

## RAISING ANATOLIAN PUPS, PART THREE: AGE 6 WEEKS TO 8 WEEKS

I highly favor pups who decide they prefer snuggling up against the goats rather than joining the “puppy pile.” In my experience these pups become the best guardians, because they maintain the closest bonding with their goats.

At ages 6 to 8 weeks the pups are learning a great deal about interacting with other dogs and animals. Since I have an adult male Anatolian, 1- to 2-year old aunts and cousins, around 20 or 30 goats, and some poultry in the four-acre puppy pasture, the pups have many opportunities to experience many different dog and animal interactions. I want all of these interactions to be positive, so I am particularly careful to watch each day and immediately change out any animal who isn't providing the correct level of training for the pups.

My very best guardians began abandoning the puppy pile, joining the goats instead, at about 4 to 5 weeks. Some of the pups never do. When I have to choose, I prefer keeping the pup who demonstrates superior bonding to their charges over the pup with superior conformation. After all, I am breeding Anatolians, and since working ability is the essence of the breed, working ability is my primary selection criteria!

At this stage some of the pups love their goats so much they want to play and interact with them. It is important they are with goats of the correct dominance level. When the goat is grazing and the pup decides to jump up on the goat to engage in play, the best goat will swing its head, knock the pup to the ground, and continue eating. This is normal goat behavior in a herd, and Anatolians must understand herd etiquette. The goat isn't mean; she is just teaching the pup the correct behavior to fit comfortably into the herd.

Another behavior the puppy should be learning at this age is to walk slowly and carefully if they chose to walk through the herd. If instead they run through the herd, ignoring the goats, one of my nannies will leap forward and knock the running pup to the ground. This is the pup's punishment for running through the herd. As the pup gets older and much larger, the goats are more reluctant to teach the pup this lesson. This is why I believe it is important to place pups with their carefully selected training flock beginning when the pups are three weeks old.

At age 7 weeks, I take my pups to the vet for their puppy shots. I give the shots my vet recommends for our area. However, all puppy shots should include protection for tetanus, distemper, and parvo! All three are puppy killers. I know of pups taken inside a vet's office prior to their first shots and then coming down with parvo a week later and dying, I keep my pups inside my pickup for this first protective shot. The vet comes outside, and I hold each pup as they give the initial puppy shot with gloved hands.

It takes the pup's body a week to 10 days to develop an immune response. I don't allow any pups to be taken to their new homes any younger than 8 weeks.

When identifying the superior pup, I watch for the pup who enjoys hanging out with the goats. While all the pups enjoy the goats, I occasionally see a pup that spends almost all its time with the herd and very little time with the other pups. This type of pup is an exceptional candidate as a potential future breeding Anatolian, because this pup tends to develop the highest level of working ability.

Another excellent trait I watch for is the pup who calmly watches something strange or different who appears to be evaluating the potential it has for danger. When people come by to look at the pups, I know the pup who hangs back and watches rather than running to the strangers for petting tend to become the best guardians.

I believe it is important to breed for correct Anatolian working behaviors. Anatolians who automatically accept a stranger as an immediate friend are not demonstrating a correct guardian response.

It is important to keep Anatolians pups with training sheep and/or goats from age 3 weeks of age to develop their genetic potential as working livestock guardians. Raising pups with sheep and/or goats helps an owner to more correctly evaluate each pup's abilities and temperament. Working ability, like other traits, can be quickly lost in a line that is not tested and selected for working ability—the essence of the breed! —Erick Conard, Lucky Hit Ranch