

Considering an Anatolian

The Anatolian Shepherd is a flock-guarding breed that isn't for everyone.

By Allan Reznik

Q. We own our home in the suburbs, with great neighbors and a very dog-friendly community. We have two kids under five. We just lost our elderly Golden and Lab and are thinking about an Anatolian Shepherd. Do you think this would be a good choice?

A. An Anatolian Shepherd is a giant flock-guardian breed from Turkey. Other flock guardians include the Hungarian Kuvasz and Komondor, and the Tibetan Mastiff. These are very loving dogs with their families but far more protective than the “never-met-a-stranger” retrievers and aloof to strangers.

They are hardwired to protect their flock – and without livestock to protect, YOU become their flock. Furthermore, the enemies of the flock include your “pushy” suburban neighbors who walk into your house without knocking or ringing the doorbell first. The dog might even misinterpret the actions of your kids’ noisy friends chasing after your kids or play wrestling.

Early and ongoing socialization is essential for the flock-guardian breeds and they will relax when you tell them the visitors in your home mean no harm. However, those same friends casually entering your home or backyard without you will not be tolerated because a flock guardian considers such behavior overly familiar and will respond with suspicion.

These are wonderful dogs but strong and primitive, and certainly not for everyone.