

Background

Stock dogs have been long used on farms and ranches since the domestication of livestock. For many livestock operations, stock dogs are a necessity for smooth handling of their cattle, especially since help on two feet has been getting harder and harder to find. There are about sixty recognized breed of herding dogs worldwide, with Australian Shepherd, Kelpie, Blue Heeler and the Border Collie being most popular in the Western ranching industry. For the sake of this article however, we will discuss the most popular breed amongst Peace Country farmers, the Border Collie pup.

Border Collies are one of the oldest breeds of stock dog in the world, bred for their herding ability and agile, responsive personality. They are known to have superior stock sense, which allows them to read temperament and anticipate movement, changing their attitude and approach depending on the class of livestock, its age, and demeanor. By being able to change their approach based on these factors, cattle can be managed and moved with minimal stress on both the handler and the livestock. Border collies were used throughout history as aids to shepherds in the border country between England and Scotland, hence where the name originated. Back then, shepherds used the Collie's natural herding instincts to their benefit, just as many producers today rely on their Collie's natural abilities and a good stop to run an efficient operation. When you consider the cost of labour in the agriculture industry today, and the slim profit margins, a well-trained stock dog is worth the investment.

Tips on Getting a Border Collie

The best way to get a Border Collie to not only be a great companion but fit your livestock operation, is to buy from a good trainer or breeder. No reputable breeder would sell purebred Collies through a pet store, so try to purchase started pups or trained dogs directly from a breeder in the area. It is best to check out the stock dog in person and get a feel for the breeder/trainer and the aggressiveness of the dog. Since Border Collies have been bred for their herding abilities, many have natural instincts at herding either sheep or cattle. Not all stock dogs are trained for both, so be sure to inform the breeder or potential trainer what type of herding dog your operation is needing. Remember, it takes a lot of time and attention to train a working dog, so it is suggested that you do not just purchase a started pup unless you have time on your hands to continue with the training yourself at home. Producers with experience in purchasing and using working Border Collies, such as Glen Leitch of Brownvale, have commented, "The price of a fully trained dog is essentially the price of a pup plus dog food and the extra money is a worthwhile investment."



EVENTS

Keep an Eye Out For:

Lentz Field Day:

September
Weevil site and triticale
for swath grazing with
guest speaker from Powerflex speaking on portable fencing.

POSTPONED:

Agriculture tour to Australia moved to November 2014

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@ (780) 835-6799

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Prices...What to Expect?

The first few weeks after a pup is born are essential to the development of a good stock dog. Often a farmer will purchase a started pup, in the \$500 range and continue with the training at home. The price increases depending on how much time was invested as well as the dog's genetic and herding potential, similar to buying a started saddle horse. Started pups should show a genuine interest in working livestock. A fully trained dog that understands commands can rarely be found for less than \$2000 and the price can reach several thousand dollars depending on ability. This may seem like a large amount of money, but if you consider the amount of time a smart stock dog will save you when working your cattle or sheep, their potential life span, and the overall companionship they will provide to your family, the investment makes a lot of sense.

Further Information

If you already own a working dog and want to form a better partnership when working livestock, there will be a clinic for owners on September 21st & 22nd in Valleyview with instructor Corey Perry. Corey recently placed 6th at the stock dog trials at the Calgary Stampede and has put on clinics in Brazil over the past two years. This would be a great event to attend if you are wanting more knowledge or experience handling your stock dog or are looking to gain trainer contacts in the Peace Country. For more information or to sign up, contact Judy Smith at 780-524-2790. These clinics are a great place to meet dog trainers across the region and learn what style of training would best fit your operation.

The following are a few contacts that will be helping to put on clinics or trials in the near future. These are also excellent people to talk to if you're interested in getting a stock dog trained or have any questions.

Judy Smith
Valleyview
780-524-2790

Eric Verstappen
High Prairie
780-536-6740

Carol Nelson
Pink Mountain
250-772-5315

Ken Price
Dawson Creek
250-219-3157

George Morrison
Debolt
780-957-2594

For more information on the breeders or on trials in the Peace Region go to www.albertastockdog.com



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[http://
peacecountrybeef.ca](http://peacecountrybeef.ca)

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