

THE MAREMMANO ABRUZZESE SHEEPDOG CHARACTER

Shaped by thousands of years of being accustomed to a solitary life in harsh conditions, albeit in a fairly civilised world, the Maremmano Abbruzzese Sheepdog has a very special character, in which the dominant trait is undoubtedly even-temperedness.

Though highly efficient as working dogs to guard sheep and livestock in general, also in comparison to other European and Asian breeds (see the studies by Ray and Lorna Coppinger), they have an inherent ability to control this guardian attitude and are not aggressive towards humans. Numerous tests (on more than 90 specimens) carried out by Mario Massucci in the Abruzzo and Molise regions have shown that, in the shepherd's presence and at his command, these dogs are completely inoffensive towards strangers. In the shepherd's absence, they know what to do: they place themselves between the flock and the intruders and do not attack, provided the intruders do not exceed a safety limit of a few tens of metres from the dogs themselves.

This makes them particularly suitable for resuming their original role as guardian dogs in areas where, after more than a century, wolves have reappeared, often in places not far from towns and villages where, due to tourism, the population increases exactly during the mountain pasturing period.

Given the origins, and despite this even-tempered and adaptable nature, the Maremmano Abbruzzese Sheepdog is clearly not the right dog for everyone. These dogs need plenty of outdoor space and a relationship based more on respect than subordination. That said, they do not have too much trouble adapting to the modern-day social context either.

Trained firmly, but with affection, our white sheepdog can easily switch from the role of incorruptible, rustic herd guardian to that of loyal companion with a truly "compact footprint". He will maintain his aptitude for guarding (which is heightened as night falls) to defend his master's family, home and possessions.

A well trained Maremmano Abbruzzese Sheepdog will never expect to spend every minute of the day with his master who, in addition to a certain empathy, must have the calm authority of a leader; he can manage when his master has to be away and can easily withstand a life outdoors in the harshest of weather conditions, but will also appreciate

some proper attention, being stroked, going for a walk in the countryside, a bit of time together in companionable silence.

This dog of ours is not very demanding, nor is he particularly obedient, but he will give you something special, a relationship between equals, a loyalty that will gradually be manifested more discreetly as he grows older.

With his innate sense of proportion, reflected in his very conformation ("the heavy mesomorph": nothing too big, nothing too small, agile when necessary, but never highly-strung), with that even-tempered character forged in a complex social system, that "pack", made up of intraspecific and interspecific interactions, with man at the top, the Maremmano Abbruzzese Sheepdog is the ideal link between our life, often chaotic rather than full, and the age-old emotions that only nature and the rural environment can transmit.

Owning a Maremmano Abbruzzese Sheepdog means appreciating his unobtrusive strength and courage, knowing how to dedicate him the right amount of time, especially in terms of quality, or he will soon sense your indifference and lack of appreciation for the job he does for you (even if only in his imagination).

He must be socialised with people and animals at a very early age, taught to walk properly on a leash in crowded places, go with you on car journeys because, although this is not a basic life skill for him, for us it means getting the most out of our life together. Your Maremmano will definitely feel more at ease on a walk with you in the countryside, cooling down in the shade of a tree and feeling the ground beneath him, sitting with you on a ridge to scan the horizon.

And you will love the way he greets you every time you come home, demonstrating his happiness exactly as he would upon returning to his flock.