

An Agility-Ace Dog

Several dog breeds excel at agility and make fun yet laidback companions.

By Allan Reznik

Q. My daughter is very involved in agility and fly ball, and is looking at getting a Border Collie to train for such shows. I'm concerned we're too busy to keep this breed of dog happy. She attends school and has a busy sports life, but goes to two or three dog events each month. Can you recommend a puppy for her to train, keeping in mind he will have an average of 60 minutes or more of outdoor play a day? My daughter is really passionate and I welcome that, but want to be sure we are making the right dog choice.

A. I am impressed both by your daughter's enthusiasm for dog sports and your research skills and desire to choose the most suitable breed for your family. You are quite right in wanting to make the most appropriate choice. After all, even with your daughter attending agility and flyball events two to three weekends a month, that's still a fraction of the time the dog will be home, serving as a loving pet and companion.

Border Collies are great performers in these activities, but they are busy, high-energy dogs. There are other breeds to consider that perform very well at these events, but would be more laidback and mellow at home, and content with an hour of outdoor play daily. Papillons are wonderful little dogs, and outstanding performers in both agility and flyball. This is a hardy breed, very athletic, a handy size, and not much grooming required for a long-haired dog. Border Terriers are another great breed we are seeing occasionally on the agility course, and well worth investigating. The coat must be hand stripped for the show ring but many pet owners learn to do it quite well. They're a sturdy, fun breed, with a distinctive, otter-like face and make great cuddlers when the performance day is done.