave the livestock and seek human contact. Strangers should not be allowed near the kraal and only a limited number of people caring for the dog will help teach the dog not to allow intruders into the kraal, thereby preventing stock theft.

(l) Sterilising/castrating dogs

Females will go in search of a mate when coming into heat and should be sterilised to prevent straying. Males will go in search of females in heat and should be castrated to keep their attention with their flock. Sterilisation will not negatively affect work performance but can prevent undesirable behaviour such as wandering.

(m) Restraining dogs

Tying the dog on a slide wire is recommended in cases where difficulty is experienced in preventing play behaviour and wandering at night. Care must be taken when tying the dog for the first time, so that it does not strangle itself. In addition, the slide wire must not reach perimeter fences to prevent the tied dog from jumping over the fence and strangling itself.

Ideally the wire should run along the ground diagonally across the kraal and have access to shade and water at all times. A light-weight chain is recommended as the dogs can chew through cords. The chain should be at least two metres long and attached to the collar with a swivel clip. It is recommended that the dog be familiarised with a collar and leash-trained prior to tying. This will also facilitate trips to the vet.

(n) Hunting game

Puppies that are not taught to allow certain 'intruders' such as warthogs close to the herd, or that are encouraged to chase game by unscrupulous herders wanting the meat, will become a serious liability and cause a lot of damage to wildlife when they mature. This is one of the most difficult types of behaviour to stop once it is established. Close supervision by a trustworthy herder and serious reprimanding of barking at warthogs etc. is recommended, as barking indicates that the dog regards the subject it is barking at, as an intruder.

Also, should a dog kill an animal, the animal or a piece of it can be tied to the collar and left there. This will help discourage the desire to go near such an animal again.

This manual was compiled by CCF Namibia and amended and extended by CCF Cheetah Outreach and De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust. The complete manual is available from Cyril Stannard of Cheetah Foundation at 082 927 2729 or email anatolian@vodamail.co.za or phone Bom Louw of the NWGA at 082 652 2243.