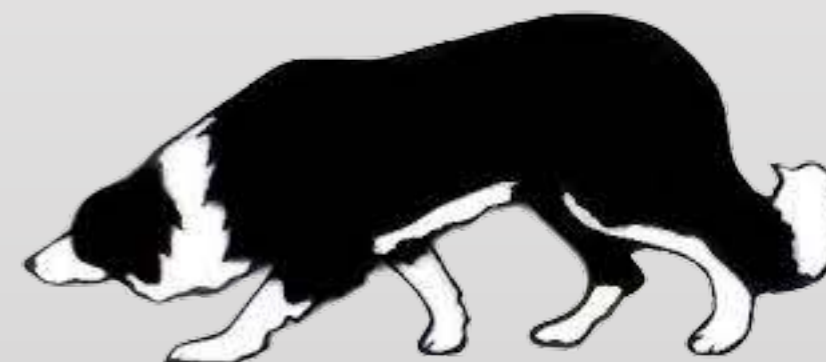




Owning a Border Collie

Everything a potential BC owner
should know about this breed

Breed aware = better care





Knowing the breed



Before setting your heart on a Border Collie, it is necessary to find out about the breed to make sure that this is the right one for you. Learning about the general nature and characteristic of the breed is essential.

Much heartache will be avoided if you make an informed decision and know what you are signing up to.

Take a look at the Kennel Club's website "Finding the right dog" and if you are still convinced a Border Collie is for you, then here is some additional breed-specific information for you to digest.

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/getting-a-dog/are-you-ready/finding-the-right-dog/>



They look so different?

The Border Collie was officially recognised as a pedigree breed by the UK Kennel Club in 1979. Prior to this, "border collies" were registered by the International Sheep Dog Society (ISDS).

Many argue that the recognition of pedigree Border Collies has split the breed - in looks and in character, diluting the work ethic of the breed. You can still find show-bred dogs herding and working, and there are some working stock that would hold their own in the show ring.

Underneath either type, there is a rather special dog and it is worth considering why you want this breed and what you plan to do with it.





Do Border Collies make good companions?

Yes -

In most cases - so long as you have the time to devote to training, exercise, playing and generally spending quality time with them. A BC will be quite happy to help around the house, following the boss around, accompanying you on trips out, helping in the garden! ... so long as they have your company for most of the time and you are able to provide adequate entertainment in a safe environment for periods when they must be left.



<http://www.passim.me.uk/faqs.html>

Are they good with children?



More to the point, are your children good with dogs?

Most BCs get on well with children, providing that the children understand that they are not just animated toys and they are treated with respect. Teaching children to recognise and respond to a dog's signals is a great life-skill, not just for their own dog but for meeting other dogs when out and about.

The herding instinct can be very strong in some BCs and young, squealing, erratic children can be a great stimulus to the dog, kicking in the instinct to circle and herd. Encourage children to remain calm when they are with their BC.

<http://www.passim.me.uk/faqs.html>

Are they easy to train?



Border Collies are very clever, perhaps, arguably, the cleverest breed! If you don't train them, they will train you - or potentially pick up some undesirable traits that will be very difficult to "untrain".

Puppy school at a local training club is a great way to teach basic companion obedience, the general principle is to be consistent, know what behaviour you want, what you don't want, and stick to it. You cannot one day think it funny if the dog licks your dinner plate, and be upset about it when it tries to do the same another day.

It is best to visit a training school without your pup - you can then take a look at the training methods, speak with other students, get a feeling for the club, before committing to train with them. The environment should encourage calm, reward based training with toys and treats, which produces rapid results. A chaotic, excitable environment is no good for a Border Collie, and shouting and smacking will only make the dog confused and it could lose trust in you making something like a recall very difficult to achieve.



<http://www.passim.me.uk/faqs.html>



Do they need much grooming?

The BC comes in two variations of coat, either rough (long) or smooth (short). In both cases, it is a double-coat, meaning there is a soft undercoat with a longer, coarser topcoat. This double-coat allows BCs to work in all weather conditions. Usually a good brush or combing once a week is sufficient.

However, the undercoat will shed once or twice a year, and this is usually very obvious, with tufts of hair sticking out from the coat, easily dislodged by fingers or comb. To avoid uncomfortable and painful matting, the BC should be groomed with a comb or a rake more often during the 'moulting' period. This is sometimes referred to as 'blowing coat' or being 'out of coat'.



There is very little in the way of trimming to be done on a BC. The areas that require regular trimming are the paws and the back of the hocks and pasterns. Some exhibitors trim and shape the ears. You should never trim a BCs "trousers", the full fur at the back of the legs, unless it is to prevent tangling in older dogs who find grooming uncomfortable.

The nails will need to be clipped or filed down on a regular basis, including the dew claws.

Unless exhibiting, bathing the dog should be kept to a minimum to avoid washing away essential oils in the coat. The use of mink oil after combing will help protect the coat from the sun and give it a lovely soft and shiny sheen.

Are they good with other animals?



If they are brought up with other animals, there is usually no problem. You must remember though that they are herding dogs, bred for generations to herd other animals, and the herding instinct can kick in at any time.

If you are walking where there is livestock, it is important to make sure that your dog is on lead, or be 100% sure that it will come back to you the minute you call it - Farmers have the right to shoot any dog suspected of worrying stock!



Do they have to work stock?

No ...

but it is a basic instinct to want to. However, this can be channeled into other forms of activity. Unless you are in a position to work your dog on sheep on a regular basis, it is unfair to awaken the instinct as it can cause frustration leading to all sorts of problems. Only start herding if you are in a position to do it properly.

There are plenty of other activities where their energy can be channeled, like obedience, agility, fly ball and working trials. One has only to watch Crufts to see just how many BCs excel at the various dog activities on offer.





Things to consider



- * A dog is a long term commitment and can be expensive. Cost of the pup, vet fees, dog insurance, dog food, training, holiday boarding ... these are some of the expenses that you will incur when you own a dog.



- * Do you have enough time to spend with your dog? Will there be someone at home most of the time to attend to the dog, walk and exercise it, to house train it and keep it company?



- * Are you house-proud or a keen gardener? Dogs shed hair, traipse mud through houses and over carpets, dig up gardens, and immaculate lawns are burned from their toilet. Precious items are inadvertently chewed as the pup knows no difference between your heirloom and their purpose bought dog-chew!



- * BCs normally live for between 12-16 years - are you ready to commit to a dog for that length of time? And if you are retired, or approaching retirement, please stop and think about whether a pup is really right for you? Plenty of retired people manage perfectly well with a puppy and none of us like to think we are getting older, but it is important to remember the life span of a BC and most are pretty active up to the end. If you are 65 now, will you still be able to give it what it needs when you are in your 80's? If in doubt, there is always the option of adopting an older dog, perhaps retired from showing or dog sports, already trained and this would make a perfect retirement for the dog too!

<http://www.passim.me.uk/faqs.html>



Still reading? So a Border Collie it is how and where to find one?

If its a pedigree show-bred Border Collie for you, then word of mouth is probably the best way to find a reputable breeder. But if you don't know anyone with a Border Collie, the best port of call is a Border Collie Breed Club. Each club usually holds a "puppy register" but if they have no puppies available, they can give you the contact details of respected breeders, with whom you can discuss your puppy search and they will, potentially, place you on their puppy waiting list. More often than not, you will have to wait for a puppy!



There are no guarantees that you will be accepted on a breeders waiting list - be prepared for lengthy questioning and for the breeder to ask to meet you. Some might even request a home visit to see if your home is suitable for a Border Collie. All this should re-assure you rather than dissuade you - a good breeder should do this - beware of anyone who will sell you a puppy without asking questions or meeting you first.



Border Collie Club Of Wales

Breeders



Some breeders are members of the ABS (the Kennel Club's Assured Breeder Scheme). Breeders buy into the scheme to help them sell puppies and it's not a guarantee that you are buying a healthy well bred puppy, but ABS breeders are inspected by the Kennel Club to make sure they abide by minimum ethical requirements. In most instances, good reputable breeders, registered or not, go above and beyond the Kennel Club's requirements and do more health tests than required, and they usually never have trouble homing pups. The overriding guide is to make sure that your breeder is aware of Border Collie health tests and all that is required to produce healthy stock, and is open and honest when asked questions.



You should be allowed to meet the dam, visit the puppies in the nest and you should also be allowed to change your mind. You should never think of buying two puppies at the same time and a good breeder should refuse to sell two puppies to the same home at the same time. Reputable breeders go to endless lengths to assess would-be owners to make sure that their pups are placed in suitable "forever" homes. Reputable breeders will state in the contract of sale that should you not, for any reason, be able to keep the dog, it must be returned to them.

Know where your puppy is coming from - never ever buy from a pet shop, or a third party, or from a newspaper advert, without seeing the dam and meeting the breeder. These puppies will more than likely be the result of puppy farming and by purchasing a pup, however appealing they might be, you will be perpetuating horrendous breeding conditions for those poor bitches who are bred from year in and out until they are no longer useful.



Border Collie
Breed Council

Another great way to decide on where to get your puppy is by attending a Championship Breed show in your area. Buy a catalogue and sit at the ring, watch the dogs on display as they are moved for the judges. You can mark down those that catch your eye and you can meet up with the breeder/handler to talk about their lines and their kennel explaining that you are interested in becoming a Border Collie owner. Crufts Dog Show attracts breeders from all over the country. Even if you have no intention of showing your dog, most show dogs are diligently health tested and a soundly constructed dog is necessary for any work (activity) that you might be interested in.



If you want a more “working-type” Border Collie, then ideally you should attend an organised activity, like an agility show or a working trial or a fly ball event. Speak to competitors, find out about their dogs, who their breeders are and which lines would best suit your needs.



If you are looking for a Border Collie specifically to work sheep, it would be best to attend a herding trial and those can be found on the International Sheep Dog Society’s website. These animals are bred for their ability to herd - so a caution - they might find it harder to adapt to life as a pet, than perhaps a show bred dog.

Which column does your breeder fit into?



Border Collie
Breed Council

CHARACTERISTIC	BACKYARD BREEDER	PUPPY FARM	COMMERCIAL BREEDER	HOBBY BREEDER	REPUTABLE BREEDER
Has a specific breeding goal	To produce puppies	To make money	To supply the demand	To better the breed - usually only has a litter when wanting to keep a pup	To perfect a specific type to leave a legacy
Puppies readily available	Yes and will probably charge top prices	Yes and will charge top prices	Usually and will charge top price	Most often not, you will have to register with the breeder and go on a waiting list	Perhaps, but you might have to register with the breeder and go on a waiting list
Belongs to and works with a Breed Club	May masquerade as a member	Hardly ever	Has a network of business contacts	Extremely dedicated - a member of one or more breed clubs	Very active, generally an officer or on a committee (or has been)
Has a least one mentor	Works independently, lacks guidance	Not interested in breed improvement	Does not specialise in a specific breed	Invites knowledge - is in contact with numerous other hobby or reputable breeders	Is a mentor, writes books/articles, conducts seminars
Understands and breeds to the standard	May not even know what it is	Uses any available stock	Focuses on general appearance	Strives towards the ideal - plans matings	Often helps to define it - plans matings
Active in dog related activities (shows, trials, rescues)	Often rescues only to attain more stock. Rarely attends shows or trials	Does not need to promote establishment, sells to brokers, pet shops, etc	Does not need to promote establishment, sells to brokers, pet shops, etc	Shows and trials to prove worth and to objectively test breeding stock	Often judges, provides seminars, writes articles and willingly mentors serious Hobby Breeders
Know the true history of the breed	May share false/incomplete info	Often pretends to know some	Claims that it's not important	Studies continuously	Impacts the breed for many decades
Sells pets with spay/neuter contract and tries to stay in touch with new owners	May charge more for "breeding" papers	Often issues papers via generic "registries"	All pups sold have full breeding rights	Yes, and diligently follows up on progeny - provides owner support	Always differentiates breed/pet quality and insists on frequent updates
Keeps up with health and temperament issues affecting the breeding and provides guarantees	May refuse to acknowledge most problems. Considers shows and trials as too "political".	No need to, mostly supplies brokers and pet shops.	Meets minimum standards as required by law	Goes above and beyond standard requirements	Maintains a solid support system. Accepts full responsibility for every puppy produced
All breeding stock is tested for genetic diseases affecting the particular breed	Some occasionally may be to impress customers	Only as demanded by customers - may give papers as proof of quality	May provide undocumented paperwork for appearances sake	Intensive testing always a priority	Often initiates club sponsored seminars and clinics
Maintains carrier records on all dogs in gene pool including affected progeny	Focuses mostly on phenotype - unfamiliar with genotype	Often supplies broker and pet shops, records unavailable	Often auctioned off in lots, records unavailable	Attempts to continuously track every puppy produced	Bases entire breeding program on extensive gene pool data
Clean, sterile environment always maintained	Conditions may vary greatly depending on available income	Often tries to maintain minimum standards	Cleanest and best organised, and inspected	Usually "home raised with love" and well cared for - owns the dam	Might be cluttered but always healthy and mentally stimulating
Expected longevity with any particular breed	Unrealistic expectations - easily disillusioned	Will continue as long as the sales are coming	Depends on popularity of specific breeds	On a mission - plans to stay for the long haul	Involved with the breed/breeding for decades - makes a lifetime commitment.

Avoid red - actively look for breeders who fit in the green

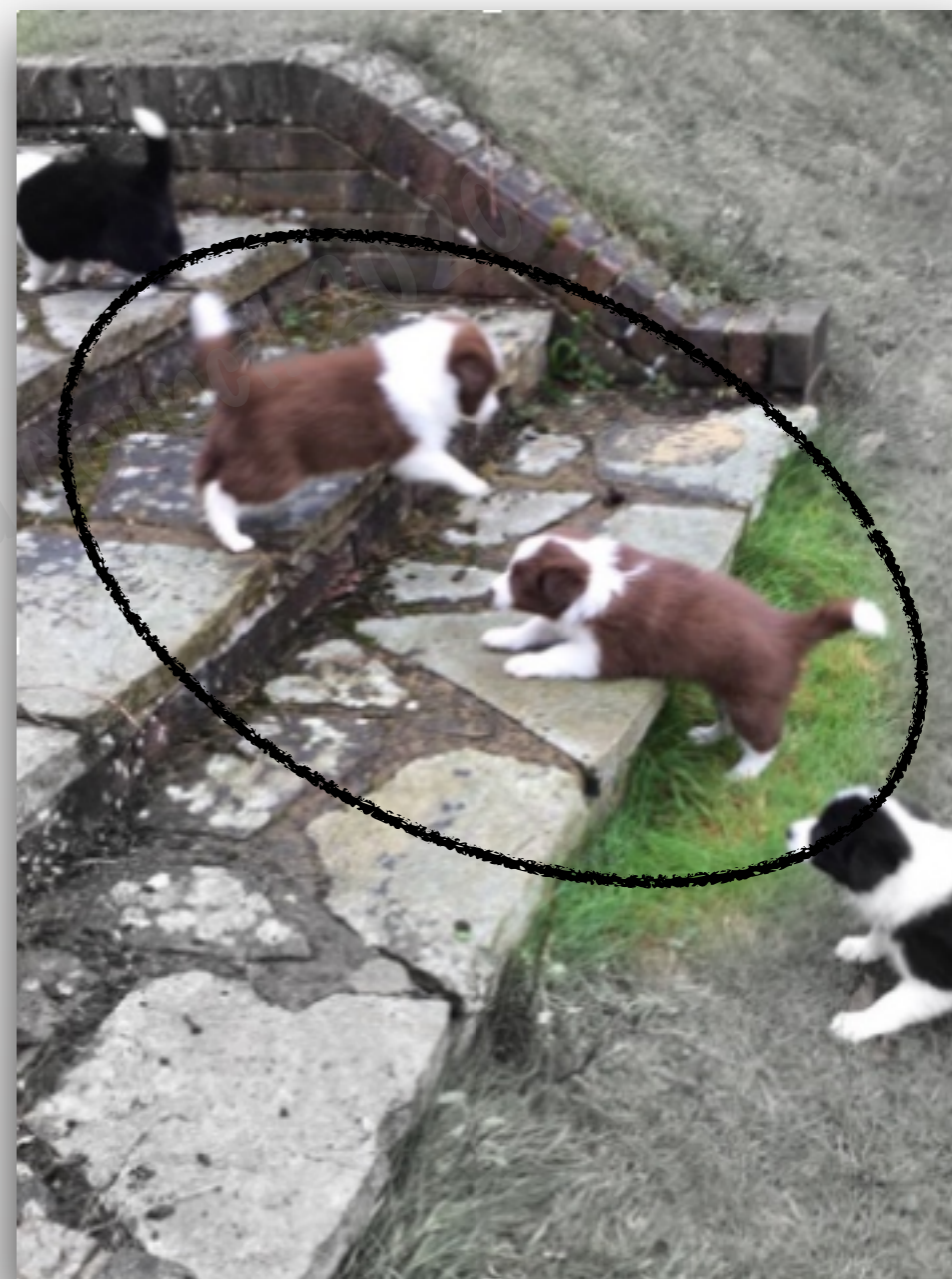
Colours?

The Border Collie comes in a vast variety of colours - the breed standard states "white should never predominate" - meaning white should make up less than 50% of the dog's coat colouring.

While you might think that a very white Border Collie is appealing, this is not correct for the breed and very often these animals present with health problems, the most common of which is deafness. Mating of merle to merle should never happen - doubling up on the merle gene can affect the development of the eyes, cause deafness and sterility.

One might think of a BC as black & white, or tri-colour (black & white with tan on cheeks, legs, eyebrows and ears). But the list of colours is extensive and all colours are acceptable providing the rule of the amount of white is maintained. Grey is referred to as a "blue", browns are "chocolate" or "liver" or "red". There are BCs with patterned coats (merles and tri-coloured merles). There are also sables and eekeds, sometimes called "yellow" or "gold".

Be aware of breeders who breed only for colour - the overriding importance is to breed a healthy well-constructed animal, regardless of colour. It is ok for you to want a particular colour, just as it is to want either a male or a female.





Border Collie Health

Your breeder should have done extensive research, had DNA tests, hip scores and eye tests done on the dam and should have checked her compatibility with the sire before breeding a litter. There are at least 8 vital DNA tests that need to be done to ensure that a pup is never born affected by a disease that could have been prevented, by making sure that carriers are never mated to carriers and that no affected dogs are used in any breeding programme.

Your pup will be clear of all hereditary diseases if both the sire and the dam are clear. If either is a carrier, there is a chance that your pup too could be a carrier. This will not affect the health of the puppy (in terms of these hereditary diseases) and it will only be a consideration if you, in turn, wish to breed on from the puppy. ***see endorsements page 18**

Before puppies leave for their new homes, the breeder should have the litter eye tested and BAER hearing tested, however testing facilities are few and far between and some breeders might find it difficult to do.

Puppies by law have to be microchipped before leaving the breeder, and you should make sure that you are given the puppy's registration papers and information on how to update the microchip details and your ownership details on its registration. Puppies usually have 4 weeks free insurance when they go to their new homes. Breeders should also give information on the puppy's worming program, feeding schedule and should provide some food for you to take home with your puppy. Puppies should be 8 weeks or older before they leave for their new home.

DNA Tests

CEA - Collie Eye Anomaly
TNS - Trapped Neutrophil Syndrome
CL - Ceroid Lipofuscinosis
SN - Sensory Neuropathy
IGS/B12 - Cobalamin Malabsorption
GCL - Predisposition to Glaucoma
MDR1 - Multi Drug Resistance
DH - Dental Hypermineralisation /
Raine's Syndrome

Physical Health Tests

BVA/KC hip scoring
BAER hearing tested
Litter eye screening
Gonioscopy PLA test

More detailed information on these tests can be found at
<https://pbhfuk.wixsite.com/pastoral/border-collie>



Puppy Health

The x-rays below show bones in a 2 week old puppy, a 7 month old and an adult. The bones in a puppy have a lot of growth to do before they become a proper bone joint. It is so important **NOT** to over exercise puppies - let them grow before asking them to climb the stairs, or do any training, or go for hour long walks with adults.

There is a guide for puppy-exercise : 5 minutes maximum for every month. So, your brand new, 8 week old puppy should only ever do 10 minutes of physical activity a day. When he is 6 months old, 30 minutes a day and so on, until most of his growth plates fuse, usually around 12 months of age.

Don't be tempted to get a "jump start" on any activities, like agility. It really isn't worth it in the long run and you instead could do long-term damage which might lead to arthritis and other orthopaedic conditions.

Puppies' bones continue to grow and strengthen as they age. They need the hormones from puberty to fully grow and develop properly.

See Spaying/Neutering page 20

2 weeks old



7 months old



Adult





Endorsements & Registration

Pedigree litters are registered with the Kennel Club and are given a name which is usually made up of the breeder's kennel name and a name chosen either by the breeder or in consultation with the owner-to-be. This name is a maximum of 26 characters. As it is usually quite a mouth-full, the owners will choose a pet name, one used everyday, and one that the dog will know and respond to. A registered name cannot be changed without the permission of the breeder, and once in the studbook* it cannot be changed at all.

At the time of registration, the breeder has the option to 'endorse' the puppies, and you should be made aware of which will apply to your puppy:

Not eligible for the issue of an Export Pedigree: the puppy may not be registered in another country. You can still travel abroad with your dog, or even emigrate and take your dog with you, but it will only be registered as a pedigree dog with the UK Kennel Club.

Progeny not eligible for registration - the Kennel Club will not register any puppies bred from this dog. This does not stop a dog being bred from, but it does mean they will not be registered as pedigree BCs with the Kennel Club.

Studbook

There are various ways a dog gets into the studbook

- Collecting enough points for a Junior Warrant
- Winning a Challenge Certificate or a Reserve Challenge Certificate
- Becoming a Show Champion
- Placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in OPEN class at championship shows
- Placed 1st in LIMIT class at championship shows



Both endorsements are easy to lift if your breeder agrees to do so. Only the breeder may lift endorsements, so be aware when you buy a puppy of the endorsements placed on its registration. Dogs registered with the ISDS (International Sheep Dog Society) can be registered with the Kennel Club, but Kennel Club registered dogs can only be registered with the ISDS on merit (ie by winning a herding trial).

To compete at Kennel Club licensed events, non-pedigree Border Collies will have to be registered on the Activities Register.

Male or Female?

Their work ethic is generally the same, as is the level of companionship, but each dog has their own distinct personality and it can vary from dog to dog.

The obvious difference between males and females is the size. Dogs should grow to 21 inches or more at the withers, the highest part of a dogs back, lying at the base of the neck above the shoulders. Bitches are much smaller.

Bitches will come into season which can start at any time after she is 6 months old, sometimes with only a 6 month break before she has her next. Others have longer breaks between seasons. A season will typically last for 21 days, with a "hot spot" around the 14-18 day point. This is where she is most fertile and will be "ready to stand" for a male. Some bitches are very clean and there is very little spotting to be seen, however this is something to bear in mind if you have an entire bitch living in your home.

Keeping entire males and bitches together in the same home requires careful management - if you are not going to be breeding from your dogs, it might be worth investigating spaying or neutering.



Spaying / neutering?

There is research to suggest that early spaying/neutering can be detrimental to a dog's long term health. Vets encourage owners to sterilise their puppies as soon as they can, to avoid unplanned, unwanted puppies, so be prepared to feel some pressure to do so.

Rescue centres are full of abandoned, abused or neglected dogs. As an owner, you need to make a responsible choice, weighing up the long-term health of your dog with the possibility of an unplanned litter, if you decide to keep them intact. If you are responsible and monitor your intact animals, then rushing to spay or neuter at an early age is not necessary.

There is an in-depth discussion on this topic at <https://www.collielife.com/Health/neutering.html> which discusses the pros and cons of early neutering - we recommend watching Dr Becker's video clip.





Activities for your Border Collie

If you want more than just a pet, you could consider one or more of these dog activities:

- * **Breed Showing** - you should let your breeder know that you would like to show so that a suitable pup is offered. Become a member of a breed club and start with local open shows. Your breeder should be able to offer help and advice, and you will soon meet like-minded people, only too willing to show you the ropes.
- * **Agility** - this is a fast-growing activity where dogs of all backgrounds, pedigree or not, can compete. Your dog needs to be over 18 months before entering a competition and it obviously needs the correct training before this. Training before 12 months should be very limited, if any at all. Some clubs offer tailor-based puppy training, but care should be taken not to stress young joints as growth plates take a while to fuse. AgilityNet is a great source of information.
- * **Obedience** - There is companion obedience and competition obedience. If you want a well mannered, well behaved dog you **SHOULD** do companion obedience and taking part in the KC Good Citizen's scheme will give you exercises and benchmarks to achieve all that is considered necessary for owning a well behaved dog. If you wish to take things further, you could enter competition obedience, which has 7 levels of classes at shows, and starting with a basic introductory class.
- * **Working trials** - This is a competitive activity based on the civilian equivalent of police dog work. They are physically demanding and both dog and owner need to be healthy and fit. Dogs compete in an agility section, obedience section which includes stays, search for articles within a designated area and track for articles on a pre-laid course.



... more activities



- * **Rally** - This is an activity derived from the heel work elements of competitive obedience with the dogs attempting a preset course with signs placed at up to 18 stations along the course, requiring them to perform one of around 80 different preset exercises. The exercises and design of the course is set at the judge's discretion and takes about 3 minutes to complete. Starting on lead, you progress through the first two levels, and at more advanced levels, the dog is required to compete off lead.
- * **Herding** - Herding trials are organised by the ISDS (International Sheep Dog Society). There are five main trials each year within the UK and Ireland, with national trials usually in July and August and the International in September. Every 3rd year, the Society organises a World Sheep Dog Trial. There are many smaller trails throughout the country. Inexperienced dogs, younger than 3 years, would start out in Nursery trials before competing in Novice and Open trials.
- * **Canicross (or canitrekking)** - You and your dog work as a team to complete a cross-country run (or in the case of canitrekking, a brisk walk). You wear a waist belt which attaches via a 2-metre bungee line to your dog's harness. Both you and your dog run, with your dog taking the lead from the start line to the finish.
- * **Therapy dog** - Owners of well behaved dogs can volunteer to take their dogs into establishments to give comfort, distraction and stimulation. Schools, hospitals, hospices, nursing home, care centres and prisons are some of the places where Therapy Dogs are welcomed. Your dog will be temperament assessed before being allowed to become part of the visiting teams.



You might also be interested in researching **Canine Hoopers, Search and Rescue, Medical Detection Dogs, Scent Work** and the **Show Border Collie Herding Test**.

Kennel Club Good Citizens

The Kennel Club Good Citizens scheme encourages owners of dogs, regardless of breed, to take part in training their dogs to meet criteria for 3 levels, bronze, silver & gold.

The aim is to ensure that dogs become easier to live with, responding to basic instructions, for their own safety and for living more harmoniously with their owners. Structured training with goals is a great way to build a bond between you and your dog, and succeeding is very rewarding for you both.

Ask your local trainer if they participate in the KC Good Citizens scheme.



Rescue

There is of course, always rescue - Breed Clubs usually have a chosen rescue that they support who are always looking for good, border-collie savvy homes.

It takes a very special person to be able to take on a rescue dog - many of these animals have been abused or neglected and it takes a lot of patience and understanding to rehabilitate them. This is not to say it cannot be done, but it can be a challenge - it is not the 'clean slate' of a new puppy.



Last words

Puppies do not come ready trained - when you see a dog responding to their owner, understand the time and patience that has been devoted to training the dog.

The effort you put into the early days with your puppy will be rewarded 10 fold as they mature into adults.

A more loyal and faithful friend would be hard to find.



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Content pg 4-10 sourced with kind permission <http://www.passim.me.uk/faqs.html>

Detailed breed health information at :
<https://pbhfuk.wixsite.com/pastoral/breedhealth>

If you have a Border Collie, you have a very special dog; a dog that is intelligent, sensitive, eager to please and very quick to learn. Sounds like the perfect pet? Yes, with our help they can make wonderful pets but we have a responsibility to try to understand all the factors that make a Border Collie what it is. The more we can understand our Border Collies, the less likely it is that we, and our collie will encounter serious problems. Border Collies have been bred for generations in a very specific and restricted environment for a very specific task and, as a breed, are relative new-comers to life as pets. Some cope very well and others struggle. It is our duty to try to understand these beautiful, clever creatures and to help them to cope.

We can easily find books that tell us what Border Collies have been bred for. We will be warned about their sensitivity to movement and tendency to chase things and about the fact that they need to have their brains occupied, but what we are not generally asked to think about are those characteristics that are not necessary in a working sheepdog, but which make life easier for a pet dog.

Anyone who has owned a Border Collie will be aware that they are generally cautious dogs. Without intensive and sensitive socialisation as puppies, they are often wary of people, intolerant of unfamiliar dogs and anxious about anything new or changing. Even with intensive socialisation some retain these characteristics. Border Collies are prone to being affected by a single bad experience and have poor "bounce back" when something goes wrong for them.

They are very sensitive to reprimands, but equally crave guidance and instruction. Because they are very sensitive to movement, any fast movement that they cannot control can be very disturbing to them. No wonder so many Border Collies hate traffic. Remember though, it is this sensitivity and intelligence that we find so appealing.

So why are they like this? Why can life upset them so easily? To understand our collies fully we need not only to consider what they have been bred for but also what they have not been bred for. When a shepherd is selecting dogs to breed from, he is selecting for a specific task and characteristics that do not interfere with this task are likely to be ignored.

The Border Collie



- *Cope with noise Collies need to have very acute hearing to hear and interpret a shepherd's signals at a great distance, but sheep farms are generally quiet places and their sensitive hearing does not cause them problems. Urban and domestic life bombards our dogs with noise and this can cause them extreme stress. Be aware of this and if necessary protect your dog from excessive noise. Speak quietly to your Collie, he doesn't need you to shout at him.
- *Cope with change sheep farms tend to be relatively unchanging places. There are sheep, the shepherd and his family, the barn where the dogs sleep and an old tractor or car. Sheep dogs don't generally need to cope with change. Every time our urban collie leaves home the street outside will probably have changed (new vehicles, new people, rubbish skips etc). Just going out for a walk, even if the dog looks forward to his walk, can generate stress and we need to be aware of this and help him cope.
- *Cope with the presence of strangers/visitors or groups of people Sheep farms tend to be isolated places. It is not necessary to be at ease with people to be a good working sheep dog. In a pet home our dogs are surrounded by many strange people in the street and visitors to the home. If you get your Collie as a puppy make sure he is sensitively socialised to people at an early age. If he is older, respect the fact that he may find meeting strange people stressful.
- *Cope with the presence of strange dogs apart from the familiar dogs with similar characteristics that live on the farm with them, working sheepdogs are unlikely to need to mix with other dogs. As pet owners we expect them to meet a lot of strange dogs, many with appalling "dog manners", and often with our dog on a lead so that it does not have the option of running away. Even if your collie does not react aggressively in these situations, he could very well be stressed.



Many sheepdogs will never leave their farms so traditionally they haven't really needed to get on with other dogs or unfamiliar people. Sociability and resilience are not characteristics that have historically been important in the development of the Border Collie. Although your dog may not be directly from working stock, he will still have many of the characteristics inherited from generations of working sheep dogs and equally he may not have inherited those characteristics that would make life in a pet home easier for him.

Shepherds are the experts with Border Collies and we can learn a lot from them. Yes, we've all heard of harsh and callous shepherds, but many value their dogs very highly, not just as working dogs, but also as members of their family. Watch a sheepdog working, it is referring back to the shepherd for guidance all the time. His impulses to chase and control movement are under very tight control. The shepherd is guiding the dog and the dog is exhibiting self-control. Ideally this is how we want our collie to be with us. If he is checking in with us to find out what to do next, not only is he under control and less likely to get himself into trouble, but he is also getting reassurance from us. He doesn't have to worry, we will tell him what to do in any situation. Encourage your dog to look to you for guidance, it shouldn't be too hard, it's in his genes!

Watch the shepherd too, he has to keep very calm and guide his dog at all times. You just don't see excitable shepherds, an excitable shepherd would mean an excited dog and scattered sheep! Be a calm owner. Think about this if you are considering Agility or Flyball with your Collie, a good working sheep dog is fast and has lightning reflexes, but is not in a state of over-excitement. Teach your dog calmly what you want him to do. If he understands and is enjoying what he is doing he will do his best; after all he has been bred from generations of dogs selected for their willingness to work as a team with their handler. There is no need for your dog to be roused to a hysterical state for it to perform well, and it is bad for its mental and physical health to be in such a state. If your dog shows signs of stress or gets over-excited ask yourself if this is really the best activity for him.

A final thought ... when a working sheepdog is not working alongside the shepherd, he is shut away in a quiet, non-stimulating place to rest and recover and to keep him out of mischief. Importantly, adrenaline levels that have probably been quite high while he is working now have a chance to return to normal. Your sensitive, alert pet Collie is being bombarded with information from his environment all the time. Make sure he has plenty of opportunity to rest in a secure, non-stimulating place where he can relax.

Think Border Collies, think working sheepdogs maximise their strengths, understand and respect their weaknesses.