

“Cheetah Outreach’s Livestock Guarding Program - Anatolian Shepherds in South Africa”

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The Anatolian Shepherd is a guard dog of ancient lineage. The breed evolved living with the nomadic people of Turkey and Asia Minor. Used by these nomads to guard their livestock, the dogs worked independently to defend their flocks against predators - wolves and bears. Additionally the dogs were expected to benignly tolerate humans. Through tough selective breeding, a magnificent livestock guarding dog emerged.

In Africa one of the greatest threats to the wild cheetah is human-wildlife conflict. Over 90 percent of cheetahs live outside protected management areas, meaning that they live alongside human communities. Most of these are commercial and communal farming communities raising cows, sheep, and goats.

To the communal farmers, many of whom are poor, the loss of even a single animal can be devastating. Cheetahs and other predators are looked upon by farmers, not as a valuable component of a thriving ecosystem, but as a threat to their livelihoods. To that end – the cheetah is poisoned, trapped, maimed by snares and shot on sight.

As a result of the success of Cheetah Conservation Fund's livestock guarding dog programme in Namibia, a trial programme was launched by De Wildt's Wild Cheetah Management Project (WCMP) and Cheetah Outreach in 2005 to introduce the Anatolian shepherd to facilitate farmers in South Africa. On farms now using Cheetah Outreach program Anatolian Shepherds, livestock losses to wild predators have been reduced by 95 to 100%. There is now a waiting list for pups!

Although mostly used to protect sheep and goats, some of the Cheetah Outreach dogs have more recently been deployed to successfully guard cattle, while others are now protecting wild game.

This presentation discusses the Cheetah Outreach Anatolian Shepherd program, which has over the past 11 years, proven to be cost effective and successful, and is rapidly expanding in South Africa.

This is truly an innovative program promoting and enhancing wild cheetah conservation alongside livestock farming success in rural South Africa.