

RAISING ANATOLIAN PUPS, part two: age 2 weeks to 6 weeks

The volume of poop and pee the pups produce greatly increases after they have turned 2 weeks. I hate moving them outside because I feel they are safer inside with me. However, they are either Anatolians, or they aren't! It is important for them to hear, smell, and see the environment in which they were bred for thousands of years to live and thrive. I bite the bullet and take the pups outside by the time they are 3 weeks old.

When I move them outside, I begin offering them mushy high-quality, large breed, grain-free puppy food. To prepare the puppy food, I add water and heat it in the microwave. I let it sit in the microwave undisturbed until all the water is absorbed and when it is stirred it has no hard parts (about 30 minutes). I add goat's milk (never cow's milk—ever) just before I offer the mush to the pups.

As they get older, I let the food be more solid and less mushy. I also include duck eggs, shredded cheese, and a very small amount (a teaspoon or less daily for the entire litter) of raw liver mashed almost to a liquid. Whatever amount of puppy food the pups don't eat, I give to their mom to finish so their food is always freshly made. Liver is powerful, so feed liver in moderation. If you give too much, it will loosen their stools. When they stop liking it, I stop feeding it.

In my small barn I have two runs separated by a 20-foot x 6-foot horse panel. I place the pups and their mom in the barn on one side. The goats have the other side, with a salt feeder to keep them coming by occasionally. On the puppy side, I set up empty mineral-supplement tubs, creating a physical barrier with spaces that can easily be walked through. That leaves another 10 feet to the gate at the end of the run. I close that gate for the first three days. I want to be certain the pup's mom doesn't decide to move her litter somewhere else!

Besides the goats in this small four-acre pasture, I keep Indian Runner ducks in a pen beside the small barn. As the pups age I let them out, but only when I'm right there to supervise. I also have the pup's dad (or another young male I'm testing for nurturing ability) and two or three young females. These dogs create a pack environment for the pups.

On their fourth day in the run, I open the gate. Excellent mothers teach the goats and the dogs that they are not allowed past the gate. An especially protective and nurturing male will spend hours lying down at the gate watching over the pups, seeing just how close to the pups the female will allow him to go.

For almost a week the pups don't go past the mineral tub "barrier." But they don't like pooping near where they live, and they move a bit further each time they poop.

At about 3 weeks their nails might be too long and sharp. When they fight over a nipple, they might be making small scratches there, causing the dam to want to get away from her

nursing pups. Since I want my pups to nurse as long as possible, I begin trimming their nails weekly, being extra careful to never, ever quick them. They won't forget it if you do! I worm the pups and their mom when the pups are 2 weeks old.

I worm them every two weeks after that. Initially, I use pyrantel pamoate (usually one ml for each 10 pounds of body weight—or better, as indicated by your vet). Pyrantel pamoate is an effective dewormer if your dog has hookworms, roundworms, or stomach worms, but it will not effectively treat whipworms or tapeworms. Pyrantel is safe to use in puppies that are at least 2 weeks old and in pregnant or nursing mothers, but do not overdose.

By 4 weeks the pups are coming out into the lane, and occasionally they move past the gate. An excellent male lies down quietly and allows the pups to come to him to play. If a pup cries out, the dam immediately rushes to the pup to provide any needed protection. The behavior males exhibit with young pups is similar to the behavior those males exhibit when surrounded by young kids.

When dealing with pups this age, I expect my males to lie quietly while the pups play around them. Calm enjoyment of the puppies is behavior that I believe demonstrates the best nurturing working behavior. Of course, if a breeder is afraid their males can't be trusted with puppies, those males probably can't be trusted with young kids either! I believe that any Anatolian that can't be trusted with puppies should never be bred. I place a male and several females with my pups and their dam with every litter.

When the pup encounters a goat, the goat generally tilts its head, and the pup, no matter how young, drops to the ground and lies very still until the goat no longer pays attention to the pup. This is a correct response for an Anatolian pup. Watching the pups interact with the goats, I learn a great deal about the type of future guardian the pup will become.

In addition, with each interaction the pup's working genetics are being reinforced (as long as the sheep and/or goats you have with your pups are excellent training animals). The pups must never be with goats or sheep that are either bullies or cowards. Bullies teach a young pup that it needs to be very aggressive toward its charges to keep them under control. Cowards, by running away, incorrectly teach a young pup that their charges enjoy play. Selection of training animals is under your control. Observe the interactions daily and make changes immediately the moment the interactions are incorrect.

This article will continue in the April 2023 issue.

—Erick Conard, Lucky Hit Ranch