

# THE BORDER COLLIE ENERGY MACHINE



## THE SMART DOG

The Border Collie has a well-deserved reputation for intelligence. These dogs have been bred for hundreds of years to control livestock under the direction of the farmer. In addition to enhancing their basic herding instincts, such selective breeding has resulted in dogs who are both very trainable and responsive to their environment. No matter how strong instinct may be, your puppy will need careful training to realize his potential and to channel instinct into desirable behavior.

It is your responsibility to teach your dog correctly from the beginning. Border Collies, like children, become confused and often anxious if they are given mixed messages. Activities that you do not want to encourage should not be allowed. If you don't want your Border Collie on the furniture, NEVER permit it when he is young. Later, if you choose, you can teach him that certain places are acceptable. Do not make the mistake of allowing the puppy to do something because you think it is cute, unless you wish to make it part of his trick repertoire. A puppy begging for a bite of your dinner becomes a nuisance, and as the dog becomes older the begging may become more insistent. It is always easier to set more lenient rules later than to correct established behavior.

You must insist that the pup obeys your rules. Help him learn by rewarding the positive rather than by punishing the negative. The best way to discourage behavior that you do not want is to substitute another, acceptable activity. You are not coddling the dog by offering a suitable alternative. For example, trade a ball for a sock instead of scolding the dog for stealing the sock. "No sock, good ball" is often all that you need. Puppy classes are an excellent way to start your Border Collie on the road to good behavior.

## INTELLIGENCE HAS ITS PRICE

Along with the ability to learn quickly and permanently comes a down side. The Border

Collie tends to grasp general concepts quickly. One is often unaware that he does not understand the reason for an exercise or the steps to its proper execution. He may run out, grab a toy, and bring it back for another throw time after time until the day he is distracted. Then he may drop the toy mid-way back, and forget what comes next because he does not realize that the goal is to bring it back to you. If this occurs, go back and teach the missing steps, such as take, hold, and come. If you break your training into steps, such as sitting, then being petted when greeting people, rather than jumping up, you will make it much easier for the pup to understand what you want.



## SMART AND COMPLICATED

When your Border Collie first joins you, try to keep him with you as much as possible. Once he has been adequately immunized take him with you frequently. Physical contact, such as petting, cuddling, or interactive games is very important, as is early and continual socialization. Most Border Collies have a strong desire to bond with their family, and this should be encouraged. Your pup needs to be trained to accept his crate, and should be confined when no one is around to supervise.

The Border Collie becomes attuned to his environment easily. Once he is past puppyhood, he may find change difficult to accept. If the pup has not been raised with people and household noises you will have to make a special effort to make him comfortable with them. Try to have him meet as many adults and children as possible, both at home and elsewhere. Make certain these encounters occur under close supervision. This is especially important in the case of children, because of

their often unpredictable actions. Despite what you see in TV commercials, many Border Collies do not trust children, and many do not feel that children are to be respected. Herding behavior comes to the surface when children run and play. Your puppy may try to control the game by circling and nipping, just as he would do with unruly stock. This may be suitable with sheep, but not with the neighborhood kids. Such behavior must be stopped immediately. Reprimand the puppy firmly, remove him from the situation, and substitute a game of ball chasing or hide-and seek. Instruct children not to run and tease these dogs.

Many very stable Border Collies go through a period when strange objects and sudden movements are frightening. The monster garbage can, the tree limb that fell in the yard, or the person coming around the corner, can produce near panic. If you are calm, yet show the pup that these are all everyday things, and that he need not be afraid, this period will pass. It is part of the heritage of the breed to be aware of activity, and to try to herd anything that moves. This is the instinct that enables him to gather flocks from the end of the field. However, it can lead to two very dangerous activities, car and bicycle chasing. The dog has no way of knowing that he cannot change the direction of a car. It is your responsibility to be aware of the danger and to prevent disaster. No Border Collie should be off lead unless he is in a secure place, such as a fenced yard. Border Collies tend not to want to roam, but their innate curiosity coupled with their intelligence often produces "escape artists". Watch your dog carefully in the beginning to make sure he is not inclined to jump, climb, or dig under the fence. He can fit through an incredibly small opening.

#### THE CRATE - A PRIVATE DEN

A dog that is trained to enjoy his crate is easier to housebreak, can travel in a car safely, and can be left alone without concern for either his

safety or that of his surroundings. The dog is by nature a den animal. Most dogs do not view the crate as a prison, but rather consider it to be their den and enjoy its privacy. Think of your Border Collie as a two-year-old child on the loose. You wouldn't leave him to his own devices. When you must leave your pup alone for several hours, his crate gives him a secure place to sleep. Because dogs do not like to soil their den, a crated dog will usually let you know when he wants to go out. This makes housebreaking much easier. Be sure the crate is small enough so that he cannot soil in one area and still have room enough to curl up and sleep in another.



Once your Border Collie has matured and can be trusted, you may wish to leave a crate set up with the door open so he has a place to go for peace and quiet. Although most dogs become accustomed to a crate quickly, you can help by including something safe to chew, and/or a special toy, when you leave him. Examples include a Kong stuffed with cheese or dog food and a sterilized bone. Never leave him alone wearing a choke collar. He could get caught and hang himself. A radio or television playing in the background can mask unfamiliar noises that might disturb him. You might even consider feeding him in his crate. Knowing that no one can steal his food adds to his sense of security.

#### BASIC TRAINING - A SURVIVAL TOOL

All age dogs benefit from basic obedience training. Puppy classes are an excellent way to start your dog on the road to good behavior.

The AKC Canine Good Citizen title is a worthy goal for the older dog. Both puppy and basic obedience classes are available through park districts, dog training clubs, pet stores and private trainers. You should investigate the program and observe a class before you enroll. Watch out for either overly strict methods, or too loosely structured "play groups". Be sure the trainers have worked with Border Collies and understand their temperament. Varying degrees of firmness are needed if you are to train the dog rather than having the dog train you. Be firm, consistent, and fair, and your Border Collie will react positively. Make certain he understands your family "pecking order". He will not obey someone he views as below him in rank. Border Collies tend to remember bad, unexpected, and unfair experiences. Prevention is your best weapon, and retraining, while possible, can be difficult.

Basic commands are essential for living with any dog. Come, Stay, and Lie Down form the backbone of training. Home games, such as retrieving toys, or "speaking" on command are fun for both of you. Simple tricks taught with praise and possibly a treat build self-confidence. Games make you fun to be around, and you can reward efforts at learning without feeling that basic obedience is on the line.

Above all, have fun. You will have many years of companionship and devotion ahead of you.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT  
BORDER COLLIE SOCIETY OF AMERICA



<http://www.bordercolliesociety.com>