



Lion Dog Digest

Sponsored by the
Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation

We experienced a severe hold up in getting out the previous issue, which was dated as September 2001. It saw the light of day in November, but it was originally dated as June. Circumstances build up every now and then and it is impossible to complete whatever was hoped for. However, with a bit of luck that backlog has now been worked off and lets see if things can move more punctually in the future.

We print below the second half of what our dogs do in the K.N.P. We can't stress strongly enough how specialized their activities are. Not only may they not advance on and have direct contact with the wild animals, but they cannot run away from them either. Pretty restrictive limitations, not so?

The Lion Dog Group (LDG) is, by and large a blend of hunting and conservation, and that is what this issue of the LDD is all about. The second part of "What our dogs do in the KNP" was a carry over from the last issue. But then the hunting scene most unexpectedly burst upon us via that renowned TV programme, 50/50. The existence of hunting dogs in KZN is nothing new and neither was the likely legitimizing of their activities. We just had not the slightest inkling of its immediate impending introduction, and its extremely upsetting format.

DOGS IN "HUNTING"

On the evening of 18th November 2001 that esteemed TV programme 50/50 screened their 12 minute investigation into legalized "hunting" by dogs. There is no doubt that every member of our Lion Dog Group (LDG) would be appalled by that inhumane display.

At least the participants made no bones about their "sport", they were not hunting for the pot but merely enjoying the chase. There were about forty dogs of varied description, predominantly based on greyhounds and whippets, marauding across KwaZulu-Natal in search of "prey". In the one hunt, under the control of a huntmaster, the dogs were held on a leash until the predetermined object of the hunt was found. It wasn't, so all the dogs and all the hunters spent a fruitless morning.

The other hunt was run on traditional lines.

The dogs do not hunt as a pack; they are all separate operators with no cohesion whatsoever in their actions. The person whose dog gets his teeth into the prey first is the winner. But not one of the dogs knew how to kill the little grey duiker. There is only one basic method, and it certainly is not exclusive

to dogs. Leopard, lion, etc all know how to get it by the throat. Not one of these "hunting dogs" had the slightest understanding of the basics. All they wanted to do was to get in a bite and pull and tear. Is that hunting?

So we have asked Sian Hall, who had half a minute's exposure in the programme, to present her views on a "sport" where R40,000 wagers are not uncommon, and the dogs are bought for R10,000 each. We hope to have this in our next issue. The Animal Protection Act prohibits the use of one animal to chase another. The Kwa Zulu Natal Province has introduced legislation whereby provincial statute overrides national law. Now there is further legislation in the pipeline to amend the Conservation Act, part of national statute. KZN Wildlife is most unhappy about the whole position and can be contacted at <hunting@kznwildlife.com>.

But surely the above scenario can't be in the interest of Professional Hunters. We had better make rapid progress on that Code of Conduct for them and their use of dogs. After the forecast legalisation of dog hunting in KZN the next anticipated stage was to permit hunters to be assisted by dogs when locating / tracking the likes of bushpig (boar) and leopard. At this rate events will supercede our efforts.

TRADITION IN THE HUNT

We should however question ab initio the term "traditional hunting" because it could, from both the "hunting" and "traditional" points of view, be a complete misnomer. Do we really suppose that historically this "hunting" for the thrill of the chase, and the lodging of large bets actually occurred, as opposed to genuine hunting for the pot? It seems unlikely that 100 and more years ago the Zulu chased meager resources across the open veld in large numbers, large numbers of people and their dogs that is. Perhaps some historian can inform us on this point. But easier to prove, are they now using "traditional" dogs to conduct their "traditional hunting"? The current favourites are obviously pretty close to being pure bred Greyhounds. Again the historians/anthropologists can offer a more informed opinion, but surely the Sitka (an important component of the RR and also known as the Pariah Dog) was the indigenous and only common dog of the time. No one ever mentioned Pharaoh Hounds being down here, and the Basenjis seemed to remain up in the Congo. Of course there were the Sloughis, and let us not forget the Boerboels which claim a history of thousands of years.

But did we see examples of those dogs in this historical hunt. And then what about those stories about the Sitka's being trained to knock down the prey with their front feet? They weren't allowed to use their teeth to bring the prey down, and the hunters delivered the coup de grace with a swift blow from a knobkerrie.

I always enjoyed that story of the Sitka's using their front paws. It seemed an imminently sensible idea. I wouldn't want my dinner chewed over by dogs either. Maybe it is all a matter of perception, but really that 50/50 presentation just didn't even have a whiff of anything traditional. The general concept should at least be checked out by those in the know.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BUSH DOG USE

So we contact a few of the role players and try to determine a code that will satisfy most of us. It won't keep everyone quiet, but at least our dogs and wildlife in general will be far better off. Here is our present offering. Let us have your input:-

"Hi

Herewith my scribblings about a Code of Conduct for using dogs in the bush.

Firstly, this code is not a new idea. A couple of years ago I saw a need for it when deciding that hunting with dogs would be legalized in KZN, followed by permission to hunt leopard with dogs nationally.

Secondly, the first stage of the above has come to pass in a form far worse than imagined (vide 50/50 programme 2001/11/18) and there is no doubt that every hunter, whether professional or not, wants to distance himself as far as possible from any association with what is called "traditional hunting".



Thirdly, a Code of Conduct is difficult to police/enforce and can only be introduced on a voluntary basis. Doubtless all serious hunters who use dogs to help them will be acting in accordance with a code like this already; all that is changing is that it is written down. The RRIF issues Advisory Notices on a variety of topics to help people cope with such issues affecting their dogs. However on this particular matter we would seek far broader guidance and acceptance.

Fourthly, though we are a RR institution we certainly do not envisage applicability to that breed alone.

Fifthly, the RR's claim to fame is that it can bay lion. We place a lot of emphasis on that word "bay". Certainly it can hunt and bring down various animals; so can a lot of dogs. We seek concentration on its ability to locate, and if necessary, restrict the prey to that one location. Also RR's are excellent at locating wounded prey.

Sixthly, we accept that the hunter wants to fulfill that objective of hunting himself and does not take a dog along to do it for him.

Seventhly, we want the dog to be physically and mentally in peak condition, thus able to cope with whatever demands the bush presents while helping his owner/handler in whichever pursuit is involved.

Eighthly, though stress is laid on hunting in the above, it is by no means exclusive. If the owner/handler is in the bush on trail, on conservation matters, or whatever we would like him to have a check list / aide memoir to assist him in ensuring that his dog is up to the challenges he may face.



Lastly, now that you have a pretty good idea of what the object is, go beyond the code provided, which is not a draft but an aide memoir and put down what you think is required in the light of your knowledge and experience.

Very many thanks

S"

ANI 6 ADVISORY NOTICE 2002/01 /01
CODE OF CONDUCT WHEN USING DOGS IN THE BUSH

This Advisory Notice is directed to those people who specifically use their dogs in the bush whether it be on trail/walks, conservation, hunting, leisure or any other purpose. The objective is to ensure that the dog is adequately equipped to cope with those bush demands which we feel require a bit more of him than the normal domestic environment. We therefore advise that attention be paid to the following matters: -

1. Physical Health

- (a) He should be thoroughly checked out each morning and for at least three days prior to all bush exposures.
- (b) Particular care must be taken regarding eyes, ears, nose and feet.
- (c) He should be free of wounds, and those that he might carry should be immune to infection.
- (d) His coat should be in good condition, free of parasites, and well groomed.
- (e) He should be well fed and at full strength, though this in no way decries him being in "bush-trim".
- (f) His vaccinations/inoculations etc. should be up to date.
- (g) ...

2. Mental Ability

- (a) If the firing of weapons is likely he should not be gun-shy but able to remain comfortably off lead at heel while the weapon is being fired.
- (b) He should be mentally fully alert and ready to cope with whatever comes his way before he goes out to meet it.
- (c) Though mainly a function of genetics and training, the owner/handler should be confident that the dog has the character/temperament to successfully handle whatever he must face.
- (d) Whereas we have no qualms about the dog laying down his life in defense of his owner/handler we expect the latter to equip himself, and be capable of expert use of, whatever weapons the situation demands in the protection of his dog.
- (e) The dog must be obedient and trained to whatever is required of him during every bush exposure. Obviously the more people and dogs involved at the time the more important this becomes from everyone's point of view.
- (f) ...

3. Special Requirements for Specific Animals

- (a) Lion. Though he may be quite capable of coping comfortably with one lion the complete opposite could be the case when there are two or more, or there is even one very aggressive lioness. If two or more dogs are involved again the position changes ...
- (b) Leopard. Though he may handle a lion with ease this does not presuppose that he will cope equally ...
- (c) Giraffe....
- (d) Snakes. Spitting Cobra ...
- (e) Crocodile ...
- (f) Bush-pig ...
- (g) ...
- (h) ...

4. Special Equipment

- (a) First Aid. The dog is at greater risk than his owner/handler therefore as a result there is a greater need for basic first aid care for him. Circumstances will determine what is required here. ...

- (b) Protective Gear. Thought should be given to providing him with boots, leather jacket, etc should it be necessary. Preferably his pads and feet in general etc, should cope with whatever environment he is operating in. Further as far as the prey is concerned, he should have the speed of mind and body to look after himself and avoid direct physical contact ...

5. ...

6. General Statement of Policy:

- a) Dogs are used to retrieve birds which have been shot. We have no problem with this activity of retrieval which has nothing in common with using a dog to bring down an animal.
- b) In all bush terrain excercises, including hunting, the Lion Dog Group of the Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation supports the inclusion of dogs which BAY and do not BITE.

WHAT OUR RIDGEBACKS DO IN THE KNP – PART 2

An example involving Ralf and Dusty illustrates a few of the requirements quite clearly. Ralf had to fix a crib (what we would call a water-trough) and took his trusty Dusty with him. He had to walk a fair distance from his bakkie and as the crib is the only water source in the area quite a few animals habitually remain within close range of it. I fully understand that feeling of confidence one has while striding through the tall grass with a Ridgeback right next to you, and Ralf wasted no time getting to the control mechanism with a few very basic tools.

The ball-cock valve is in a small float trap right next to the crib and it has a low wall and a sheet of roofing for protection, in other words, though on your haunches, you are not exactly out in the open, you have enough protection to keep the sun off you. So Ralf rests the rifle (which to me looks like it was designed for anti-tank warfare) on the wall and busies himself with the mechanism while Dusty does guard duty right next to him, and that is really right next to him. With her on look-out duty he can concentrate on the job in hand; there is nothing more distracting than having to continually look around you while trying to put that split pin through the arm on the ball.

He was progressing slowly when he felt Dusty's body vibrate against his leg and he became aware of her low, almost inaudible, growl alerting him to nearby danger. On looking up he couldn't fail to immediately see the Rhino

standing only ten meters away. When you're basically sitting on your backside on the ground, a Rhino at that range is as big as a bus. Dusty had assessed the position accurately; that Rhino represented no threat at all, he only wanted some water, but there is a limit as to how close he can come



before you start mentioning his presence. Nothing would have been gained had she talked earlier, and to have made a loud noise when there was no cause for alarm could have been a serious mistake.

The chances are that the Rhino had still been moving in on the crib and would have continued doing so had Dusty not complained. It seems inconceivable to us humans but when these brave little brown dogs growl all the wildest of animals in the KNP will stop and take note. So Ralf patted her, assured her that there wasn't any danger, she went quiet, and he got on with the job. He was almost finished when he detected the low growl and the vibration again. A quick glance up and across in the direction of her stare was all too easy and this time a lion had joined the party; he was also ten meters away and the three of

them (ie. treating Ralf and Dusty as what they were, one) were equally spaced from each other, that is each was at the corner of a triangle of which each side was ten meters.

Now you might say how can a Rhodesian Ridgeback watch a lion walk straight up to her without doing a thing. Firstly she can do it because that is what she is supposed to do when she is with a Section Ranger in the Kruger National Park. She knows the lion has no evil intent and in any event she is at peace with all the animals. We must understand that the KNP is a conservation area and that the humans there (and here we are talking about the employees, not the visitors) AND THEIR DOGS, have conservation as their sole objective. If there is no call for alarm then don't get alarmed. But when the lion keeps moving in a girl has the right to say no, no further. And she does so, and the equilibrium is maintained.

As happened before when the rhino came in Ralf re-assures her and she returns to her silent observation duty, but at this stage Ralf himself becomes slightly concerned because lion and rhino are definitely not suitable bed-fellows. He can see that they are not comfortable in each other's company and though they have no interest whatsoever in either Dusty or himself this doesn't mean that they won't be swept up innocently in some rapid action.

Ralf finishes quickly, the water is opened up and rushes noisily into the trough, the lion is startled by the commotion and backs off rapidly into the bush, the rhino stands impassively waiting for the water level to rise sufficiently for him to drink, and Ralf picks up his weapon, pats Dusty continually with his free hand while walking backwards for twenty meters, and then cautiously continues normally, but with frequent rearward glances, all the way back to the bakkie.

So what do we make of the activities of Dusty. Firstly she has a perfect understanding of the wild animals. She knows what they are doing and thinking so she can respond correctly every time. She can watch a lion coming straight towards her and maintain complete self-control, self-discipline, and this is in the face of what causes extreme anxiety in all real ridgebacks. All of which explains why, with her 0.1. hips she is unsuitable genetic material as far as KUSA is concerned.

The way these Rhodesian Ridgebacks must behave in the KNP is not indicative of how all ridgies must conduct themselves in the bush. But it does highlight their remarkable versatility. In the bush they are tops. They will accomplish what is expected of them. Now would you say that they must be "laid back". I have a problem with that phrase because it conjures up images of care-free nonchalance: the opposite to my mind is the case: these dogs are on a knife edge almost every second of the day. The one bitch is laid back and she's been hit by spitting cobra three times. The result, she is blind in one eye. Please, would she pull herself together quickly because if she doesn't the other eye is going to go and that means a needle with some blue liquid.

One aspect of the Breed Standard that must hit any thinking person between the eyes is its tremendous attention to detail when covering character. Sure, it doesn't use that word, but all that is applicable is given under Behaviour/Temperament, the second item. We shall quote it in full, in other words no abridged version because the cost in printers ink will be the ultimate in stinginess. It says, "in full":- "Dignified, intelligent, aloof with strangers, but showing no aggression or shyness". Now the good news is that this says nothing wrong when we think of Dusty. Does it say enough?

Perhaps brevity works in favour of the Breed. The rest of the Breed Standard goes on and on about physical appearance. Really, how could you ever imagine that the lion and the rhino, just referred to, stopped on Dusty's command because the colour of her coat was right, the skull was the right length with the ears in the correct place, she had a stop, the nose was only, repeat only black (for those purists), the muzzle was ... Does one go on through the whole thing.

Again, more good news. For those people who want to use Ridgebacks in a more active role we say yes, they can do the job. The ridgie is unlimited in its versatility. We still have them available, registered, possibly for a limited period only, who knows, but they are there. It may take a bit of trial and error to come up with the perfect answer but we are prepared to persevere. In spite of efforts to make this remarkable dog an exclusive money making prize for the few we still think that Mr Everyman can have one that will suit his circumstances. Our ridgies can be a success in the center of Africa's biggest cities, they are so versatile. He can also, if given the opportunity, and also assuming that he is in fact a genuine (possibly unregistered but more importantly real) ridgeback, do what he was bred to do more than a hundred years ago. The character is still there.

BLOODSPORT

Ridgeback owners must beware the activities of dog-thieves who supply the underground dog-fighting fraternity with what they regard as suitable material. Susan Boonzaaier of the Citizen writes in her article "Dogs stolen for bloodsport" on 25 September 2001 that Sasha, a Staffordshire Terrier, was stolen from Lombardy East in Johannesburg.

A group of children was seen stealing the dog and were obliged to return her by observant neighbours. However, she was missing when her owners returned. The wounds she was carrying when returned after two months absence indicated duty in the illegal dog-fighting rings.

"Sasha's snout was damaged, she had wounds on her head, hind leg and paw. She had an infection in her eye and pieces of flesh missing from her lip, ear, and tail."

Mandy Callanach, spokesman for the Sandton SPCA, said underground bloodsport was rife in Alexandra. "Quite often the dogs are brought to us for treatment. If the dog has a microchip we can trace the owner."

Readers should note that the SPCA recommends against tattooing. A tattoo can be used to identify a dog, as can a microchip. But when it comes to finding the owner a tattoo is not very effective. Several organizations, and the NSPCA is one of them, seek the microchipping of all dogs and the maintenance of a national register. It would operate much the same way as the national motor vehicle register.

THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK'S RELATIONSHIP WITH LION



The writer holds the belief that the lion (male) is not really all that determined to kill our little ridgies. Let us first make it quite clear, however, that there is really something different (special?) going on between lion and Ridgeback. When they are young puppies, ie less than six month old, they evidence exceptionally strong awareness of the presence of lion. Again and again, whichever one is involved, be it male or female, these pups from a very tender age display definite fear/anxiety symptoms when in the presence of lion (even while still 100m to 200m distant). As they approach the pride anxiety becomes even more pro-

nounced ie if they hear a roar, or get a strong whiff of the powerful predators, these puppies can shake themselves out of their skins, such is the level of apprehension. Now this is with them sitting up front within the protective shield of the bakkie's (LDV) cab, with their human (guardian) right next to them.

It is wrong to describe their condition as being terrified; even frightened is negatively too strong, but there is no escaping the fact that these young scraps of dogs are experiencing an exceptionally heavy emotional surge, which causes them to tremble uncontrollably. All their concentration is directed towards where the ancestral enemy is hiding, and such is the concentration in that direction that they show no sign of a desire to run away: if they are in fact scared to death of that object then they manage to bring that fear under enough control to let them continue facing up to it. At the same time they show without doubt an exceptionally strong desire to maintain that enemy in front of them ie they will not only face up to the enemy at perilously close range but, should they be forced to make a tactical retreat you know that they will turn round as soon as possible and front that enemy once more.

While the RR is behaving in that fashion what is the lion doing? It is at this stage that your writer hypothecates that there is a big difference between the lion and the lioness. We've seen enough TV shots of the pride at the kill. If the males are feeding then we know that the kill is of recent origin; and all the rangers will allow the big males to get their fill before interfering in any manner whatsoever (ie if any

interference is called for). But it is not long before the scavengers move in and try and get their bit of the feast. Jackal and hyena congregate and attempt to snatch a chunk or two. You often see shots of a large male breaking away from the feast and chasing these annoying bystanders away. But does he really try to catch and kill them or does he just "get them out of his face". The writer believes that the latter is the case and we must realize that when that big fellow is getting his lion-share, pun intended, of the kill he is not the most pleasant being to be near; as mentioned earlier, everyone lets him get his fill before going anywhere near the scene.

As it is with the jackal/hyena so should it be with the Ridgeback, provided we are talking about like situations. In the Kruger National Park, in particular, there is no situation in which our favourite breed will be permitted to practice his baying techniques. To start off with there is usually only one of them, two at most, so there is no possibility whatsoever for them to advance successfully on lion. And even if he/they wanted to it is totally "verboden"

Contrary to the opinion of a vet in Germany there is no hunting of any animal with any dog (particularly not with Ridgebacks) in the KNP. It is just not allowed, and dogs in the KNP are very strictly controlled; they are available to a very limited level of employee, and they are only permitted to be taken on duty by Section Rangers. And there is in any event the national total prohibition of hunting with dogs. (We seem to mention this fact repetitively, ad nauseum).

So there is no reason for the lion to assume that the RR is of evil intent, in fact the little chapie doesn't even want to steal his food. Thus there is no threat to the lion whatsoever. But does the lioness see the position in the same light? It appears not. One can well understand that a lioness with cubs will become most aggressive should a dog look/bark at her and come too close. She is not at risk, her cubs are. We know that a Ridgeback can relatively easily capture a piglet from mummy and daddy warthog, so there is very good reason to understand the protective attitude of the mother lioness.



We had Jaco's Ridgeback Juba in the enclosed rear section of the Kingcab when out looking at lion and their kill (we stress that Juba was in an enclosed back section and not in his accustomed open rear deck). A very large pride of lion (say 25) has perfected the art of chasing giraffe up and down the tarred road 30km north of Malelane, just waiting for the ton-and-a-half long legged animals to slip whereupon the big males will grab it, hold it down, and bring its life to a speedy end. They'd been successful again and though the main carcass was at the side of the road the neck and head had originally sprawled across the tar. The kill was four days old and the lionesses had basically had their fill.

There were still two of them astride the carcass, and when we stopped 30m away Juba almost fell out of a window in his efforts to get the best view possible. He has tremendous respect for the big girls but his interest was overpowering. One of the lionesses raised her head, caught sight of him, narrowed her eyes, and if looking could kill he was already dead. You could not possibly misinterpret the sheer malice in her intent. There she was, one of earth's most ruthless and efficient killers, enjoying a lunch on the fruits of her labours, and there was that Ridgeback, not even a thing, watching her. I don't believe for one moment, had it been a hyena instead of little Juba, that she would have given it a second glance. And a hyena is a dangerous, powerful, animal that with a bit of luck can mortally wound her. (Wars between lion and hyena to the North of Africa are legendary, and lion suffer significant losses).

There is no justification whatever for her aggressive and obviously murderous intent; he was only looking and from a distance which put him well out of direct involvement. No, she had a death wish for him.

Ah well, I'm not the first person to suggest that the female of the species is more dangerous than the male. But I do think that lioness have a hate campaign going on for our little dogs and that they are quite prepared to carry out their own personal extermination programme.