

## **A New Kind of Guard posture—a position of the body**

1 The coyote silently sneaks around the western sheep farm. He spots a delicious dinner waiting for him beyond the fence. No guard dogs have barked a warning. He slowly creeps a little closer and just as he is about to jump across the fence, a strange noise fills the air. It sounds like a creaky door. Suddenly, something large hits the fence. The coyote retreats into the night, unsure of what he saw and heard.

2 The coyote's surprise is a new guard making its home in the west. This large, furry animal looks out of place protecting sheep, chickens, and cattle. The new animal keeping a close eye on the herds is the llama, a four-footed animal related to camels.

3 The llama was first used to help humans do chores more than 5,000 years ago in South America. When the Spanish brought horses and other animals to the area, llamas almost died out. They could only be found in the highest mountains. However, in recent years, there is a growing interest in the animals. One reason is their use as guards on ranches.

4 For some reason, llamas show a fierce reaction to wolves and coyotes. When a llama spots one of these animals stalking a herd, it

immediately changes its posture to let others know that danger is near. Next, it lets out a special and unusual cry of alarm. It sounds like a rusty hinge on an old door. Finally, the llama runs toward the hunter, trying to kick it away. Bravely, the llama places itself between the herd he is protecting and the threat. Nothing seems to frighten them. In fact, Dan Goodyear, the owner of a llama farm in Pennsylvania, says that, "When their mind is set, they seem to be fearless. The llama is a natural guard."

5 Farmers are thrilled with their new guard llamas. They are very helpful in scaring away wild animals. Farmers are not losing as many animals as they once did. According to Sheila Fugina, president of Llama Association of North America, or LANA, these animals want to work. "Llamas like to have a job," she says. 6 In addition, llamas are also valuable for their fur, which can be used for spinning. In this way they are like the sheep they protect. Other people use llamas as pack animals to carry things. For others, these large, fluffy animals become family pets.

7 Llama farms are popping up all over the United States. There are

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several hundred farms across the country. LANA was founded in 1981 to help rescue llamas from places where they are not wanted. These animals are then placed in good homes such as western ranches. These farmers and ranchers value their new watchdogs—or watch llamas.

