

Predator Awareness

# Basic Dogmanship

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## The Purpose

Our reason for the use of dogs is the proactive response to predator issues that the ranching community face today. Dog use in predator awareness is to train cattle to resist the instinctive flight or fight and promote the herd group and the defensive posture of *predator awareness*.

The fundamental difference between a stock dog versus a *predator awareness* dog is the stock dog uses pressure point pressure to push the livestock to the group; an

action of pressure that has the response of flight to the desired location. The *predator awareness* dog is reversed, its purpose is to establish flight or *shedding*. Creating more pressure until the livestock have an understanding that until they reach the safety and the calmness of the herd group that the pressure will continue. The only relief to the pressure is achieving the destination of the herd group. The *predator awareness* dog also circles the herd group seeking an individual to shed. This baying action also promotes a tighter defensive posture. The *predator awareness* dog should move quickly and quietly in his efforts. This training effort is a fundamental training of pressure and release. Individualized cattle receive pressure until the individual returns to the herd group, which is when and where the pressure is released. Our assistant, the dog, soon understands that this is its task and objective.

For our livestock, a predator's presence and pressure can be a matter of life vs. death.

To those that argue that the dog's use is inhuman abuse to our livestock, the dogs use may be our livestock's best chance of surviving an encounter of an apex predator. Training our livestock to respond to pressure by grouping into a defensive posture of *predator awareness* is the dog's primary goal. Promoting a proactive response of a predator's pressure by establishing the defensive herd group rather than the reactionary response of Fear and *flight or fight*.

## Basic Fundamentals

The basic goal of the training, is that our livestock *group* into a defensive posture of *predator awareness*. This effort should be applied throughout the year and also becomes a change in our *Stockmanship*. The *predator awareness* dog is not a good choice as an assistant for moving livestock, unless the goal is specific to training cattle in *predator awareness*, and specific to training and creating movement after the defensive posture is achieved.

We are establishing the response of a defensive herd reaction. Without abuse or any mistreatment of our livestock. The dog's pressure is not a pain delivery or fear

response. Training is intended to replace the reaction of fear and to replace it with the calm resolve of herding into a defensive posture.

Besides the dogs assistance it also requires a *Stockmanship* skill of training our cattle. The dog is a tool to achieve the defensive posture of *predator awareness* of our livestock.

## Dog Breeds 101

There are many breeds of stock dogs available. But of more importance than the breed is the performance that will assist us in the objective of creating the defensive herd posture. The purpose of the project is the final result of a defensive posture of the cattle.

The dog that fits our requirements is a dog that stops cattle. If we refer to this action it would be referred to as a heading dog. Dogs that promote flight would be considered heeling dogs. There are breeds that function well at both heading and heeling. Which is a admirable trait for a stock-dog. The preferred stock dog would be a multi-trait dog. The *predator awareness* dog would be a solid head dog.

The training requires a consistent pressure that does not promote anything that creates flight, even if it is the pressure point pressure that creates a return to the herd. The action of promoting a chase for the return to the herd seems to us as the same accomplishment, but that's only our perception. It is actually still encouraging flight. It is not the desired achievement from our livestock that we are trying to achieve, which is the response that the herd is the safe zone. By chasing the individual to the herd, it does not require an individual effort to reach the comfort of the herd group, only the effort of flight in the correct direction. When choosing a *predator awareness* dog, be aware of the goal and the objective, not the personal likes or dislikes of a breed.

In your selection of a *predator awareness* dog, let's say you end up with a dog that closely resembles a multi-trait stock dog. Even though you will have to

adapt to his traits, he can still be an effective training assistant. The shed is going to be your challenge. Instead of the dog creating the shed, it would be you, the trainer. Then as you send your assistant to the head, you are in between the herd and the shed individual. You are then in a blocking position. Blocking the return several times while your assistant continues the pressure to return. This instills that when the livestock reaches the herd, it is in the safe zone. You are completing the shed effort, and are adapting to the situations needs.

## Training

The training of animals is a *show-me* connection. As the trainer, **YOU** must show the direction of the result you are going to try to achieve. Commands are a repeated verbal pattern of the *show-me* connection. Which aid in future communications between the trainer and the dog. When we talk of the *show-me* connection, an example may be learning to sit. You may say “sit,” but the dogs only understanding is when it's applied with the physical pressure to sit, *show me*. The *show-me* training may use a lead dog, or the trainer can lead the dog by beginning in the direction desired.

All of the training that is going to take place is a learning curve for all involved; you the trainer, your assistant the dog, and the cattle that we are trying to train. All of the above are at the beginning a new project, *Predator Awareness*. Realize the goal, don't get stuck in the procedure. When mistakes are made, and there will be mistakes, move on and don't dwell on that unsuccessful effort. When training any objective, realize that quitting on a positive result is important. When you achieve a desired result, don't continue to practice it that day. This will allow for the continued building blocks of effort to be built on each day. By continuing an effort to enjoy the results, only establishes that the result you are enjoying is added punishment and more work for the animals. Quitting on success instills our will of achieving our goal of *predator awareness*.

Control of a puppy begins prior to contact with livestock. This should begin early. One of the early training practices is *listen up*. *Listen up* is a simple whistle or

call or sound such as “Augh.” The purpose is the attention of the puppy, that you the trainer can get the puppies attention when asked. It's not a *come here* call or a reprimand but a look here response that you are achieving. This is a basic building block.

Other controls that begin prior to cattle contact should be the down or sitting, a stay and a return when asked. Don't over use these. They can compound into a sending issue, and become a distance and time, or effort restriction for the dog.

Commands need to be consistent, whether it's a specific whistle or verbal command. Commands begin with the *listen up* stage. Keep them simple and they will be built upon with time.

Punishment and reprimands should be limited to threat for behavior that is not acceptable, such as posturing towards people, chasing vehicles, chewing, digging, fighting. All reprimands are stern and done with the finalization of that issue. Other issues can be non-desirable and would be discouraged but not reprimanded. The *listen up* method is enough to detract these non-desirable events. Some examples might be barking, or over excitement.

*The stop* is a main component of our efforts. When encouraging your dog to the lead to achieve the stop, you must use the *show-me* training technique. Trot at a forward parallel towards the lead of the cattle, giving your command of the *send* to the dog. The dog should follow, proceed to the front of the cattle, *stop*. This is the training skill that you will use to train the dog in *the stop*. This effort may need several attempts but should soon have the assistant, our dog, creating the stop on command within several days. The command needs to realize direction, the right side, a counter clockwise direction, will have a different command than the clockwise direction of the left side.

*The defensive posture of the group.* How we achieve the training of our dog to train the livestock to use the defensive herd posture is the continued use of the stop. The trainer shall proceed at a trot around the herd, searching for any weakness in the

grouping. Then by applying pressure, you are training your assistant, *the dog*, that the herd group is the goal. The attempt to individualize will proceed into the training of the pressure of shedding.

Praise: showing praise is an effort that is often overdone. The praise should be an understanding that the job is completed, such as *that's good* or *good* or *that will do*. A simple conclusion to the effort. Not an excited state.



## Age

The age of your dog is quite a factor in how much time can be applied in a training session. The younger the dog, the less effort it can apply. Just keeping its attention on task can be challenging as well as maintaining its stamina.

Approximately, the age of focus begins at two years old, which is also an age of physical fitness. That should not be the beginning of training, it is just the age that a dog has the necessary stamina and hopefully the focus for a full session.

If the decision is to begin with a trained dog, be aware of the age. A younger dog will be more adaptive to you and your skills. An older dog that is possibly trained by someone else will require you to adapt to its skills.

When you are beginning on untrained cattle (especially with younger dogs) the focus for a short time period will be introductory, introducing the dog to the cattle, and the cattle to the dog. Mature cows that are not accustomed to dogs can injure or frighten a young dog with irreparable damage, physically and emotionally. Take your time. Remember the goal and not the procedure.

From starting a puppy to achieving an assistant that is training livestock in *predator awareness* is time consuming process. To achieve an assistant capable of the task will take approximately two years time.

## Pitfalls to avoid

In the beginning efforts, don't schedule other activities with the *predator awareness* training, whether it be specific to the dog or cattle. In the beginning it needs it's own efforts.

Size of the group should be from six to twelve head. Later on, when your efforts are directed towards the cattle specifically, head count is less of a factor. But the beginning dog requires a manageable size group.

Avoid other dogs and riders. Keep it a solitary event, unless it is with a lead dog and it's trainer. You are accomplishing a specific task.

Avoid too many corrections. Allow the effort of work to happen, and after it happens, evaluate the circumstances that occurred. Try to keep discipline to a minimum in the beginning, then progress with a plan on the next training session.

Keep the verbal connection light, simple and soft. Effort is key. Without the effort and time spent, success will be elusive.

In the training process of *predator awareness*, tight control is not desired on the young dog in training. Allow a young dog to lose attention and explore. Control and purpose will come with experience. The continued non-stop *get behind* control will hinder the dog's *send* and ability to work away from the trainer later on.