Comprehensive Behavioural Report for Trojan

Introduction

Dear Julia,

Thank you for reaching out and sharing details about your beloved Trojan. It's clear you care deeply about him and want to ensure he has the best possible life while addressing his behavioural challenges. Owning a Rhodesian Ridgeback, especially one with strong instincts, comes with unique joys and difficulties. In this report, we'll explore Trojan's behaviour, background, environment, and health before offering a tailored strategy to help you manage and improve his current issues—particularly his tendency to attack livestock.

Let's take a deep dive into understanding Trojan and creating a plan to support both him and you.

Trojan's Profile

Breed: Rhodesian Ridgeback

Age: 3-5 years

Sex: Male (Not Neutered)

Weight: 55 kg

Health Status: Very good health

Source: Unauthorised breeder

Living Arrangement: Outdoor kennel

Household Environment: Detached property in an urban, noisy setting with a patio area.

Exercise Routine: 20 minutes of walking per day, mostly on a leash.

Dietary Habits: Dry kibble and canned food, fed three times a day but at irregular times. He is sometimes fed from the table, as a distraction, or as a reward.

Behaviour with Other Dogs: Mostly ignores them.

Response to Commands: Mostly obeys commands.

Training Equipment Used: Harness.

General Canine Behaviour and Instincts

To better understand Trojan's behaviours, it's useful to look at canine instincts. Dogs, particularly breeds like the Rhodesian Ridgeback, have deeply embedded drives that influence their reactions to the world. Originally bred for hunting and protection in Africa, Ridgebacks are known for their intelligence, independence, and strong prey drive.

Even though modern dogs live in homes rather than the wild, their instincts haven't disappeared. This is why a Ridgeback like Trojan may display predatory behaviours, especially towards fast-moving animals like sheep and cattle. His reactions are not out of malice but rather a deeply ingrained behaviour pattern.

Breed-Specific Analysis: The Rhodesian Ridgeback

Rhodesian Ridgebacks were originally developed in Southern Africa to track and hold lions at bay until hunters arrived. They are powerful, intelligent, and independent. As a result, they often require a confident and structured approach to training.

Key Characteristics of the Breed

- Strong prey drive – This explains Trojan's tendency to chase and attack livestock.
- Highly intelligent but independent – They may not always listen unless training is consistent.
- Extremely loyal to their owners – This bond can be harnessed positively in training.
- Protective instincts – They are often wary of strangers but loyal to their families.
- High energy levels – Though Trojan only gets 20 minutes of walking per day, his breed typically requires more.

Case Summary: Trojan's Environment & Routine

Trojan lives in an outdoor kennel at a detached property in a busy, urban environment. His daily exercise consists of 20 minutes of walking, mostly on a leash, and he is exposed to livestock while out walking on open ground.

His feeding schedule is inconsistent, and he eats both dry kibble and canned food. He is sometimes fed from the table, as a distraction, or as a reward. These feeding habits could contribute to a lack of structure in his daily routine.

When interacting with other dogs, Trojan mostly ignores them. His response to commands is generally good, but his tendency to attack livestock remains a major issue.

Behavioural Concerns

Issue: Aggression Towards Livestock

Trojan has shown a tendency to attack sheep and cattle while out walking in open areas. The behaviour has "worsened a little" over time and is always aggressive.

Owner's Current Intervention: Shouting and hitting with a leather strap.

Outcome of Intervention: No change.

Root Cause Analysis

Several factors are contributing to Trojan's aggressive behaviour towards livestock:

1. High Prey Drive – Ridgebacks have a strong instinct to chase and catch moving prey.
2. Inconsistent Routine & Lack of Mental Stimulation – Irregular feeding times and limited exercise can cause frustration.
3. Ineffective Discipline Methods – Shouting and physical punishment can increase anxiety and stress.

Solution Strategy

Addressing Trojan's livestock aggression requires a structured plan focusing on training, management, and positive reinforcement.

Step 1: Increase Exercise & Mental Stimulation

- Minimum 1 hour of structured exercise daily, including longer walks, running, and problem-solving games.

Step 2: Training for Livestock Encounters

1. Use a long line for controlled exposure.
2. Reward calm behaviour with treats.
3. Teach 'leave it' and 'watch me' commands.
4. Consider muzzle training for safety.

Step 3: Addressing Household Structure

- Regular feeding times and stopping table feeding to improve discipline.

Step 4: Positive Reinforcement & Alternative Corrections

- Replace shouting with calm, firm commands and reward-based corrections.

Recommended Products

- Kong Extreme – Keeps him busy and provides mental stimulation.
- Outward Hound Puzzle Toys – Encourages problem-solving.

- Adaptil Diffuser – Can help with stress reduction.
- Long Line Training Leash – Allows more control when training recall and redirection.

Conclusion

Julia, you are clearly committed to Trojan, and with structured training and consistency, his aggression towards livestock can be significantly reduced. The key is redirecting his natural instincts, increasing structured exercise, and replacing outdated discipline methods with effective training techniques.

It won't be an overnight fix, but with patience and a structured plan, Trojan can learn to coexist peacefully with livestock.

Let me know how you get on, and feel free to reach out for ongoing support!

Best wishes,
Roxy Delacruz – Head Canine Behaviourist

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