

K9 GUARDIANS

PART 1

INTRODUCTION: This article is not intended to be the "bible of dog training" but more a reference for those without experience in working dogs. The author is a law enforcement K9 handler experienced with patrol, narcotics, and explosive detector dogs. This article will in no way be able to cover every aspect of training a personal protection dog it will however provide a starting point and give the reference material to continue training. Further information may be obtained directly from author at email NDARME@aol.com

THE HOME/FAMILY/PERSONAL PROTECTOR:

First one must realize the advantages and disadvantages of owning a personal protection trained dog. You must have a secure area to keep the dog with posted warning signs (liability leaves no room for irresponsibility). The amount of time you must devote to training is enormous ensure you are willing to spend about 30min to an hour per day for months on end to train your dog to a proficient level. If you have ever owned a dog before you should be well aware of the normal responsibilities of owning a pet.

BREED PROSPECTS:

The following is a list of breeds which I have personal experience with and have found acceptable in protection work.

- 1) German Shepherd
- 2) Rottweiler
- 3) Belgian Malinois
- 4) American Bulldog
- 5) Bullmastiff
- 6) American Staffordshire Terrier
- 7) Belgian Tervuren
- 8) Doberman Pinscher

The following breeds are ones I do not have experience with but have been recommended to me by fellow trainers/breeders.

- 1) Akita
- 2) Boxer
- 3) Presa Canario (excellent prospect I believe but expensive)

- 4) Giant Schnauzer
- 5) Mastiff
- 6) Tosa
- 7) Dogo Argentino
- 8) Kuvasz
- 9) Fila Brasileiro
- 10) Bouvier des Flandres

The list goes on and on but i believe the above list provides you with a place to start. I encourage you to research breeds that interest you before making a final decision. Considerations should be your climate, size of the dog, breed temperments etc...

PUPPY OR ADULT?

When considering which age of dog to purchase remember the following things: 1) in the long run purchasing an adult does save money especially if training is complete or started. 2) sometimes adults come with prior owner installed problems 3) when purchasing a puppy the parents and litter can be viewed 4) a puppy is easier to introduce into a family 5) when purchasing a puppy expect to wait a year or more before your guardian is ready to start training

Weigh the pros and cons of each and make a decision that best suits your needs.

MALE OR FEMALE:

You would be wise to choose a prospect on the basis of merit rather than because of its sex. However there are small differences that may make one suit your needs better than the other. A male is a more formidable opponent generally being the bigger , stronger more aggressive of the genders. A female tends to bond closer to the family and therefore at times may be more protective. It is the author's opinion that males are more suited to do the job and easier to find capable prospects but by no means eliminate the female prospect choose which ever fits your needs best.

SELECTION AND TESTING PROSPECTS:

When testing dogs for protection prospects there are certain desirable traits to look for , dominance is a valuable trait look at the tail carriage ,is his tail held high ? Puppies in a litter have the same traits as adults there will always be one alpha dog . Throw a rag in a litter of puppies the desired response is a litter

that plays and tugs with the rag , the alpha dog will more than likely be the dog that wins the rag. Test dogs for prey drive ,do they chase a ball ,play tug o war? If so this indicates good prey drive , the dogs desire to chase down and manipulate an object. The idea is to find a dominate dog with good prey drive , by rolling a puppy on his back this tests how submissive the dog is , does the dog struggle? The desired answer is yes. Testing adult dogs is similar ,test for prey drive with a ball and rag. When you first approach the adult dog this will tell you alot about its tempermant , does the dog retreat?, bark and growl?, raise up ears in an attentive alert posture? show curiosity?If retreat was the answer look for another prospect. Sometimes the defensive drive can be tested by simply maintaining eye to eye contact with the dog ,what is the dogs reaction? Hopefully the dog is dominate enough to stare back at you maybe even show some aggression. Remember these tests should be done in a safe manner (from the other side of the fence maybe).

Probably the most sure fire way to get a good prospect is to buy from a knowledgable breeder that breeds WORKING dogs not show dogs.

TO TRAIN OR NOT TO TRAIN:

It is a widespread myth that many breeds will protect their families and homes ,not true trust me in my job i see many "family protectors" cowering in a corner after their owner's house has been burglarized. Training is neccessary I don't care if you have a big ol mean rottweiler , pitbull or whatever I have case studies where a protection type breed dog did nothing but whine while the owner was raped or murdered! It is estimated that about 75% of dogs purchased for home protection would not bite when it came down to it . Hmmm.....My dog is one of those 25% you say because he growls and barks , has he ever been threatened back ? or hit ? Does gunfire scare him? Even if the dog will bite without formal training 50% of untrained dogs that do bite like to bite the legs and ankles, not good when there is a weapon in the hand. Consider also that a trained dog may actually reduce your liability because of the control you will have instilled in the dog.

TRAINING :

The first steps in training your personal protection dog will be lessons in ettiquette , obedience training. This is a neccessary step in training that must not be overlooked , do not make the mistake of slacking on this area of training if you do it will show later. I suggest you purchase a manual on dog obedience they are available at any bookstore for a relatively cheap price . A possible way to save money would be to purchase a breed specific book containing a obedience section there are many of these available on almost every breed out there. Remember though most of these books are oriented towards AKC show dogs and compettitions the traits they desire in their dogs are

undesirable for a good working dog.

OBEDIENCE:

I will provide only a brief overview of obedience training here i encourage further research on your own.

Step One: First you must teach the dog commands in their simplest form nothing complicated start with the SIT command before going to the HEEL etc

At first you will have to do what is called escape and reward training

Escape training is where the dog must assume the correct position in order to "escape" the pressure from the handler ie. teaching the sit handler pulls up on choke chain pushes down on dogs rump untill dog is in the sit position when dog is sitting pressure is released and dog is rewarded.

The next level is a proofing stage no more food rewards the dog should be obeying commands without the handler forcing the dog into position. Make things a little harder say two correct responses before a reward is given. Follow these general guidelines for all commands taught and remember patience is key to this type of work .

Obedience training should begin at approx. 6mo to 1yr depending on the maturity of the dog , do not make the mistake of rushing things allow the dog to mature at its own pace .

Potection training (bite work) will be covered in part two of this article .

Here is some reference material that i would reccomend to assist in the procurement and training of a personal protection dog.

BARRONS A Complete Pet Owners Guide (breed specific books about \$5)*

The Koehler Method of Dog Training by William Koehler*

Dog Problems by David Weston & Ruth Ross

The Koehler Method of Guard Dog Training by William Koehler*

Protection Dogs for you and your family by Edward Weiss, M.D.

The Home and Family Protection Dog by Karen Freeman Duet & George Duet

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K-9 Body - Guards by Mike Harlow*

Pit Bulls and Tenacious Guard Dogs by Dr. Carl Semencic*

Schutzhund by Susan Barwig and Stewart Hilliard

Dog Psychology The Basis of Dog Training by Leon F. Whitney,D.V.M

The New Knowledge of Dog Behavior by Clarence Pfaffenberger

* book is easy to read&understand in layman's terms

I have many more titles i would reccomend but the above all supply a good basis of working knowledge on the subject.