

EDUCATION: Help! My puppy was so good and how he's chasing chickens!

By Cindy Coombs on Thursday, December 18, 2014 at 6:12am

One of the most common questions we get in this group is "why is my puppy chasing my chickens/goats/sheep"? The typical senero is the puppy was purchased at 8 or 10 weeks and was raised with livestock. For months, the puppy was perfectly fine with livestock. And all of a sudden, at around 5 to 8 months, the puppy is suddenly chasing livestock. Or was found eating a chicken. I bet we get this question almost every day.

Fear not! your puppy is not ruined and has not developed a taste for blood. The puppy is being a perfectly normal puppy. These dogs are slow to mature. They are not really mature until they are about two. Until they ARE mature, they should not be allowed to be unsupervised with small livestock, especially poultry. Chickens are the hardest thing for LGDs because they dont usually bond with them like they do hoof stock. To a puppy, a chicken is a live flappy squeaky toy. They don't understand that they are to protect them. Forget all the old antidotes such as tying a dead chicken around it's neck, beating it with a dead chicken, etc....the pup simply needs time. Pen the chickens up safely next to the dog and only allow him to be loose with them when you are there to teach and to supervise.

Many people incorrectly believe that all you do is bring home the new puppy, place it in with the livestock and the puppy already knows it's job. Well, believe me....that's not true. Border Collie pups have the herding instincts in them but need to be taught how to herd in a controlled manner. Retrievers have the instincts to go get downed ducks, but need to be taught that they are to softly carry them back to their master. LGDs have the guarding instincts but need to be taught as well. No puppy comes pre-trained. Train your pup well and you will never regret it. Getting through those first two years can be trying, but it will be worth it.