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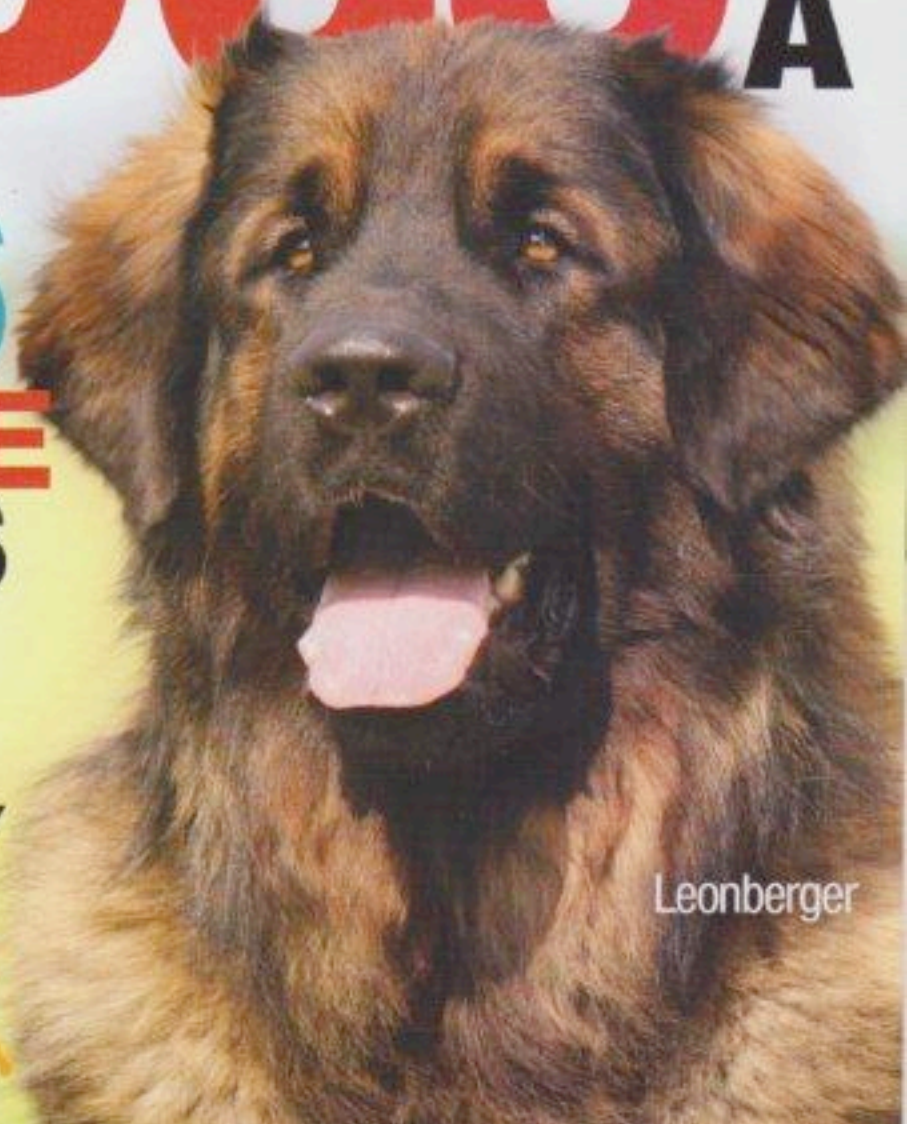
The Working
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WINERY DOGS:

A BREED APART



COURTESY OF ROXANNE WOLF

Standard Poodles Jazz and Levi work together to patrol the vineyards at Eagle Eye Winery.

sheep, cow, or human,” Shannon says. If a dog, coyote, or deer comes anywhere near the sheep, the dogs chase it down; with luck, the predator escapes the powerful Maremmas. Shannon visits them and feeds them every night. Since he got the Maremmas, he’s lost only one lamb to coyotes; before that he lost several every year. Shannon has even named a 250-acre vineyard and wine brand after the dogs: Vigilance.

Shannon moves his sheep to different pastures in Lake County during the year. They spend the winter in his vineyards, but have to be moved to areas without vines after April or they would eat the grape leaves; the grapes themselves are too acidic for their tastes.

In these more remote pastures of rural Lake County, there’s another problem: bears. Shannon was losing half a dozen lambs each year to the bruises. Maremmas are understandably afraid of bears, so he got an Anatolian Shepherd Dog named Jasmine. The breed is used to

dealing with bears in its homeland, Turkey.

Jasmine is still a puppy — though a big one — and will grow to 130 pounds or more. Shannon purchased the dog from a rancher who was losing 30 to 40 lambs a year to bears. That number has dropped to only a few since he got his Anatolians.

Keeping pests out of the vineyard

Some dogs work more directly in the vineyards. At Eagle Eye Winery in rural Napa County, two Standard Poodles, Jazz and Levi, keep the vineyard critter free. The friendly dogs also greet visitors.

Owner Roxanne Wolf says Jazz, the 9-year-old female, has killed a wild turkey — they love ripe grapes — and Levi, the 2½-year-old male, is the gopher king, keeping the pests out.

The dogs smash stereotypes of Poodles as effete: They chase rabbits, birds, foxes — anything they know doesn’t



The vineyard guardians take a break from their duties for a sip of water.

belong in the vineyard. "One time, a deer sneaked into our fenced vineyard and each dog chose a row on either side of it, working in tandem, and chased it all the way up to the front of the property and over the fence," Wolf says.

To show their gratitude to their watchdogs, the winery owners actively support Cause for the Paws, an annual fundraiser for the Humane Society of Napa County, where pet lovers are wined and dined, and bid on auction items.

Helping dogs out

Eagle Eye Winery is only one of many wineries that welcome canine visitors, support dog causes, and are active in rescue. "Dog-friendly" is a category you can select when you're trying to decide which wineries to visit at the Napa Valley Vintners Association's website (www.napavintners.com). Some wineries go even further.

Mutt Lynch Winery in Healdsburg is owned by wine-makers Chris and Brenda Lynch. "We are the most dog-friendly winery in Sonoma County, if not beyond," Chris Lynch says.

His current dog is the antithesis of a working winery dog, however. Patch is a rescued Greyhound, and his only winery job is to greet visitors.

The winery's overall marketing efforts are dog-themed, and dogs grace the wine labels.

The Lynches support local animal rescue organizations across the country. One benefactor is a national organization called AdoptaPet.com, North America's

Finding the vineyards' tiniest pests

Wine grapes are the targets of many insect pests, and one of the worst is the vine mealybug. Vineyard owners and government officials use artificially synthesized pheromones to bait traps for the bugs, mostly to count them. The traps only capture the male bugs, however, and it's the nonflying females that do the damage. Dogs can find them by smelling the pheromones they excrete to attract the males.

Caroline Upton, whose family owns Three Palms Vineyard in Calistoga in northern Napa Valley, uses her black Labrador Retriever,

Cyrus, to find the vine mealybug. "The dogs are phenomenal at it," Upton says. "I've seen Cyrus cross 13 rows of grapevines to find one bug on one vine."

Upton and her business partner, Shay Cook, run Insect Detection Dogs, which takes dogs to vineyards to sniff out pests. The business grew out of their work as search-and-rescue volunteers. "We knew that dogs could identify pheromones, and this seemed a perfect task for them," Upton says.

They talked to researchers at the University of California at Davis and Berkeley to learn more, then they hatched a plan.

Upton and Cook wanted to use natural pheromones rather than artificial ones, so Cook, a certified manager of animal resources and laboratory animal technologist, raised the bugs in careful isolation so they couldn't escape and damage vineyards. Cook then trained Cyrus to find the female insects by smell. It's an ideal pursuit for Cyrus, who had to leave search and rescue because he was allergic to some weeds that he would encounter in the field. Cook has also trained her German Shepherd Dog, Rixi, to sniff out bark beetles, another destructive vineyard pest.

largest pet adoption web service. The Lynches give an annual donation, \$10,000 this year.

They also channel their wine and time to support local animal rescue organizations across the country. "This year, we have already supported more than 75 shelters with donations of wine, time, and contributions," Lynch says. 🐾

Paul Franson is a freelance writer based in Napa Valley. He writes about wine, food, travel, and life in wine country. He lives in Napa with a Russian Blue cat who thinks she's a dog.