



BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

SHEEP AND WOOL WEEK: TRAINING A HERDING DOG

Certain dog breeds make better herding or working dogs than others. For example, the Border Collie is the most popular breed in the US for herding. They are picked for their intelligence, work ethic, and their need to please their owner. Border Collies originated in the UK where they were used to move sheep from one pasture to another. Some other breeds of herding dogs are Australian Shepherd, Shetland Sheepdogs, and Corgis.



A working Border Collie



A herdsman closes a pen behind a flock of sheep after his dog herded them in.

Herding dogs are used to gather and protect livestock. Dogs can find and herd a flock of sheep much faster than a person can. If the flock is on a large pasture, herding dogs are used to find and bring the herd to the herdsman. Some people compete in herding competitions with their dogs. In these competitions, people use voice and whistle commands to direct the dogs where to move the livestock. Sheep, cattle, and ducks are common livestock herded by dogs.

SHEEP AND WOOL WEEK:

TRAINING A HERDING DOG

Working dogs learn voice and whistle commands. Whistles are used because they are much louder and travel farther than a person's voice.

Come-bye: go to the left of the livestock.

Away to me: go to the right of the livestock.

Get up: walk straight toward the livestock.

Whistle command for 'Get Up': two high pitched whistle sounds in quick succession.

Stand: stop.

Lie down: stop, but keep contact with the livestock.

Whistle command for 'Lie Down': one long, high pitched whistle sound.

Steady: slow down.

Whistle command for 'Steady': one short, high pitched whistle sound.

Cast: gather the livestock in a group.

Find: search for the livestock.

Get out: move away from the livestock.



A Border Collie herds a flock of sheep at Billings Farm's 2019 Sheep Shearing & Herding Day.



Hold: keep the livestock where they are.

Bark: bark at the livestock.

Look back: return for a missing animal.

In here: go through a gap in the flock to separate them into groups.

Walk up: move closer to the livestock.

That'll do: stop working.