## HELPFUL IDEAS WHEN ENCOUNTERING A WORKING LGD

### DO...

- TELL THE DOG TO "GO BACK TO THE SHEEP OR GOATS" OR SAY "NO" IN A FIRM VOICE

- WATCH FOR LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOGS NEAR LIVESTOCK

- REMAIN CALM IF A LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOG APPROACHES

- KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM THE LIVESTOCK AND CHOOSE THE LEAST DISRUPTIVE ROUTE AROUND THEM

- IF THE LIVESTOCK ARE TRAILING, BE STILL AND QUIET AND WAIT FOR THEM TO PASS

### DO NOT...

- ALLOW YOUR DOG TO RUN TOWARDS OR HARASS THE LIVESTOCK

- TAKE A DOG WITH YOU TO THE BLIND OR WHEN SCOUTING

- FEED THE DOGS

- ATTEMPT TO BEFRIEND OR PET THE DOGS

- CHASE OR HARASS THE SHEEP OR DOGS

- TRY TO OUTRUN THE DOGS

- THROW THINGS AT THE DOGS

- SHOOT AT THE DOGS

@TAMUlivestockguarddog

# TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE
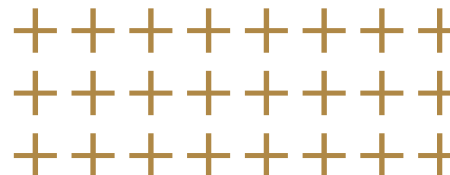## LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOG PROGRAM

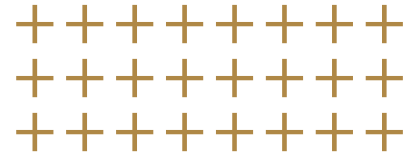HTTPS://SANANGELO.TAMU.EDU/RESEARCH/LGD/

# HOW TO SAFELY APPROACH LIVESTOCK GUARDIAN DOGS

LGDs are naturally protective, and they take their job seriously. They primarily work by warning off threats, and that may include people. If a person is far from a herd, the LGDs may calmly stand up and watch as a person passes by - perhaps coming closer to observe. If the dogs believe their animals are threatened, they respond in a series of graduated steps - barking, bluffing, and charging. Most LGDs are discerning about actual threats, but some dogs rapidly proceed through these steps. These actions deter most large predators, making physical encounters uncommon.

## HUMAN BEHAVIOR MODIFICATIONS FOR POSTIVE EXPERIENCES WITH LGDS

**Right and Wrong Eye Contact:** There is a "soft" and a "hard" way to look at a dog. Use what is call the "soft eye" with a dog, which is a half-lidded look, never a wide-eyed, firm, or "hard eye" (squinting with scowl lines between the eyes) to stare into the dog's eyes, which is intimidating. Never stare directly into a dog's eyes as you approach him. Rather, lower your gaze and use a half-lidded gaze when looking at the dog – this is the "soft" way.

**Arms Down and At Your Sides:** Simply keep your arms down, relaxed, and hanging normally. Don't make any quick or sudden gestures or moves. Don't have bulky items in your hands like jackets, large cameras, backpacks, fanny packs, etc. Put them down on the ground while you engage with the dog.

**Yawning and Stretching:** Yawning is a recognized calming behavior signal amongst dogs. Even if you must "fake" one, yawn as you stand next to the LGD to reduce tension. When a dog stretches his front legs forward and arching his back in a bow, he sends a calming or displacement signal. You can replicate this by extending your arms out in front as you bow down.

**Sitting and/or Squatting:** Sitting down or squatting so that you are now at the dog's level rather than towering over him has a strong calming signal, particularly when dealing with a strange or feral dog. It takes trust on your part, but it works. A strong calming signal shows them your intention is not a threat. Put yourself down on his level.

**Don't Make Assumptions.** Don't assume an LGD will be aloof and unapproachable or be friendly and touchable. Read the dog's body language to understand him—eyes, ears, body. Don't be afraid. The dog will sense your fear and possibly react to it. Be almost nonchalant in your slow, casual movements and observe without being intense or threatening.

## MORE TOPIC INFORMATION

**Remove Hats and Sunglasses:** When approaching a working dog, remove your hat or cap and dark sunglasses. If a dog cannot see your eyes, it will be impossible for him to read your eyes and expressions. Leave your dark glasses off until you have left the area.

**Dark Clothes:** Dark colors can set a dog off. Be mindful of your clothing in a situation.

**Positioning Around Livestock:** Never place yourself between the LGD and the guarded livestock. The dog will perceive this as a possible threat and may react aggressively. Move so that your body never separates the stock from the dog. Use "the backward C" approach. Use slow movements as they have a strong calming effect on a dog. Pace yourself and walk to the dog in a "backward C." Walk out to your right, in a curve, and approach the dog to its side, not its front. When you stop, if the dog is facing you, you will be off to his left side, facing the middle of his body. While you do this, remember to keep your gaze slightly averted, passive, and not "hard."