



Livestock Guardian Dogs

What is a guardian dog and how to they work?

- Guardian dogs are a breed of dog who have been selectively bred to encourage their protecting habits around livestock. Examples include maremmas and Anatolian breeds.
- Livestock guardian dogs live with the livestock in the paddock, providing protection from predators such as wild dogs and foxes.
- They do not exclude the predators from the paddock but deter the predators from interacting with the livestock.
- Livestock guardian dogs perform confrontation and disruption behaviours towards predators.
- Livestock guardian dogs can occasionally kill the predator.
- They are a very effective tool for reducing predator activity and livestock losses on your property.

Who should use a guardian dog?

- Landholders running livestock such as chickens, sheep, goats or weaner cattle who have a problem with wild dogs and foxes.

What should someone getting a guardian dog know?

- Starting with an already working guardian dog or a pup is a good idea.
- Bonding time with the livestock and other animals that live on the property is very important. This will help avoid livestock harassment and other behavioural problems by the guardian dogs, or livestock fear of the guardian dogs.
- Socialisation with visitors to your property is important to reduce guardian dog aggression.
- The ratio of numbers of livestock to guardian dogs and the paddock size are also important. The smaller the paddock with more guardian dogs the better the predation protection will be.

- Individual livestock guardian dogs have varying livestock protection skills and abilities based on their personality, experience and breeding.
- Good fencing to keep the livestock guardian dog at home is important. Guardian dogs do like to wander.
- Healthcare for your guardian dog is pivotal (i.e. vaccinations, coat care, good diet and nails).

Guardian dogs are not for you if:

- You don't have time to train the livestock guardian dog appropriately, for example, bonding the livestock with the guardian dogs. Guardian dogs are not a time saver, they are just as much effort as other predator control tools.
- You lay poison baits or trap wild dogs in the area they will live.
- You are not prepared to own a dog for 10-12 years (average lifespan of guardian dogs).



Maremmas in the southern rangelands with their sheep flock

Guardian dogs can be effective at deterring wild dogs and foxes from specific locations. However, their use does not replace the need for other management techniques.

For more information [Livestock Guardian dog manual](#)

Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copyright © State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), 2023.