

5. Directions of the use of dogs and their importance in agritourism farms

Evolution of grazing

The life paths of two animal species, the protohuman and the wolf, crossed about 14,000 years ago. To this day, no one has fully explained how this happened. There are only theories. Probably the two species found that they could complement each other in hunting game.

- Man has been taking advantage of the characteristics of dogs since time immemorial. Wolves and later dogs, compared to man in hunting, excelled in speed, and the ability to track game. Man, on the other hand, was able to kill game faster with primitive weapons.
- The first use of dogs was for hunting games, where a man used the original innate qualities (tracking, searching, pointing, trapping, and holding game).
- The killing of the game as the right of "last strike" in the hunting game was retained by man. This right is accumulated by man in dog populations through training and selection of genotypes.
- The hunting qualities of dogs are used not only in hunting but the weakened hunting qualities are used in herding.
- The use of herding by herds of different animals, by different peoples, in different geographical and climatic conditions has led to the emergence of many breeds of working animals.
- Herding behavior in dogs is a modified predatory behavior. Selective breeding has minimized the natural tendency of dogs to regard livestock as potential prey, but at the same time retained some of the hunting qualities towards predators, resulting in a very effective herding dog.
- Herding dogs belong to groups of dogs that are trained to herd, or belong to breeds that have these characteristics innately.

Characteristics of dogs used on farms

In the agrarian sector, we mainly use the characteristics of dogs for livestock, which help us in various working operations with animals and thus replace human labor. This includes :

- Herding the herd, we are talking about herding dogs,
- Herd guarding, we are talking about sheepdogs,
- Herding, we use cattle dogs.

In all cases, these are suppressed hunting qualities, with an attempt to chase the animals in front of the ALFA individual, similar to wolf hunting. The ALPHA individual is represented by a human (handler).

The last phase of the hunt - killing the prey is suppressed in these dogs. Occasionally it appears in some individuals. It is undesirable. The weaker manifestation of this trait can be suppressed by training. Such individuals should not be used in reproduction.

Talent characteristics

The character traits are genetically determined. Even in individuals with the assumption of perfect genetic traits, it is necessary to awaken them with the right stimuli. The actual awakening of these qualities depends on many other factors.

It is mainly influenced by: character traits, experiences both positive and negative, socialization, properly designed training plan, and training maturity and it is influenced by many other factors, especially health, nutrition, enough stimuli, and so on.

When guarding the flock, we use the innate qualities of sheepdogs. Mainly the so-called courage or sharpness, i.e. aggressiveness towards predatory animals.

- In many countries, this is nowadays, especially against bears, wolves, lynx, and ravens.
- Last but not least, guard dogs are also a protection against animal and property thieves.
- Experience has shown that dogs that move freely in the herd have proved to be the most successful; the herd is used to these dogs and they react immediately in the presence of predators. In recent years, in addition to large carnivores, problems in sheep farming have also been caused by raven-like birds (especially ravens), which can kill a lamb after it has been fleeced, or even damage adult sheep by, for example, pecking out an eye.

The herd chase

- The aim of herding - is to regulate the movement of herd animals. In some countries, the herding of large herds over long distances is typical of livestock farming. This fact prompted the emergence of breeds of typical cattle dogs - hounds.
- The innate behavior of the dogs is exploited - to drive the animals by nipping them in the legs, especially in the heel area (heeling), which is accompanied by barking.
- These dogs have an excellent feel for putting pressure on animals. Of course, the firm nature of the individuals is very necessary.
- They move close behind the animals, literally on the verge of danger of endangerment. Occasionally, these dogs get some kicks from the driven animals.
- They use barking to move the herd, which they enhance by nipping the animals in the legs.
- These breeds are characterized by a smaller body frame on shorter legs, without a pronounced stop and supraorbital arches, which eliminates kicking from livestock.
- These breeds can also learn to some extent the work typical of sheepdog breeds.

Herding

- Can be characterized as the use of the innate behavior of herding dogs, which is enriched by learned practices according to the needs and conditions of man.
- The aim of herding is to regulate the movement of herd animals (sheep, cattle, ducks, etc.).
- Grazing itself consists of several instincts.
- These dogs keep the grazing animals in a group. They purposely go forward or to the front of the animals to turn or stop the group of animals.

Herding can be divided into several separate instincts. There may also be cases where an individual does not innately possess any of the instincts belonging to herding. He may not even have any of these instincts innate. Individuals with a deficiency in breed-specific traits should not be used for reproduction. We divide grazing instincts into :

- Gathering of grazing animals (Gathering) - into a compact unit
- Circling around the herd so called Flanking, this is the use of "innate feeling" to keep the herd from moving, i.e. beyond the "escape zone" but at the same time to get into a position from which the herd can move in the desired direction.
- Putting the herd in motion, the so-called Lifting, according to the ALFA requirements - is a very important instinct - it is a feeling of what pressure to exert in order not to spook the herd.
- Leading the herd in a straight direction, so-called Wearing, where the direction is determined by ALFA, the dog eliminates the herd's deviation from the desired direction.
- Holding back the escaping herd so called Heading, the dog runs to the heads of the first animals in the herd to slow them down and especially to regulate the direction of the herd's movement towards the ALFA.
- Keeping the animals close to the ALFA (Balancing) - the dog moves constantly on the opposite side of the herd from the ALFA. This is considered the most important instinct of a herding dog.
- Separating an individual from the herd is so-called Shedding or Singling. Wolves do this in order to hunt the individual ALPHA. This role is genetically fixed especially in Border Collies.

If we want to characterize the ALFA individual we need to mention a few facts.

- The dog is a social animal living in a pack with a strict hierarchy.
- This fact carries over into coexistence with man.
- The fact that the owner or keeper of the dog is a Human does not mean that he or she has the ALPHA position.
- The ALFA position is reinforced from a young age by training and respect, but sometimes also by punishment.
- The BETA position is held by the individual who is trying to get to the ALPHA position.
- The ALPHA individual is the individual who directs the activity of all individuals during the hunt.
- Only the individual in the ALPHA position has the right to the so-called "last strike" during the hunt. Therefore, the basis of herding is the work for the individual in the ALFA position, and we want this to be the handler managing the dogs providing the herding.
- The ALFA handler must have an excellent FEEL for working with dogs.
- The ALFA must show some superiority, but must also give.
- Part of the ALFA handler's FEELING FOR WORKING WITH DOGS is innate, and part is acquired through knowledge and experience.

There are two basic styles of herding and these are the traditional style and the gathering style.

- The traditional style is the most commonly used, the traits of this style are possessed by most herding breeds.
- The gathering style was only recognized by the FCI in 2008, only Border Collies and Australian Kelpies have the aptitude for this style.
- The goal of the traditional style of grazing is to bring the herd, along with the ALFA, to a specific location, i.e. a place where the animals will graze or a place where the animals will be confined.
- The boundary that the animals cannot cross is defined by the dog in this style of grazing by running.
- The use of more dogs in the traditional grazing style creates a space in which the herd can move but which it must not cross.

The congregational style of grazing has been used in the past mainly in the UK and Australia.

The FCI, as the top cynological organization, only recognized this style in 2008.

- Only Border Collies and Australian Kelpies have a role in this style.
- The aim of herding in the gathering style is to gather a herd scattered over a pasture by circling around in a large arc, moving to the ALFA, and balancing around to keep the herd close to the ALFA. In practice, the term Gathering is used.

Morphometric aspects of dogs used in working with herd animals

- Since dogs work in all weather conditions, it is necessary to coat the body, which protects the body from rainwater, so that the dog's body does not get cold, mechanical damage to the body when the dog hits various branches or bushes, and reflects light so that the dog's body does not overheat.
- Correct body substance retains heat and better affects fitness, endurance, and movement mechanics. If the body substance is too strong, the mechanics of movement deteriorate and the dog gets tired sooner.
- Limb angulation - correct limb angulation positively influences the movement mechanics of dogs, especially during the most important movement of dogs, which is the trot.
- The upright position of the ears generates more respect in sheep, which retreats better in front of the dog.
- The distribution of colors and their ratio is a factor that is quite often discussed in professional circles, but there is no evidence, but it is claimed that too much white reduces the respect of animals towards dogs. This fact applies to Border Collies. The FCI standard states that Border Collies should have more dark color on their body than white.

Regarding the physiological aspects used by dogs when working with herd animals, these include:

- Health - only a healthy dog can perform.

- Condition - the requirement is that the dogs are conditioned to perform their work for the entire time of herding.
- The dog must be able to stand up to the condition of the dog.
- Character traits, where the requirement is for a firm temperament. Melancholic components in an individual's character are not desirable.
- Reactivity
- Courage - a sharpness towards predatory game.

Grazing skills include :

- Use of eye contact (Eye). This is especially typical of border collies.
- Posture, Movement.
- Sense of taking the appropriate position in relation to the animals, the so-called Balance point.
- Sense for estimating the necessary distance from the animals, so-called Zone point, or Personal space.
- Sense of the type of pressure exerted and the intensity of the pressure towards the animals (Power).
- Sense of pace and change of pace (Pace).
- Sense for the use of the moment (Time). The sense of the right moment to make the animal retreat.
- The ability to anticipate – the sixth sense (Predict).
- The ability to make quick decisions to influence the direction of the herd or individual (Pick out, Choose).
- The use of one's power, one's influence (Grip).

The biggest difference between breeds is in the use of eye contact.

- Almost exclusively strong eye contact is used by Border Collies. They are characterized by a crouching position with the head stretched forward. The position of the back hardly changes, but the legs oscillate rapidly. The work is characterized by circling around the herd, which simultaneously moves the herd towards the ALPHA, or handler, which is called the so-called Collecting style.
- Breeds with poor use of eye contact (Loose-eye) do not seem to observe the herd with the dogs' eyes at all. The style is characteristic of all other herding dogs (except Border Collies and Australian Kelpies). The dogs trot beside or behind the herd with their heads held high. These dogs control the movement of the herd. The dogs work mainly with ALFA what we call the so-called Traditional style.

Testing of the properties

- FCI Natural Herding Attitude Test (NHAT)

- The aim is to assess whether an individual has an aptitude for herding.
- The test has been used in FCI umbrella countries since 2016.
- The age of the dog on the test is a minimum of 6 months.
- The first part of the test focuses on the socialization of the dog with sheep.
- The second part of the exam is focused on testing the actual behavioral traits related to the dog's interest in sheep. It is tested in the pen with the sheep, in case of disinterest directly in the pen with the sheep.
- The dog should not be too eager in contact with the sheep, should not try to bite the sheep, and should keep its balance.
- Aggressiveness towards sheep and fear of sheep is undesirable.

The Herding Working Test (HWT) is a test in which the handler must already demonstrate that they can regulate and direct the movement of a small flock of sheep with their dog.

- It makes considerable use of learned skills in addition to vocal qualities.
- This test assesses the working ability of the dog with a flock of sheep (herding skills, obedience, initiative, working sense).
- The test should be a prerequisite for the selection of dogs for breeding in breeds with the original work - herding.
- Types of HWT :
- Herding Working Test - Collecting style, HWT CS for Border Collies and Australian Kelpies.
- Herding Working Test - Traditional style, HWT TS for other herding dog breeds.

HWT (Herding Working Test) CS subjects

- Test exclusively for Border Collie and Australian Kelpie breeds
- exit from a pen
- drive together
- outrun (gathering)
- run out not less than 75 m
- taking the sheep and setting them in motion - lift
- fetch the sheep to the line - fetch
- driving the sheep in a specified direction - drive away
- drive the sheep in a specified direction - drive away
- The dog must work in a manner appropriate to the breed.
- The dog shall behave appropriately towards people and sheep.

- Furious sheep snapping - disqualification.

HWT (Herding Working Test) TS subjects

Test for all other breeds except Border Collies and Australian Kelpies.

- Herding out of the pen.
- Herding back into the pen.
- Control of the herd.
- One stop.
- Grazing in a square (15 meters x 15 meters).
- Except in exceptional circumstances, the dog should not bite the sheep and any display of roughness is penalized. A short bite will only be tolerated if necessary to maintain control of the flock.
- Conspicuous and out-of-place biting are grounds for disqualification.
- Nowadays, it is popular to present the Border Collie breed in the form of various demonstrations that use its innate characteristics called herding. With the help of dogs, a small group of animals moves, for example, in a circle drawn on the ground, or from one pen over an obstacle to another.
- These are mainly demonstrations of smaller animals for example sheep or ducks, which are a highlight of various agricultural fairs.