Socialization

Socialization is something that is really tricky. It is especially important for young dogs, and yet, we have to be careful to make sure that this experience is a good one. To do it right, you really need to plan ahead and work with some well behaved dogs.

Please, remember that not all dogs are social. In fact, many dog breeds were created specifically not to be dog social. While there are some exceptions to the rule, most livestock guardian breeds are not overly social with other dogs. They are often good with a small pack but don't handle overly busy situations very well.

Dog parks? Dog parks can be both great and awful. I don't normally recommend them for young dogs (for several reasons) or for dogs that are not extremely outgoing, social, and overly forgiving. To be frank, most livestock guardian breeds are not usually "dog park" dogs as the park tends to be too overwhelming and busy for the typical Pyr.

How do I safely socialize a young dog? There are two things to consider when socializing young dogs. We need to keep them physically safe from disease and parasites as well as make sure that these socialization experiences are good ones. The safest way to socialize a young dog is to work with a well balanced and well mannered adult dog. Size difference really isn't important. You need an adult dog that is patient and firm without being anxious or short tempered. A great adult dog can both play with and teach a young pup. There are few better teachers of dog social manners than an adult dog.

What about adult dogs? Adult dogs can benefit from socialization as well, but keep in mind that their social style and preferences are going to be pretty set. The way we socialize adult dogs is a bit different than young dogs. Generally with older dogs, we do things like pack walks, public outings, and social events. Once you know that your dogs get along, you can try play dates at each other's homes or at a neutral place.

What if my dog is picky? Actually, this isn't unusual at all. We're learning that the majority of dogs have a preference in friends, usually based on play style. Some dogs like to wrestle while others like to play chase. The key is to choose those dogs that your dog enjoys spending time with. It's important to watch body language and give your dog breaks as needed.

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