

Introducing a new Livestock Guardian Dog to your home.

Remove all items of 'high value' around the paddock or yard ... these might include, toys, food, balls, bones.

The best way that I have found to do this is on neutral territory by simply having both dogs on a leash and going for a walk together for 30 minutes to an hour. So at least two people should be present to walk each dog. Be aware that if you do this outside the front of your property those dogs may then feel this is new territory to patrol and this may encourage fence jumping at a later stage! So drive the dogs separately down the road to an area where it is neutral and do the introduction walk there. If all goes well then walk the dogs around the boundary fences and repeat this if you can morning and evening for a few weeks.

Leave long drag leashes on each dog so if a fight breaks out you simply pick up the leash and move the dog without touching collars and possibly getting bitten! If you have a new dog coming to live with you please make sure you are around to supervise interactions and if you have to go away or out overnight it is prudent to separate them until you are with them again. This may go on for several weeks or even months if it is a puppy.

Invite around farm hands, employees, family and friends that are likely to be interacting often with the dog in the future. This should be done early on and repeated.

Do not leave your new dog with livestock or other pets without supervision particularly if the dog's history is unknown. Even if the previous owner has said the dog is fine with livestock please be aware that old owners may not tell you the truth as they are eager to move the dog on. Also I have found different environments and homes can give rise to new behaviours. The dog may have been bonded with the goats or sheep at the previous home but new livestock can sometimes be problematic. The dog may be fine with livestock for a few weeks but as it settles in it can start to chase stock. Be aware that if this is your first Livestock Guardian Dog and your livestock is not used to a dog being around they can run in fear and this can create a chase!

Supervise meal times and with leash dragging. Place bowls a fair distance apart. If you are aware one or both dogs are food aggressive simply feed apart.

Dividing a chook pen in half with a chicken wire divider and two doors works a treat. I have two working dogs that are fed in this way... this also is a good place to put them when they are eating bones or perhaps visitors are around. This is also handy if one is injured and needs to be penned. It also lessens the carnage that goes along with feeding these dogs with poultry who want to steal the dog's food!!! I also believe meal times should be stress free!

These are just a few things I have learnt over the years after being a foster carer of rescue dogs that include Maremma, Sarplaninac, an Anatolian Shepherd Dog and crosses for nearly 8 years.

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