

Training Tips and Tricks for Large Breed Working Dogs

This is a quick flyer of info to help get new puppy owners started off right with their large breed puppies. This is not a complete set of information to train a working Livestock Guardian Dog, but the basic obedience commands and establishment of authority by the handler is a required first step before LGD training would begin.

There are many resources for training ideas on the web and in books. If these methods do not work, please don't feel that they are your only options.

*****Remember with large dog breeds - They do not stay small for long!*****

Some training methods do not recommend starting until the pups are 4 months old. With a large breed dog, you will definitely want to start before that or you will find yourself trying to control a wild 50-60 lb puppy. Also, some pups really try to test their limits between 3-5 months of age, or as we call them, the puppy teenage years! Consistency and patience are key factors during this time, as you may find yourself asking why you wanted this crazy puppy in the first place.

Preventative – Train, Don't Re-Train!

The best dog training advice that we have found useful when working with the Pyrenees and Newfoundland dog is to identify and eliminate disrespectful puppy behavior (ex. above) and to make sure the dog understands that you are the boss or pack leader. The independent large breed working dogs, while naturally being gentle giants, will also easily walk all over owners who do not establish authority with them.

Cute puppy behavior that is NOT cute when the dog weighs 90+ lbs:	Can lead to this type of rude dog behavior when puppy has grown:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barking, growling, snapping at you or any other human, even in play.• Jumping up on you, another person, cars, furniture, etc...• Guarding their food and growling or snapping at anyone who tries to take it.• Pawing at you or others with their (now little) paws.• Chewing on your hands, fingers, clothes, toes, furniture, etc...• Butting you with their head.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dog barks, growls or snaps at you or others either in play or when you do something it doesn't like.• Dog jumps/paws on/at you/others/cars/doors at its own will.• Dog demands attention when you are busy (on phone, working, etc...).• Dog pushes past you/others on stairs, in doorways or in narrow hallways.• Dog does not let you take away or handle its food while it is eating.• Dog runs away when called to come.• Dog chases things it shouldn't (cats, chickens, small children, etc..)

Preventative measures for establishing authority:

- Never let the puppy growl, bark or snap at you, even in play. This is hard when they are cute and little, but it is disrespectful (trying to be the boss) behavior on the puppy's part.
- Try to pet the puppy more on the side or back rather than the head. Probably the most difficult tip here, but also very effective. A large dog that has learned to put its head foremost to get attention can easily knock people over by head butting. A puppy who has learned to get pats on the side will more likely come up and stand to your side for attention or praise.
- Do not let the puppy chew or jump on you, even in play. If you want the dog to jump up on you, teach it to do so when it is older on command.
- Always go in front when going through a door, up/down stairs, through a narrow hall, etc... Make puppy go behind you even if you have to donk it out of the way with your foot, knee or leg.
- Make sure you control puppy's food and can take it away from pup anytime. Try to stick your hand in or pick up the food while pup is eating. But be careful - if pup growls say "No" and if it doesn't stop or snaps follow

method outlined below. You may want to do this until pups are as old as 6 months if they show food aggression. If they do not show aggression, try to do it once a week, just to make sure they don't start.

- Start leash training earlier than the 4 months typically suggested. Use age and size appropriate collar, do gentle and short periods to start with. It is not necessary to use a choke, prong or other training collar when they are very young.
- Teach the puppy simple commands to start with. The best are: Sit, Come, Down, Off (for when they jump up) and No. Make sure the puppy consistently obeys these first commands before training it on more complicated commands. Use games or play with training as much as possible. When saying "No", try to look for an alternative that puppy can do – Example: Puppy is chewing on something not allowed. Say "No" and replace the item not allowed with something the puppy can chew on. Then say, "Good!" when puppy chews on that.
- Try not to get discouraged. Puppies do go through testing periods in the first year. The time you put in to train your puppy early will without a doubt pay off as the pup gets older.
- Get everyone involved! All family members should be a part of training the puppy to show pup where it fits in in its new "pack". This means kids too. Very young kids should be helped by parents of course, but can do age appropriate things to help the puppy learn that the child is ahead in the pack.

Our Favorite Methods for Discipline

One of the best methods we've found is to mimic dog pack behavior when training. For pups, think about a momma dog going after a pup who is being naughty (naughty meaning pup is doing anything you do not want it to do). It is pretty amazing to watch - the momma never hurts the pup. She'll give a warning growl and then, if the pup does not listen, she gets in the pup's face with pup on its back, growling and snapping. The pup is usually crying and yelping like they are going to die. But in all the litters we've done, we've never seen even a scratch on the puppy. The mom just scares the living daylight out of it. The pups learn VERY fast this way.

We are not dogs of course, but try to mimic this behavior as much as a human can. As soon as the puppy does something naughty, say "No!" in a deep commanding voice. (For kids/women, lower voice as much as possible and add a growl sound if you can). If pup does not stop, take it down as follows: Grab pup and roll on its back. Put your hand over its muzzle (for protection for your face and also to show your authority) and growl "No!" again and spit in the pup's face. Sounds strange, but we have found it works. **Always say "No!" - Dogs learn by association and saying "No!" in the deep growly voice will hopefully, with consistency, be all pup needs to hear as it gets older.** Be firm and hold tight. ***NOTE - If pup ever snaps at you or any other person you have deemed acceptable, skip the first step. Take pup down as described above right away, still saying "No" in the growly voice. Pup is trying to be the boss/leader in its most assertive way and you need to show it that it is not as fast and firm as you can.*

For dogs that run away when called: This is fairly common with young puppies. The best method we have used is to "stalk" puppy. Don't run after it, just fix your eyes on pup and follow it like you have no other purpose on this earth than to hound pup's every step. It really seems to unnerve puppies when you do this. You can usually then corner the puppy and grab it. Try not to call puppy to "come" when the pup is running away or to bring it over to punish. Again, association! Do this instead.

We have read that dogs do not "love" the way we humans think of love. Dogs by nature respect and follow a leader. When you establish with the dog that you are its leader, it will then show you what humans may call "love" - Loyalty, respect, obedience, protection, etc...

Most of all, enjoy your new puppy and make sure to reward all good behavior!

Please feel free to contact us with any questions:

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