

# Benefits of having a well-trained dog for farmers

By Jarred Hodgson | 21 March 2024 | 7:00 pm

*Dog trainer Jarred Hodgson says a well-trained dog can be a game changer for farmers in the country.*



German Shepherds are known for their protective qualities and high trainability.

*Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

As a farmer in South Africa, having a well-trained protection dog can be a game changer. Not only do these dogs provide security and peace of mind, but they can also be trained to perform a variety of tasks on the farm.

In an [article](#) at the beginning of the year, I looked at which breed of dog would be best as a guard dog.

**READ [Start training as soon as you get your puppy!](#)**

Now I will discuss the benefits of having a well-trained dog, not only for personal protection, but also for utilisation on the farm.

One of the most popular breeds for protection work is the Belgian Malinois. These dogs are highly intelligent, easily trainable, and fiercely loyal to their owners.

They are also known for their courage and protective nature, making them an ideal choice for farmers looking for a reliable personal protection dog.

In addition to their protective duties, Belgian Malinois dogs can also be trained to perform other tasks on the farm.

For example, they can be trained to herd livestock, track down lost animals, and even detect pests or diseases in crops. This versatility makes them a valuable asset to any farm.

Although the Belgian Malinois is an ideal candidate as a farmer's best friend, they do require an extraordinary amount of energy and effort. They are extreme dogs and need to be working and burning energy all day, every day.

These dogs are a great option if you can have the dog with you all day on the farm, but if it ends up being a dog that gets left in the yard most of the time, it will go mad and cause you countless headaches.

According to a report by South Africa Online, livestock farmers in the country suffer losses of around R2 billion each year due to predators such as black-backed jackal, caracal, leopard, cheetah, brown hyena, and even crows and stray dogs.

Having a well-trained protection dog can help mitigate these losses and provide farmers with much-needed peace of mind.



**Border collies are known for their herding abilities. Photo: Wikimedia Commons**

While the Boerboel, Rottweiler, German Shepherd and Rhodesian Ridgeback breeds are also popular for guarding work, the Belgian Malinois is highly trainable and versatile, making them an excellent choice for farmers looking for a reliable and multi-talented protection dog.

**READ [Tips to take care of your farm dog](#)**

If you want to enjoy the benefits of having a well-trained dog on your farm, you need to invest some time and effort into training the animal.

Getting professional training from your local dog trainer should be your first step. You can contact me if you are based in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands area.

## **Some general tips on how to train your dog for farm life**

- **Start early:** The best time to train your dog is when it is still a puppy. Puppies are more eager to learn and more adaptable to new situations than older dogs.

- Be consistent: Use the same commands and signals for the same behaviours every time. Reward your dog for doing what you want it to do, and correct it for doing what you don't want it to do.
- Be patient: Training takes time and repetition. Don't expect your dog to learn everything overnight. Don't get frustrated or angry if your dog makes mistakes. Instead, try again until it gets it right.
- Be positive: Use praise, treats, toys, or play as rewards for your dog's good behaviour. Avoid using harsh words, physical punishment, or negative reinforcement for your dog's bad behaviour. Creating fear in your dog is never a good thing and causes the dog to withdraw and become anxious.
- Be realistic: Don't expect your dog to do things that are beyond its abilities or nature. For example, don't expect a small or timid dog to guard your livestock from large predators. Don't expect a dog that is not bred for herding to herd your livestock without proper training.
- Be safe: Make sure your dog is healthy, vaccinated and microchipped. Make sure it wears a collar with identification and contact details. Make sure your dog is under your control and supervision at all times. Make sure your dog does not harm or annoy your neighbours, visitors, or other animals.

## Some other ways a well-trained dog can benefit you on your farm

### Livestock Herding

One of the most obvious benefits of having a dog on your farm is to assist you with herding your livestock.

Whether you have cattle, sheep, goats, or poultry, a dog can help you move them from one place to another, keep them together, and prevent them from straying or escaping.

A dog can also alert you of any problems or dangers that may arise with your animals, such as illness, injury, or predation.

**READ** [\*Strategies for limiting livestock losses to predators\*](#)



Some breeds of dogs are naturally suited for herding, such as collies and shepherds. These dogs have a strong instinct to control and direct the movement of other animals, and they can learn to respond to your voice or whistle commands.

However, any dog can be trained to herd with proper guidance and reinforcement. The key is to start early, be consistent, and reward your dog for good behaviour.

### **Pest Control**

Another benefit of having a dog on your farm is to control pests and vermin that may damage your crops or feed. Mice and rats can eat through your grain, seeds, or produce, and spread diseases to your animals or humans.

Terriers are excellent at hunting down and killing these rodents, as they have a high prey drive and a keen sense of smell.



**Dogs like the Yorkshire terrier can help keep vermin at bay. Photo: Flickr**

Dogs can also help you get rid of other pests that may harm your plants or animals, such as insects, snakes, or birds.

Dogs can chase away or catch these pests, or at least alert you of their presence so that you can deal with them accordingly.

Some dogs are even trained to sniff out pests that may be hidden or hard to detect, such as fruit flies or bollworms.

### **Companionship**

Another benefit of having a dog on your farm is to provide you with companionship and emotional support. Farming can be a lonely and stressful occupation, especially if you live in a remote area or work long hours.

Dogs can offer you unconditional love, affection, and loyalty. They can also make you happier, less stressed, and more productive by providing you with exercise, entertainment, and social interaction.

Dogs can also help you cope with difficult situations or losses that may occur on your farm, such as droughts, diseases, or deaths. Dogs can sense your emotions and comfort you when you are sad or depressed.

They can also help you heal from trauma or grief by giving you a sense of purpose and hope.

### **A productive farm life with your canine friend**

In conclusion, having a well-trained dog can provide farmers with a variety of benefits. Not only do these dogs provide security and peace of mind, but they can also be trained to perform a variety of tasks on the farm.

The Belgian Malinois breed is an excellent choice for farmers looking for a reliable and versatile protection dog that can help protect their livestock and crops from predators and other threats.

However, you need to train your dog properly and responsibly to ensure that it can perform its tasks effectively and safely.

By doing so, you can enjoy a happier and more productive farm life with your canine friend.

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