

Hooked on Herding

Bond with your dog and watch its natural instincts at work.

Susan M. Ewing

Amazed, fascinated, blown away and hooked – that was me at my first herding trial. As I watched Border Collie after Border Collie work, I wanted to take part in this incredible activity. I wanted to learn to whistle so precisely that my dog would circle sheep clockwise (come by) or counterclockwise (away to me), depending on the tone. I wanted to whistle my dog closer to the sheep, or command him to lie down. I wanted to learn all the nuances of herding. I wanted to understand sheep, and why they behaved as they did. Possibly as a result of having seen the movie Babe one too many times, I wanted to say, “That’ll do,” at just the right moment.

There’s nothing better than watching a dog do the job it was bred to do. Gazing at these dogs, I was in heaven. However, to properly observe, I needed an idea of what was happening on the course, so I turned to the woman sponsoring the trial, Joyce Geier. Geier is on the team that will represent the United States at this year’s World Sheep Dog Trials (Sept. 11 to 14 in Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, Wales), so it’s safe to say she knew what was going on.

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