



Tales Out of School

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EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Herding Dogs

by Floyd Dorsey

On a recent trip around the block, and by around the block, I mean around several sections of pasture where I live, I saw quite an unusual sight. On a pasture that contained no house or farm structures, stood a flock of what appeared to be goats. My interest aroused; I decided to get a better look. Sure enough, there was a group of close to one hundred goats grazing in this field. They were small goats, maybe 50 pounds. What really amazed me was the lack of confinement in this field. There were fences and barbed wire in places, but it appeared the goats could have left if they wanted to.

I decided to get out of my car for a closer look. That was almost a big mistake, for as soon as I got out, I was charged by what I first thought were two big goats. But goats don't bark. They were two times the size of the goats and did not like it when I approached. They came right to the edge of the field and stopped. That's when I got a good look at them. They were a pair of Great Pyrenees dogs. They are an ancient breed of dog from France, owned by both French royalty and faithful and loyal companion of French peasants.

My first thought every time I see one is the animated cartoon, Sebastian and Belle. It was popular when my children were small. Sebastian lived in the Pyrenees Mountains and Belle



Great Pyrenees Dog and Goats - This image was originally posted to Flickr by minicooper93402 at <http://flickr.com/photos/21703936@N08/4601028523>. It was reviewed on 16 May 2010 by the FlickrreviewR robot and was confirmed to be licensed under the terms of the cc-by-2.0.

was his loyal dog, who happened to be a Great Pyrenees. No matter what trouble Sebastian got into, Belle saved the day. But I wasn't in France; I was in Lyon County, Kansas. These dogs weren't guarding Merino Sheep either, but goats. My interest was way up, so I needed to find out more.

I learned that an industry has sprung up in areas are affected by the invasive plant called Lespedeza. Lespedeza is

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Tales Out of School, a newsletter for elementary and middle school teachers, is published twice a year and is available free of charge to interested persons. A variety of subjects related to teaching Kansas history and the Great Plains appear in *Tales*. Each issue emphasizes a single topic and includes a resource of websites, books, and teaching tools to assist in the classroom. Readers are encouraged to submit items to the newsletter that they believe will be useful to fellow teachers. Past issues of *Tales* are available on the website at www.emporia.edu/cgps. If you would like to have your name added to the mailing list or would like to send suggestions please email us at cgps@emporia.edu.

native to Asia and also goes by the name Bush Clover. There are many different varieties of Lespedeza. When the plant invades native pasture, it competes with the native grasses for nutrients and reduces the quality of the ground both for grazing cattle and for wildlife. It was first imported to the U.S. as a ground cover to stop erosion at old mining sites. But like many non-native species of plants or animals, it has become a problem. There are many control recommendations; burning, herbicides, grazing patterns, etc. One of the most effective is the use of goats to graze the Lespedeza. The plant emerges early and goats like it whereas cattle do not. Cattle will only eat the mature plant and only if they need it for survival. Goats will eat it any time. Thus, that is why I spotted a herd of goats grazing.

But how do you keep a herd of goats safe from coyotes, stray dogs, and people while they do their job? That is where the dogs come in.



Lespedeza Angustifolia - USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 2: 407.

In the world of dogs and livestock, there are breeds known as herding dogs, and others known as LGD's - Livestock Guardian Dogs. Of those breeds, the Great Pyrenees seems to be the favorite of goat herders. They start life as a puppy living in a wire cage with a dog shed in the pasture with the goats. This allows the goats to get nose to nose with the dog in a non-threatening way. Once the goats and the dog have become familiar with each

other, the dog is allowed to interact with the goats. If they try to chase them, usually verbal correction is all that is necessary for the correction. LGD's are very sensitive and are eager to please, so verbal commands are usually all that is needed. The goats are also good at training the dog if it gets too aggressive. Posturing with their heads down is generally enough to put the dog in its place. The dog is allowed to grow up with the goats with as little human contact as possible. These breeds have a very strong bonding drive and you want them to bond to their goat herd and not the owner. Once fully bonded, it is not unusual for the dog to assist in birthing of the kids by eating the afterbirth and licking the babies. They become the sole protector of their herd and will defend them against all threats. Most Great Pyrenees dogs are over 100 pounds, and their presence alone will keep many predators away. But their main weapon is their bark. They are very vocal dogs who use their bark not only to warn off intruders, but to let the goats know they are on the job.



Working Great Pyrenees - Photo courtesy of The Great Pyrenees Club of Southern Ontario. Additional images and information can be found by visiting <http://www.great-pyrenees-club-of-southern-ontario.com/livestock-guardian-dogs.html>

Back to my pasture experience - the dogs did not know me, so they would not let me enter the pasture even if I tried. They didn't even like the fact I stopped and got out of my car. Just to see how they would react, I walked a ways down the road. They shadowed me at a safe distance and barked the entire time. Meanwhile, the goats kept right on grazing as if nothing was happening.

When I drove off, I stopped and watched through my binoculars what the dogs did after I left. They went back to the herd, and sat like sentries on both sides. There are a lot of coyotes in our area, and as Mister T used to say, "I pity the fool." No coyote in its right mind would try to pick off one of the goats and neither would I.

Author Bio

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Online Resources

AHBA Trial Rules

<http://www.ahba-herding.org/MainPage.php?AreaName=GeneralRules>

AKC Breeds

http://www.akc.org/breeds/herding_group.cfm

All About the Australian Cattle Dog

<http://www.petplace.com/dog-breeds/australian-cattle-dog.aspx>

Australian Cattle Dog Quick Facts

http://www.dogster.com/dog-breeds/Australian_Cattle_Dog

Cattle Dogs

<http://cattletoday.biz/>

Cattle Dogs With Children

<http://www.cattledog.com/life/kids.html>

Herding Dog Breeds

<http://www.petwave.com/Dogs/Dog-Breed-Center/Herding-Group.aspx>

Herding Facts

<http://xpranch.tripod.com/herdingfaq.html>

A Shepherd's Best Friend

<http://www.sheep101.info/herdingdogs.html>

The Way Herding Dogs Work

<http://herdingontheweb.com/workingstyles.htm>

Online Resources for Teachers

Australian Cattle Dog Resources (Grades 3-11) Must be a member, can use 10 day free trial (7 different lesson plans)

<http://www.lessonplanet.com/search?keywords=australian+cattle+dog>

A Recipe for Traits (Grades 5-12)

<http://teach.genetics.utah.edu/content/begin/traits/traitsrecipe.pdf>

Breeds of Dogs (Must be Member)

<http://www.readinga-z.com/book.php?id=626>

Dog Breeding Activity (Middle School)

http://pbskids.org/dragonflytv/games/game_dogbreeding.html

Dogs at Work (Must be Member)

<http://www.readinga-z.com/book.php?id=259>

Dog Lesson Plan for Teachers (Grades 6-8)

<http://www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/free-lesson-plans/dogs.cfm>

Books

Australian Cattle Dog

By Charlotte Schwartz
Kennel Club Books LLC, April 2011
ISBN: 9781593788452
Ages: Unknown
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/australian-cattle-dog-charlotte-schwartz/1100387908>

Australian Cattle Dogs

By Richard Beauchamp
Barron's Educational Series Inc, October, 2007
ISBN: 9780764136498
Ages: Unknown
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/australian-cattle-dog-charlotte-schwartz/1100387908>

Away to Me, Moss

By Betty Levin
Greenwillow Books, October 1994
ISBN: 0688134394
Ages: Unknown
<http://www.workingdogs.com/store/item-0688134394.htm>

Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs: How They Guard Sheep

By Cat Urbigkit
Boyd's Mills Press, 2005
ISBN: 9781590783177
Ages: Unknown
<http://www.ebay.com/itm/NEW-Brave-Dogs-Gentle-Dogs-They-Guard-Sheep-Cat-Urbigkit-Hardcover-Book-/130836308379#vi-content>

Dogs With a Job (Read All About Dogs)

By Barbara J Patten
Rourke Publishing, January 1996
ISBN: 0865934568
Ages: 4 and up
http://www.amazon.com/Dogs-Job-Read-All-about/dp/0865934568/ref=sr_1_7?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354115672&sr=1-7&keywords=Dogs+-+Breeds+-+Working+%26+Herding+Dogs

Herding Dogs: Progressive Training

By Vergil S Holland
Wiley, John & Sons Inc, October 1994
ISBN: 9780876056448
Ages: Unknown
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/herding-dogs-vergil-s-holland/1111789954>

The Old English Sheepdog (Top Dog Series)

By William Reynolds Sanford
Crestwood House, November 1989
ISBN: 0896864529
Ages: Unknown
http://www.amazon.com/Old-English-Sheepdog-Top-Dog/dp/0896864529/ref=sr_1_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354115672&sr=1-6&keywords=Dogs+-+Breeds+-+Working+%26+Herding+Dogs

The Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog

By John R. Erickson
Puffin, 1998
ISBN: 0141303778
Ages 8-12
<http://www.abebooks.com/9780141303772/Original-Adventures-Hank-Cowdog-%231-0141303778/plp>

Shepherding Dogs: Rounding Up the Herd (Dogs Helping People)

By Alice B McGinty
Powerkids Pr, August 1999
ISBN: 0823952193
Ages: Unknown
http://www.amazon.com/Shepherding-Dogs-Rounding-Helping-People/dp/0823952193/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1354115672&sr=1-4&keywords=Dogs+-+Breeds+-+Working+%26+Herding+Dogs

The Toughest Cowboy

By John Frank
Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, July 2007
ISBN: 978-0689834615
Ages: 4-8
<http://www.adoremusbooks.com/thetoughestcowboy.aspx?zmac=46742494&zmas=1&zmac=2&zmap=52048&gclid=CiVlo7SEjLUCFZGiPAodFVwACg>