

*There is no good flock without a good shepherd
and no good shepherd without a good dog.*

International Sheep Dog Society



Selecting a Border Collie

It is impossible to assess the future working ability of a six or eight week old pup by examining the puppy. The best the purchaser can determine by examining the puppy is that it is healthy, well socialized, and colored and marked in a fashion that is pleasing to the future owner.

The potential ability of the pup can best be judged by assessing the ability of its parents, siblings, and, to a lesser degree, the other dogs that represent the pup's ancestors. It is important to deal with a responsible breeder who understands working dogs and their bloodlines. Check with several breeders before selecting your pup. Listen to them and talk about the breeding of their dogs and watch their dogs work.

Sheepdog trials were developed to test the ability of stock dogs and remain an excellent way to compare different bloodlines. Notice not only how nicely a dog runs, but how it handles difficult situations and livestock. The breeders of good working dogs are proud of their dogs' abilities and will gladly spend time talking about their breeding program and demonstrating their dogs. Do not settle for a bitch/dog from working lines that does not work. The working instinct and the other traits that make the border collie special can be seriously diluted in only a few generations of careless breeding. Make sure that the breeder is the sort of person who can offer the type of support and guidance you will need as the pup matures and you have questions about training and working the dog. Remember that the breeder of good working Border Collies is going to be interested in seeing the pup and its owner succeed in whatever endeavor they attempt. The success of the pups, not their sale, is how the breeder will measure the success of their breeding program.

Join The North East Border Collie Association so that you can....

- Promote the Working Border Collie.
- Receive the NEBCA Newsletter.
- Use the lending library of books and videos.
- Receive a list of Border Collie events.
- Compete in NEBCA sponsored trials.
- Meet people who share your interests in sheep.
- Meet the GREAT Border Collie people and dogs.

The North East Border Collie Association was formed to promote the breeding and training of the Border Collie as a working dog. The Association is dedicated to preserving the Border Collie as a stock dog for any livestock or poultry.

Association activities include dog trials and clinics on training, handling and judging. The NEBCA lending library is unparalleled. It contains over 60 books, videos and audiotapes on training, health, dog stories and dog lore and is available only to members. Membership goes from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 and includes a subscription to the NEBCA newsletter. Memberships received after Oct. 1 will include the following year. Membership dues are \$25 for individuals and \$30 for Farm/Families.

To join, send name, address, phone, email and a check made out to NEBCA to:

NEBCA
C/O Martha Walke
PO Box 66
So. Strafford, VT 05070
Email: walkem@sover.net



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About the Border Collie

The Border Collie breed was developed by shepherds in Britain who were attempting to find the perfect sheepdog. Starting with the best dogs then available, they began selecting breeding stock that had the qualities they wanted. The dog had to have natural ability to work but be biddable and easily trained. It had to be brave enough to stop a charging steer but gentle enough to herd lambs. It also had to be fast enough to catch and turn a running sheep and have the stamina to cover a hundred miles a day on the hill farms of Britain in summer and in winter. The shepherds didn't particularly care how this perfect dog looked.

The modern Border Collie is the product of this selective breeding program. These dogs are intelligent, obedient, eager to please, easily trained, and have a strong natural instinct to herd. There remains, however, no standard of appearance for the breed. Border collies vary in color from black, or black and white, black and white and tan, to red, red merle and blue merle. Dogs vary in size from less than thirty pounds to more than sixty with an average weight of about forty pounds. A Border Collie's coat may be long and heavy or short and smooth or anything in between. The breeders of working collies today, as a hundred years ago, still examine each dog for its working ability and style, intelligence, temperament and physical stamina - knowing a good Border Collie by its work and not by its appearance.



Training Border Collies are used to herd all types of livestock and poultry. The Border Collie is instinctively a “header” - its instinct tells the dog to gather and hold livestock, “heading off” any animal that attempts to leave the group. Most well bred Border Collies will demonstrate this instinctive desire to work at anywhere from eight weeks to one year of age.

The dog trainer works with this natural tendency of the dogs, encouraging it to gather stock into a group and keep them together while fetching them to the trainer. This is the point at which the dogs' natural ability to “balance” on sheep is revealed. The dog instinctively positions itself in such a way that the stock move in a straight line to the handler. This is also when the dog is taught the commands for stopping (down), moving toward the stock (walk up), slowing down (steady or take time), moving clockwise around the stock (go bye or come bye) and counterclockwise (way to me) and finally stop working (that'll do). When these lessons have been learned the youngster is taught to drive the stock away from the handler instead of fetching them. The distance between the dog and the handler is continually increased until the dog can work out of sight of its handler who may be a half mile or more away.

Most dogs are introduced to whistle commands at some point in their training. The sound of the whistle carries farther than the voice and is easier for the dog to understand at a distance. A dog that has progressed this far in training has become a very useful farm laborer capable of saving its owner an enormous amount of work.

Trialing A sheepdog trial is a test of the Border Collie and its training. A trial is designed to test all of the skills that a good farm or ranch dog needs to perform its daily work. To reach the level of training and skill required to successfully compete in a trial takes years of work on the part of both the dog and handler. Not only must the partners understand each other perfectly, but they must also out-guess and out-think unfamiliar sheep - moving them through an obstacle course with points lost for any error. This is the biggest departure from the dog's daily job of bringing the cows home to be milked or driving a flock of sheep to fresh pasture.

At most trials a judge watches each dog's performance and deducts points for any deviation from the ideal of the perfect run. Other trials are judged on a point system with the dog earning a specific number of points for each sheep put through each obstacle. Gripping or biting the sheep by a dog usually results in a disqualification of the dog. The dog should take the sheep through the course in a steady and efficient way, causing the sheep a minimum amount of anxiety.

While the rules may vary from trial to trial, most contain the following elements:

Each trial is set to a standard time for competitors.

Outrun - The handler and dog take their positions at the post. The dog is sent to either the left or the right to run the length of the field to where the sheep are being held. The dog must stay on the side of the field it was sent from until it is behind the sheep. The dog should run wide enough not to disturb the sheep but should not waste time by going too wide. During the outrun each command from the handler will cost points.

Lift - This is the end of the outrun when the dog first makes contact with the sheep. The dog should approach the sheep in a calm and cautious manner without frightening the sheep so that they start moving directly toward the handler.

Fetch - The fetch should be straight from wherever the sheep are when the dog makes its lift to the handler. The sheep should move at a steady pace. The fetch ends when the sheep are around or behind the handler.

Drive - The dog is required to drive the sheep away from the handler in a straight line through a pair of gates on one side of the field, then straight across the field to a second pair of gates. From the second gates the sheep are brought to the pen.



Pen - At the end of the drive the handler may leave the post and go to the pen. The handler holds one end of a 6' rope tied to the gate and must confine his movements to the limit fixed by the rope. All of the sheep must be put in the pen and the gate closed. The handler may not touch any sheep with his hands, crook or gate.

Shed - After completing the pen the handler shall proceed from the pen to the shedding area leaving the dog to bring the sheep from the pen. One sheep shall be separated from the others and driven away from the group by the dog to the judge's satisfaction.