

ACTIVITIES FOR YOU AND YOUR BORDER COLLIE



ACTIVITIES

Border Collies are bred for work that is both mentally and physically strenuous. They are mentally keen and have a very high energy level. It is therefore essential that they have a job or they will invent one. Border Collies enjoy doing almost everything, but several specific activities can be especially rewarding for you and your dog. Skills are fun to learn, and competition on many levels is available through the American Kennel Club and several other organizations. The AKC has a well-organized program of trials and tests. Titles you and your dog earn become part of his permanent record. Children are eligible for special awards under the Junior Showmanship program. Spayed and neutered dogs are welcome in all activities except Conformation.

The AKC Canine Good Citizen program is a worthy and attainable goal for almost every dog and handler. This program involves testing skills that make a good companion and neighbor. Walking calmly on a leash, accepting attention from a casual passerby, and meeting other dogs without undue excitement are part of this activity. Many clubs and community training programs emphasize this training in good manners as an excellent foundation for more formal training.



HERDING

The Border Collie was bred to herd. It is a special thrill to watch your dog instinctively know what to do with livestock. This natural ability arises from the instinct of the wild dog to hunt in a pack for food. Border Collies must not be left unsupervised

with livestock, even as puppies. Bad habits can be learned very quickly and it is in everyone's best interests for the dog to learn correct behavior from the beginning. Introducing a dog to stock should be done by someone experienced in both herding and Border Collies. It must be done in a way that builds the dog's self-confidence and control, and prevents bad habits such as chasing and gripping. There are an increasing number of people interested in herding throughout the country. Herding clinics are offered by stock dog associations and a variety of dog clubs.

The AKC and several other herding organizations sponsor trials that test the various levels of the dog's herding ability. The Herding Instinct Test is designed to show whether the dog has any interest in working livestock. It does not test actual ability. Although differing in design, herding trials are designed to test the dog's ability to assist the farmer in his daily work. Most have three levels of complexity. In the most advanced level, the dog must go out and gather the sheep to the handler, drive them away from the handler, herd them into a pen, and split one or several off from the flock. Depending upon the herding organization, herding titles may be awarded.

OBEDIENCE

This sport was designed to demonstrate the trainability of the dog. There are three basic levels, Novice, Open, and Utility. The exercises performed increase in difficulty through the classes. Border Collies have excelled in Obedience. Border Collies have held the record for most points scored annually several times at the top level, the AKC Obedience Trial Championship.

The Novice class consists of heeling, a recall, and stays in place. It demonstrates the dog's ability to stay with the handler in precise position both on and off leash, to come when called, and to stay until released. The Open class involves retrieving and jumping, as well as dropping to the ground on

command in the middle of the recall, and then returning to the handler when called. The Open stays are done with the handler out of sight, and last three minutes for the sit and five minutes for the down. The Utility class involves finding an article with the handler's scent from among other scented articles, as well as more complicated jumping exercises as directed by the handler. Titles are awarded for qualifying scores rather than for winning.

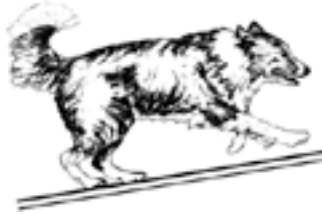
Obedience training is available through clubs, park districts, and private trainers. Be sure that the trainer has had experience with Border Collies and observe the classes that you want to take. There are many styles and methods of training. You need to be comfortable with a trainer's philosophy. It also helps to discuss the trainer's basic approach to instruction for both dog and handler. Remember that Border Collies are generally both intelligent and very sensitive. They do not respond well to harsh corrections.



AGILITY

An Agility course is a series of jumps, tunnels, and other obstacles which the dog must negotiate in a specific order. This pattern changes with every course. Currently there are four organizations that award titles. As in Obedience, titles are awarded for qualifying scores rather than for winning a class. Agility seems to have been invented for Border Collies. They enjoy the level of activity and the variety of new courses. You will be challenged by the speed and inventiveness of your dog. There are Agility clubs and classes throughout the country, and the sport is growing in popularity. To participate successfully in Agility, your dog needs to be sound

both physically and mentally. The sport demands repeated jumping, quick changes of direction, and skill in climbing over and through obstacles. Your Border Collie needs basic obedience training, since all courses are run off lead, with the handler at varying distances from the dog. Although it helps if the handler is somewhat athletic, there are many successful handlers who have trained their dogs to work far enough away from them that keeping up with the dog is not necessary.



CONFORMATION

Conformation (or breed ring) showing is what is generally considered to be a Dog Show. Dogs compete against other dogs of the same breed and sex. The purpose of the competition is to evaluate how closely the physical conformation of the dog comes to the ideal of the breed standard. The breed standard for each breed is based on those physical attributes necessary for the dog to do what he was bred to do. Dogs in competition may not be spayed or neutered.

Males and females are shown separately. Championship points are based upon the number of dogs shown and are awarded to each sex. Once a Champion, the dog is shown in a Specials class, and no longer competes for points against dogs that have not become Champions. The winners of the points competition compete against the Specials for Best of Breed.

TRACKING

In this activity the dog follows the scent of the tracklayer to find an article he has dropped. It is a wonderful outlet for dogs to use their natural ability

to follow scent. If you enjoy working as a partner with your dog, and find a day in the field pleasurable, tracking may be for you.

As in many AKC activities, there are three levels of competition. At the Tracking Dog level, tracks are about a quarter mile long and thirty minutes old. In order to enter a test at this level the dog must be certified on a test track by a judge. For Tracking Dog Excellent, tracks increase in length to about half a mile over more varied terrain and are three to five hours old. For Variable Surface Tracking, the tracks are laid in urban areas, and the dog tracks over pavement and other surfaces without vegetation. Tracks at this level are at least three hours old. A single successful track run in a test is awarded a title.

FLYBALL

Flyball is not an AKC activity, but is one that many Border Collies and their owners enjoy. It is a team sport, although dogs earn specific titles. Flyball is a dog relay race in which dogs race over hurdles, tap a box to obtain a ball, and race back to the owner to return the ball so that the next dog may run. Dogs and owners find that the enthusiasm of the game is fun.

With so many different things to do, your choice depends upon your interests and abilities, and those of your Border Collie. Whatever you choose, you will find a willing and eager companion. Try several activities. There are new friends and new experiences waiting for you. Best of all, you will develop a relationship of great depth and joy with your Border Collie.

BORDER COLLIE SOCIETY OF AMERICA



<http://www.bordercolliesociety.com>