

# **CHARACTER TESTS FOR GUARD MOLOSSERS**

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**(published in 1987 in “El Mundo del Perro” and in Bulletin nº 3 of  
the Spanish Molosser club)**

## **THE FUNCTION AND THE CHARACTER**

When we say that men have formed dogs by selection to make them appropriate for different utilities, we do not only refer to his anatomy, we also refer to its psychical qualities, to his temperament and to its character.

One of the oldest functions that dogs have developed during its relation with men is the GUARD function. People have always kept, and keep dogs to protect plots and belongings against strangers. This led to the selection of big and strong dogs with an imposing aspect to intimidate intruders: the “molosser dogs”. This trunk became divided in two other ones: one of dogs which guarded mobile properties, connected to a system of migration and stock breeding, living in big open areas and in freedom; from this one descend the breeds which we know today as the Mountain Molossers: Mastines and cattle dogs of different types. The other trunk, which was more specialized in the proper guarding, selected dogs which were developed into the breeds, which we know today as Guard Molossers.

## **SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE GUARD WORK**

Of course the selection mentioned before has been done during many hundreds of years and without any method, and the division of the trunks to which we referred must be understood in broad and general sense. There is no doubt that for example in the actual Rottweiler comes together the blood of cattle dogs, guard Molossers and other indefinable ones, in quantities which are difficult to determine. Analysing the genealogical tree of the majority of the modern breeds we should see that the various trunks cross each other in their formation.

Because of this it is not rare the observation of “polyvalent” individuals, appropriate for multiple utilities. The modern selection of various breeds

took place in this way and the German Shepherd is without any doubt the best example of the attempt of the “good for everything dog”: dog for guarding, defence, cattle, sheep herding, tracking, company...

However, far from these modern movements, the guarding dogs have been selected during centuries for this only utility, and they have developed their work under special and distinctive conditions, which have influenced in the formation of their character. What have been these special conditions?

- 1°.- A scarcely, or not any, relation with people during his period of “imprinting”, with the exception of the owner or keeper. This practice is still a habit in rural environment for the dogs which will be destined as guard dogs, with the aim that they will have an as big as possible mistrust towards people.
- 2°.- During the day, and sometimes also during the night he is doing his job while chained up in a familiar place, which fixes clearly his “territory” and his safety distance.
- 3°.- Some times intentional, other times accidentally, the dog gets “provoked” various times a day to defend his territory, which means actually a permanent training.
- 4°.- The aggressiveness demonstrated against people never gets oppressed, but on the contrary stimulated by the owners.
- 5°.- The guard dog has to resolve the situations of confrontations with the strangers **WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE OWNER**; this is of utmost importance and shows the big difference from the personal defence work.

## **THE GUARD MOLOSSER TODAY**

It is no need to say that these conditions to which formerly the guard dogs were subjected to, are not usual today for the specimens of the breeds which descend from them. This change in treatment conditions, together with the failure of an own and adequate system to select the qualities which a good guard dog must have, caused that many specimens of specialized breeds are showing an a-typical character, fitting other functional branches.

In what amount treatment is determinant in behaviour? Till what point can wake up hereditary instincts and sleeping aggressiveness? With which methods can we detect the most excellent specimens to use for breeding and make a selection, which also takes account of the character?

All these questions and much more must be answered by the only valid way: the beginning of a rigorous work of experimentation, methodical and firm, with a broad population of guard molossers, which makes allowance for the own peculiarities of that group and the specific ones of every breed and individual.

Little or nothing is done in this way, at the most some specimens haven been confronted with more or less luck to tests which were invented and conceived for other branches with a different function; like the dogs for personal defence.

### **TEST FOR GUARD MOLOSSERS**

The existing working tests, as well as selective as competitive level, found their mechanics and their aims on molding dogs for **PERSONAL DEFENCE**.

Therefore they are not valid to select fundamentally the **GUARD** qualities.

What are these qualities?

- 1°.- Mistrust towards strangers
- 2°.- Big territorial sense
- 3°.- Aggressiveness at the invasion of his territory
- 4°.- Courage to support threats and charges by possible intruders
- 5°.- Know how to bite to resolve the limited confrontation situations.

Like we have seen before, all these qualities have to take place without the support of the owner because the guard work is realized by the dog on his own.

How to establish a test mechanism that shows us and that brings out these qualities? It is a complex work, but it is necessary to take the first steps. Let's review each one of the numbered sections.

### Mistrust towards strangers

We see that this mistrust, besides responding to a genetic factor, is very much under influence of the "imprinting period" that takes place till the age of five months. Avoiding excessive socialisation and handling concerning strangers has been a tradition on guard dogs. Investigation can be a good step in the beginning.

### Big territorial sense

All of us have heard or argued that a certain dog "is guarding very well in his territory, but out of that he is not". This makes a test difficult because one cannot go to the house of each individual to perform it.

How to solve this situation?

A solution could be to get the dogs used to stay inside the car. Here, as we know, wakes up very soon the territorial sense. The defence of the car can be a good as well as practical method to check the reactions of the dog within the framework of a test. One should work on it with them.

### Aggressiveness at the invasion of his territory.

To weigh up this section it is necessary that the dog is fixed with a leash on a ring in a fixed place, without the presence of the owner. Then, at the distance of about fifty meters a stranger provokes the suspicion of the dog with slow and adequate movements. With adequate work a clear answer must be achieved, with a taut leash and as soon as possible.

### Courage to support threats and charges

One time achieved the immediate answer at a certain distance, this distance will be made shorter, while the tone of threats against the dog will be increased (stick, whip, voices etc.) The work must be progressive and never come to a situation that the dog cannot stand in a positive way.

### Know how to bite to resolve the limited confrontation situations

The charges against the dog will be carried out much closer every time, till reaching the point where the intruder can be caught with the taut chain. Then it is necessary to teach the dog to resolve the situation while biting.

At this point it is convenient to emphasize that there exist two types of “biting”. One responds to the provoking of the hunting instinct and the other one when aggressiveness is provoked. All of us have seen dogs in which, when the training “sleeve” is moved as if it was a piece of game, the capturing instinct wakes up as well as the eager to run after it and bite, to hunt. The bite in this case is “holding”, it is about to hold a piece, which is considered a game. Many dogs, which carry out this biting the sleeve lack aggressiveness and would be incapable to confront a person who is facing up without provoking the hunting instinct. Another type of biting is the one dogs do when they are threatened, when they respond with aggressiveness to what they do understand as a situation, which produces insecurity to them. In this case the biting is short. He bites and lets loose and bites again. Well, bearing this in mind, for a guard dog it is fundamental that he responds to the second one of these situations, that he has aggressiveness. For this reason we do not consider appropriate using a sleeve for the work with these dogs. We think it is better to use the complete suit and that while entering the territory of the chain the dog bites wherever he can: in the leg, in the thigh, the back...etc. One must not value too much the time of duration of the bite either, for the same reason as we have seen before. The dog must learn that in case of a threat against his territory or against his integrity he will win if biting. This is the work.

All these considerations and other ones that could be added, can serve to initiate regulations, a project of selected character tests for Guard Molossers.

This is the only way to perpetuate the peculiarities of a character that has been molded during hundreds of years and that is threatening to be lost within a few decades. °



The article in “El Mundo del Perro” is illustrated with pictures made by Carlos Salas during the Spanish Molosserclub show in Torrelodones (near Madrid) in 1987 where a character test was organized for different breeds, which are represented by the club, chained and without owner.

The Filas showed in the pictures are the bitch Española do Mato Grosso, 37 months old and the male Fripon da Zagaia Verde, 21 months old. Both Filas belonged to the former president of the CEMA, Mr. Eduardo Benito.

Please observe the Molossers of different breeds, chained, and see the different reactions. The aggressiveness of the Fila stands out from the rest of the breeds. The judge for working dogs Mr. Francisco Ramis judged the test and the provoker was Mr. Vicente Ferrer from Valencia.

Report of Española do Mato Grosso:

“Very good reaction, bitch with self confidence and with good aggressiveness.”

About Fripon da Zagaia Verde:

“Good reaction. Good defending.”



*Fripon da Zagaia Verde*



*Española do Mato Grosso*