

“OLIVER” OF THE BUSHVELD

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Stand back Jock and look out Lassie, there's a new HERO in the Bushveld - it is “OLIVER” of the Bushveld.....

Some 3 & half years ago, I received an alarming telephone call from a nearby nature conservancy's ranger: - “there is a pack of wild dogs wondering through your farm.”

Having just bought my first 20 Heifers to begin my Nguni Stud, I was horrified at the news and the thought of what was to come. I knew the history of the area and the specific farm with regards to the natural predators, especially leopard. In my discussion with the ranger he mentioned their involvement with the De Wildt's Cheetahs Projects in the nature conservancy opposite the road from the farm, and he went on to hint about this “some or other Magic dog” that keeps predators away from livestock.

So I went and investigated the websites for information on the Anatolian Shepherd Dogs.

I came across the Livestock Guarding Dog Project, part of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's(EWT) conflict mitigation Program managed by Deon Cilliers. I called Deon and he went on to explain to me how this project works and how it is funded and more impressively their involvement in placing and caring for the Dog on your farm. After hearing how the entire process works, I didn't hesitate to put in my application to get one of the Anatolian Shepherd Dogs and hopefully I would be approved. Not long after submitting my documents I received a call saying: The EWT have a dog for me!!

I was delighted and looked forward to receiving my puppy when he would be about 8 weeks old. I had , as part of the conditions, to secure about a 200m² area, where “Oliver” as we called him - would be left with 3 one- month old calves from the Nguni herd for a couple of weeks, so that he would adopt these calves as his family. I obviously allowed the mothers of the calves in the enclosure in the late afternoon and for the entire evening, and had to feed them accordingly, and as mentioned, this allowed the dog to become part of the family and herd. The dog has no human interaction, bar that from his handler, who feeds him and ensures all is well.



I think it is very important to note here that farmers, as I did, are expected to sign an agreement and a code of ethic - that is simply to protect our natural predators from bullets and other cruel measures of livestock protection. In return for this you receive this amazing protection for your livestock absolutely free; you receive free food and veterinary care for your dog for a full year, including a monthly visit from Deon and his team, to check on his/her progress as a guarding dog.

At roughly 4 months of age, a fully trained “Oliver” was already walking freely with his newly adopted family - a herd of about 35 Nguni's. As a dog lover, you always seem to wonder if the dog gets lonely? I can today assure you he doesn't as he thinks he is a cow and forms part of the herd in its entirety. He is the protector and I will vouch for this.

Allow me to share some of Oliver's experiences and you will see the value of Anatolian Shepherd Dog's. From the very moment Oliver arrived, we knew there was something special about him and I think Deon and the EWT will confirm this, having recently had a documentary made on the Anatolians and Oliver in his 'Bushveld' home.

One late afternoon, just after Oliver was set free to protect his herd, at about 6 months old we were taking our usual Saturday late afternoon game drive and in the furthest point to the farm we found 3 Nguni cows and calves wondering up and down the game fence. We couldn't quite understand this as our herd is accustomed to being kraaled every evening and down the game fence. When we got off to investigate we soon saw what was going on - I found Oliver running up and down the fence, but on the neighbours side. He couldn't get back onto our farm because of the closeness of the wire strands, as he had probably slipped under the fence where there was a pigs furrow and couldn't find it again to come back. So now it was time for human intervention and I simply showed him where to come through a different furrow. And now you can guess which 3 cows with calves were running up and down the fence waiting for Oliver - the 3 whom he had adopted as his family!!!!