

# Northern Nevada Stock Dog Assoc.

September 2009, Volume 1, Issue 2

## Newsletter... To Do's

Thank you for checking out our 2nd issue of the NNSDA Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to exchange information between members, provide training tips and education, and promote activities and events. So, while your readership is appreciated, I would also like to encourage you to participate by contributing your stories, experiences, photographs, information about upcoming events, photographs, questions, tips, and anecdotes. **Did I mention photographs?** It doesn't even have to (necessarily) be herding related but should be of general interest to our members.

Each newsletter edition will include a "Training Tips," article composed by **NNSDA Advisor Ian Caldicott**. Ian asks that you let him know what questions and/or concerns you have that he can address in his article so that the information he provides will be relevant to you. In this newsletter for instance, Ian answers two questions:

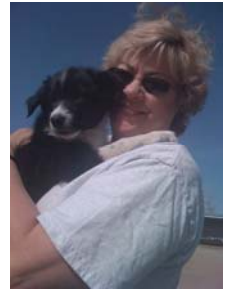
- (1) How can we help to give our herding dogs consistent and meaningful training, if we don't have the benefit of living around livestock?
- (2) Can you provide some tips on finding a good trainer/mentor? Great questions, thank you!

**Also in this edition:** Information about a recent practice session and plans for an October clinic by our club **President Kathy Givens** and **VP Erin Singley**; and a peek into my Border Collie pup Murphy's first herding lesson. *Thank you!*

## Message From the President

We had our first practice session recently and I am so pleased with the dogs! Erin's Tilly worked very well and is going to be a fun dog for Erin! Rebecca's dog brought her mom all the way from the west shore of Lake Tahoe to work and showed a good deal of improvement. Lori worked a friend's red bitch that put us all to shame! We tested 2 dogs, one Aussie, and one Border Collie. I would like to see them again and see if we can build drive. They were sure beautiful girls!

My favorite topic these days is my new herding pup Mojo. I liked what I saw in him at 5 months and am really excited about starting him. Goodness knows Race has taken me on quite a journey. He was his old lightening self.....guess it will always be that way with him.



*Here's to cooler weather and an upcoming clinic!*

~Kathy Givens, NNSDA President

**To learn more about  
upcoming practice  
sessions, call Kathy:  
775-267-4068**

**DETAILS COMING SOON FOR A FALL CLINIC!**

## Vice President's Message

There have been some developments in club activities. To add to Kathy's message, our first practice was held on August 8<sup>th</sup> at Paradigm Ranch and was well-attended. I am pretty sure everyone got to work their dog about three times each. It was good to see you and your dogs again.

Being a NOVICE dog handler/herder, I was surprised how quickly the dogs improved. My dog has learned that she can travel both to her right and left (who knew?), and that good dogs DO NOT run to the middle of the herd and grab a sheep. Go Tilly! Speaking strictly for myself, humans have a shallower learning curve. *Sigh.*

We intend to have additional practice sessions in the coming months, depending on everyone's schedules. Hopefully, some of us are getting good enough that the club will feel comfortable allowing us to practice at other venues on other people's stock. An October clinic in Gardnerville is also the works. I cannot take any of the credit for the progress made in this area. More details about these activities are coming your way, so keep in touch!

~ Erin Singley, NNSDA Vice President



## Training Tips by Ian Caldicott

In this section of our newsletter, Ian will address your training related questions. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please send them to: [Sandra@a-capital-idea.com](mailto:Sandra@a-capital-idea.com)

**Q How can we who do not have access to livestock on a regular basis reinforce the training?**

The simple answer is there isn't anything you can do away from sheep that will help your dog with herding. That is not however, a very comforting answer for those who don't have regular access to sheep. The best I can do is give you some things to work on that will help establish the kind of relationship with your dog that you will need when you do get to go herding, and some things you can do that will help you be ready for your next session.

Let's start with your dog. There are two commands you will use on a daily basis that will be needed when herding that you can at least teach your dog what they mean and how serious you are that they be obeyed. They are the recall and the stop.

By the recall I am not talking about your usual come or here. I mean a "that will do" something that gets the dog to stop whatever it is doing and come to you, all the way. You should be teaching it whenever you are done with an activity, or whenever he is doing something he needs to stop doing. It is particularly useful to train him to obey it when there is something distracting or more fun to do instead.

The "stop" can be a sit, stand or lie-down; or

you can even work on all of the above, though any two of the three are usually more than sufficient. Again, you want to work on the dog taking the commands at a distance from you and when something else is going on that's fun or exciting. Make sure you reward the dog by releasing him to do the exciting thing for a bit after he has taken the command. When working on your stop you do not want to encourage the dog to look at you, just to do it wherever he is and whatever he is doing.

More important than teaching commands though, is forming the proper relationship. When herding you and your dog must work as a team and you must be team leader. That means you need to focus on two things in your relationship, trust and authority. Teamwork requires that you trust each other to do your part and to do the right thing; but any good team has a leader, and that needs to be you. How do you build trust? By helping your dog, helping him deal with difficult or stressful situations, by following through on what you say and do and by being consistent. Establishing authority starts much the same way, being consistent, following through on what you say and do. It also requires that you carry yourself as if you know what you are doing; it requires that you make rules, establish boundaries and adhere to them without wavering.

The last thing, and perhaps the most important and useful thing you can do has nothing to do with your dog. It has to do with training your mind and body for herding. You can obviously read books and watch videos but they won't do you much good if you don't start training yourself to implement what you are learning. *How do you do that?* You sit down, alone, someplace quiet, you close your eyes and you visualize yourself and your dog doing the things you read and see, doing the exercises, pausing, rewinding

trying out every possible alternative in your mind. Ask yourself how serious you are about getting good at herding. If you're serious, then find some time every day when you are not out actually herding to practice in your mind. Think of it like one of those exercise machines you see on TV, 30 minutes 3-4 times a week and you can be a top dog trainer in as little as.... 5 years. Finally don't forget training your body, practice that walking backwards more!

**Q** *What advice would you give for finding someone to train with, a mentor?*

This is a common and fairly complicated question and can be looked at in two parts. Who should you practice with and who should you take lessons from. Let's start with the first part, as it's more straightforward. Practice with anyone you can. It's good to practice with people you're comfortable around, people with dogs at a level similar to yours, so you can offer each other advice, share what you see in each other and each other's dogs. Find as many people and as many places to practice as you can, the broader the experience that you and your dog get the better.

The second part, who to take lessons from is a lot harder to answer. To some degree who you take lessons from is determined by how far and how often you are willing to travel and who is within that range. For simplicity let's take an ideal situation, and look at what I would suggest you look for in an ideal mentor. First thing you want to look for is are they competing at or above the level you want to eventually get to. They don't have to be the best, but they have to be able to do it or how can they teach it to you.

Second thing I would suggest you look at it is whether they train the dogs they are

competing with themselves. Handling a trained dog is quite different from actually training them. Third I would want to know what percentage of the dogs they have had they have taken to the level of competition we are talking about. This is very important to me; it tells you how flexible they are in adjusting to the needs of individual dogs and how effective their methods are.

Finally I would want to know how their other students are doing, are they willing to put you in touch with their other students so you can hear their experiences. Are the students happy with their training, are they making good progress, are they competing, and are they accomplishing their goals. This last one gives you some insight into how well they teach people, after all it's not just your dog getting the training, it is you as well.

~ Ian Caldicott, NNSDA Advisor



## Our *First Time*

I was very excited to welcome my new Border Collie home when he was about 10 weeks old. Admittedly, I didn't know much about the breed but had heard and observed that they are highly intelligent, are great companions, and possess superior instincts for herding. I was also "warned" that they have an endless supply of energy, very active. Indeed!

While I don't have livestock or an opportunity to work my dogs on a regular basis, I couldn't resist. I got bit by the herding bug and wanted to jump in with both feet. I was amazed watching the natural instincts of these dogs emerge and how they responded with this intense focus and excitement when herding. I thought the best thing to do would be to start with a puppy, one that I could learn *with*, two beginners; right? Well, turns out that was a rather absurd assumption because at 10 weeks, my "beginner" was far more advanced in his understanding and talent for herding than I, not to mention much less intimidated by it.



The Jennings gave him the name "Hoss" when he was born. Wanting to give him a traditional BC name, I spent days "Googling" and settled on "Mirk," for about two weeks... His name now is Murphy (aka Wiggle Butt). No, not a traditional BC name, but I was still resolved to share with Murphy his noble ancestry (when he was old enough to understand), and continued my research. I learned what most of you already know: the Border Collie originated on the borders of England and Scotland; in 1873, the first sheepdog trials were held in Britain; a dog named Hemp impressed everyone with his ability to manipulate sheep with an intense glare rather than barking; Hemp sired many pups and thus is attributed with the title of "father" of the modern Border Collie; they were imported to America in the twentieth

century where they became popular working dogs and pets. I also learned that Border Collies, if not given lots of exercise and activity (did I say lots, I meant constant), they start to display very bad behavior. That would explain several pairs of chewed shoes, ripped books, middle of the night bursts of energy, etc. I decided that my intentions of guiding Murphy toward an impressive and stellar career as a herding dog and youngest national champion in history would have to wait until we got a better handle on the basics, like “those kind of messes are made outside!” I don’t think I have ever been more grateful for laminated wood flooring.



When Murphy was 20 weeks old, Ian announced there would be a sheep camp at his farm in Oregon. I thought this would be a great opportunity for early-puppy-development, and for me to stop merely observing and learn how to take an active role in training and working with Murphy. I wasn’t disappointed. Overwhelmed at first and naturally curious, Murphy needed a little time to adapt to the environment and to make friends with the many dogs who lived and worked on Ian and Raven’s farm, but it didn’t take long for him to take to the sheep and become singularly and rather impatiently focused on taking his turn in the pen.

With each session Murphy made great

progress (okay, I am biased). My progress? Much, much less impressive. I spent time with experienced dogs that would anticipate my movements and direction and supposedly, would work at a slower pace (slower being a matter of interpretation). It was frustrating and exhausting. For instance, I was told that I would have to learn to walk backwards as comfortably as I walk forward; looked easy enough. Who knew that my first and most difficult challenge would be something so simple? I have been practicing walking in reverse however, and it really does get easier. I watched videos, committed a few new commands to memory, and adopted some basic techniques for how and when to use them in conjunction with particular directions. I also got a mild case of heat stroke but besides that, it was a great experience.

Learning how to train is like learning a new language; for me, it doesn’t come naturally and just to become "adequate" will take a great deal of time, focus and commitment. Murphy caught on quickly and gained a lot of confidence! But perhaps the most meaningful lesson learned was that while Murphy might not be the youngest national champion in history, we will bond as a team by learning together and more importantly, have a great time doing it.



~ Sandra Kinsey, NNSDA Secty/Treasurer