

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT According to online sources, dogs and hunter-gatherer people started associating with one another roughly 15,000 years ago. This business arrangement, that likely began rather inauspiciously with less fearful wolves looking for food, would evolve into one of the most life-altering, successful, long-term, interspecies relationships ever known.

Farming began roughly 11,000 years ago, when people became more settled and started giving up a peripatetic lifestyle. Sheep one will ever know what fateful event precipitated the agreement, but it was likely something as simple as the realization that the wolves raiding the garbage middens got rid of things that attracted pests and predators to their campsites.

Along the way, someone discovered that these forerunners of the domestic dog could assist in hunting and could help with alerting hunter-gatherers to the presence of game, predators, and other humans. They likely also did duty as beasts of burden, they may have kept people warm on cold nights, and they probably ended up in the stewpot during hard times, as much as that notion may upset the American mind.

The other thing that early keepers of small hoofstock likely realized was that their canine partners were uniquely situated to help them keep their sheep and goats safe from large, toothy predators that wanted to take advantage of a good meal with little cost to themselves. In a time that predated firearms, when the ability to strike at a threat was limited to how far you could throw a spear or shoot an arrow, having a dog by your side that had a particular way of behaving that calmed fractious stock, and was highly defensive in the presence of physical threats to you and your animals, was a huge technological leap forward.

This or something similar is the likely origin story of the landrace dogs that became our Anatolians. It is so integral to the breed that we, as stewards, must commit to keeping these working traits at the absolute center of every aspect of the breed—when choosing breeding animals, when choosing the dogs that we present to judges, and judges, we ask you to keep these traits at the forefront of your mind every single time you point and award the dogs we bring to you.

It is a sad truth that what wins, and often not what most closely resembles the standard, is what gets bred. We as breeders must make certain that we include proven working lines in every generation of dogs we breed. Equally as importantly, we, as exhibitors, must take working dogs to judges, even knowing that working dogs often do not make the best show dogs. And judges, we ask that you help us in this endeavor by rewarding correct, calm temperament in the ring.

I'm waked up by the dogs outside barking, and I look at the clock, briefly wondering if my neighbors are bothered by the noise. It's after 11p.m. and the bin men just picked up the trash at the end of the road, which is why my dogs are sounding off.

I doze off and wake up again sometime later. In the distance I hear coyotes singing—they are close to catching their quarry, and in typical coyote fashion, they feel we all need to know about it. I drift back to sleep. The last conscious thought I have is that I feel safe, that my sheep are safe. And this, I think to myself as I change to a more comfortable position in my somewhat elusive pursuit of sleep, is why we have dogs, why I have Anatolians, so that the things that go bump in the night do not concern us overmuch.

—Jo Lynne York,
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