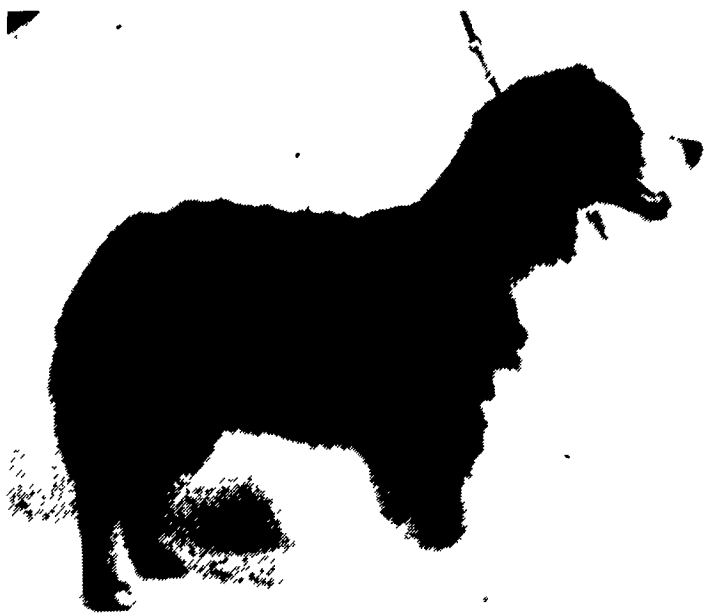


# Raising Good Shepherds At Windrush Farm



**Davlin's Dark Design CD STDd, or Jody for short, is one of the top all-around dogs in the country in 1988 and '89. In addition, he is a multiple high in-trial winner in stock dog and obedience trials.**

**BY LINDA WILLIAMS**  
Bedford Co. Correspondent  
BEDFORD VALLEY (Bedford Co.) — While still a teenager, Ann Fleming Humbertson became known for her expertise as a horsewoman. She captured awards all over the United States.

A hip operation ended that, but it began another career. Ann now is known nationwide as a breeder and trainer of Australian Shepherd dogs.

"I had 'Aussies' even when I had horses," Ann explained. "And, I've always admired the breed."

Ann learned much of what she knows from her grandfather, who raised dairy and beef cattle and sheep and used Aussies and English Shepherds to work his livestock.

A working dog, Aussies are known not only for their herding abilities, but also for their unusual merle, or spotted, coloring and blue eyes. The dogs come in four colorations: black tri-color, red tri-color, red merle, and blue merle, which has a lot of gray and black markings. The blue eyes are found on the merle dogs, while the tris have amber eyes. In addition, in the truest bloodlines, the dogs are born with bobbed tails.

Ann and her husband, Doug, and two-year-old daughter, Sarah, own eight Aussies that take up much of their time. Nearly every weekend is spent in competition at contests all over America. They attend shows regularly in Ohio, New York, New England, the East Coast, and the Midwest.

The Humbertsons have several national champions, and all their dogs have conformation points toward the championship title. Dogs that have earned the champion status are designated with CH before their name.

Currently at Windrush Farm are CH Propwash Absolutely, who is undefeated and at stud; CH Davlin's Doubletake, who is at stud; Hillside's Remembrance, Davlin's Dark Design CD STDd, one of the top all-around dogs in the country in 1988 and '89 and multiple high in-trial winner in stock dog and obedience trials; Kel-Mar's Herd'em of Colorado, at stud; Kel-Mar's Lisa Cain, the last daughter by WTCH CH Wind-song's Raisin Cain CD, one of the highest-titled Aussie dogs ever; Hillside's Princess Annabelle, CD STD; Dogpatch Sunny Kisses; and Gemini Cookie Monster.

#### Careful breeding

Ann breeds her dogs with the utmost of caution. "I generally have orders for the puppies before

I even consider breeding," Ann explained. "The Aussie is a wonderful companion. However, I do not like to sell them to anyone who will not do all they can to better the breed. I won't sell them to urban dwellers, and very few (puppies) go to suburban homes. I mainly want to see them placed on farms."

Nasty as the job is, Ann culls her puppies selecting those with just the right markings and herding instincts. A culled Aussie, sold as a pet, costs \$200, while a show-quality dog sells for between \$250 and \$300. "The difference," Ann pointed out, "is in the structure and how they compare with the breed standards." An average litter has seven to 10 puppies.

Ann is quick to stress that her income is not made with puppies. "Everyone should realize that you never get into puppies for the money. You can't make money with puppies. If you do, you aren't doing it correctly," she stated.

Ann has several tips for farmers wishing to buy an Aussie or other breed of dog. "Don't buy from 'backyard breeders' or pet stores. These dogs almost always have temperments or health problems or genetic defects."

When buying a working dog, breeders should see the parents work, make sure the parents have had their hips x-rayed and their eyes checked, and make sure the dog is true to breed. Ann warned that registration papers are no guarantee of quality.

While there are many herding breeds, the Aussie heads the list for the Humbertsons. "We have tried Border Collies, but they have too many physical problems," Ann said.

The collies are notorious for getting hip dysplasia, according to the couple. "Out of 12 Border Collies we tried, nine had that affliction," Ann added.

Ann finds that, while a good working Border Collie needs very little affection, an Aussie works harder the more attention it receives. "We spoil all of our dogs, and it just doesn't hurt their abilities in handling animals," she said.

#### Tough dogs

In addition to being healthier than Border Collies, the Aussies are tougher. "They have a tendency to be better for cattle because they are tougher natured," Ann explained. When a Border Collie gets kicked, it gives up, whereas the Aussie shakes it off and continues on with the job.

The main purpose of the Australian Shepherd is to herd. "Herding or helping the farmer to herd sheep or cattle was the main purpose of

the Australian Shepherd originally," Ann explained. But not all dogs have the right amount of instinct.

"Herding instinct is a genetically fragile balance of innate instincts that are molded by training," reported Ann. "It varies in strength, style, and concentration. It can be developed and sustained by proper exposure to livestock, or entirely concealed by lack of exposure or mishandling."

Both Humbertsons are certified herding-instinct testers and judges for the American Herding Breeds Association and the American Kennel Clubs. Late last month they conducted the first-ever AKC herding-instinct test in Vandergrift.

"Herding instinct, is either present or it is not," said Ann. "It varies in strength, style, and concentration and is not limited to a few breeds."

The Humbertsons have seen strong herding instincts in German Shepherds, spitz breeds, Rottweilers, and, much to Doug's surprise, a poodle.

#### Cattle and sheep dogs

Aussies generally are more adept at herding either cattle or sheep, but "the ultimate goal is to have a dog who can do both," said Ann. A dog that is better at working with sheep has a stronger heading instinct, while a dog with a heeling tendency works best with cattle.

In addition, females are better workers than males, according to Ann. "In males, their noses get in the way sometimes. They smell a rabbit and their concentration is off."

The Aussies belonging to Ann and Doug get a lot of first-hand training. Their farm, Windrush Farm, has a flock of 50 sheep including Cheviots, Border Leicesters, and Karakuls. Besides being used in dog training, the sheep are kept as market animals and for their wool.

A flock of ducks is used to fine tune the herding training of the Aussies.

Several of their dogs came from kennels where they had sat aimlessly for months before being discovered by the Humbertsons.

"They had excellent qualities and are pedigreed dogs," she commented. "All they needed was training to have the best come out in them."

#### Proper training necessary

While the instinct is an inborn trait in many dogs, it must be nurtured with the proper training. On a weekly basis, Ann spends many hours working with each of her eight Aussies, readying them for the shows ahead and for future owners. She trains them to work separately and in pairs.

Becoming skilled at working in pairs is important for dogs going to farmers with large livestock operations. Additional training in pairs

work comes when farmers call Ann for help rounding up livestock that has gotten loose. This emergency work is valuable as well for teaching dogs to work with cattle and sheep that aren't "dog broke," or used to being herded by dogs.

"Training dogs is not hard once you learn to communicate with them," said Ann. She believes that any canine owner could learn to border train a dog in three days. She teaches a class in dog obedience at the YMCA in Cumberland, Md. The Humbertsons also give demonstrations of their dogs' capabilities at festivals and fairs.

Ann's main goal with the Aussies is to do all she can to promote the breed and have the dogs work at their original purpose. "Our commitment is to preserve the more traditional moderate Aussie. We try to consistently produce free-moving, practical workers, those that are sound and will hold up under stress, and when first introduced to stock, will head and read their movements with

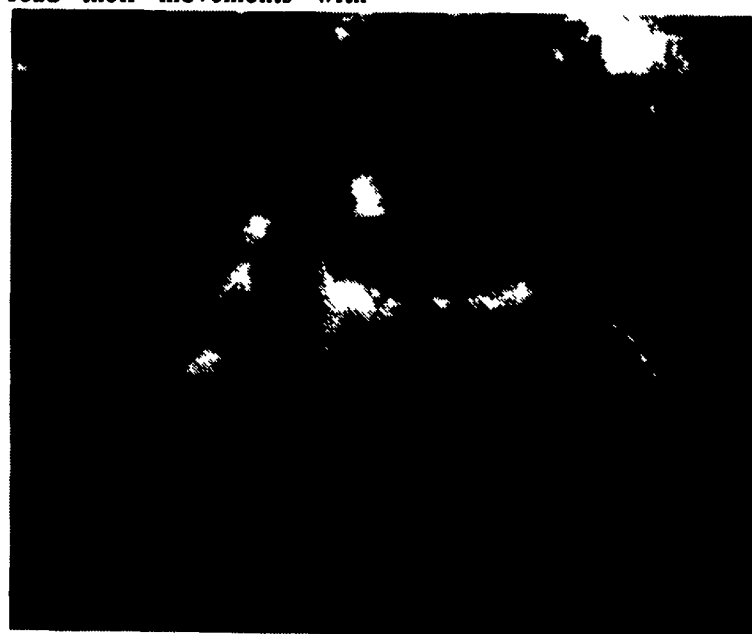
balance, eye, and fluid motion."

In promoting the breed, Ann is in the process of forming a club in the Mid-Atlantic region. Anyone interested in joining may call her at 814/356-3366.

"The Aussie is a dog that can help any farmer who has livestock that needs to be herded. The dogs do not bark, they do not nip. With proper training, they can save the farmer a lot of leg work," she added.

Doug is quick to agree as he remembers the farm on which he was raised. "I was the herding dog," he recalled. Doug's first experience with Aussies came when he got one to use on his farm. In fact, he met Ann while attending an obedience class with his Aussie.

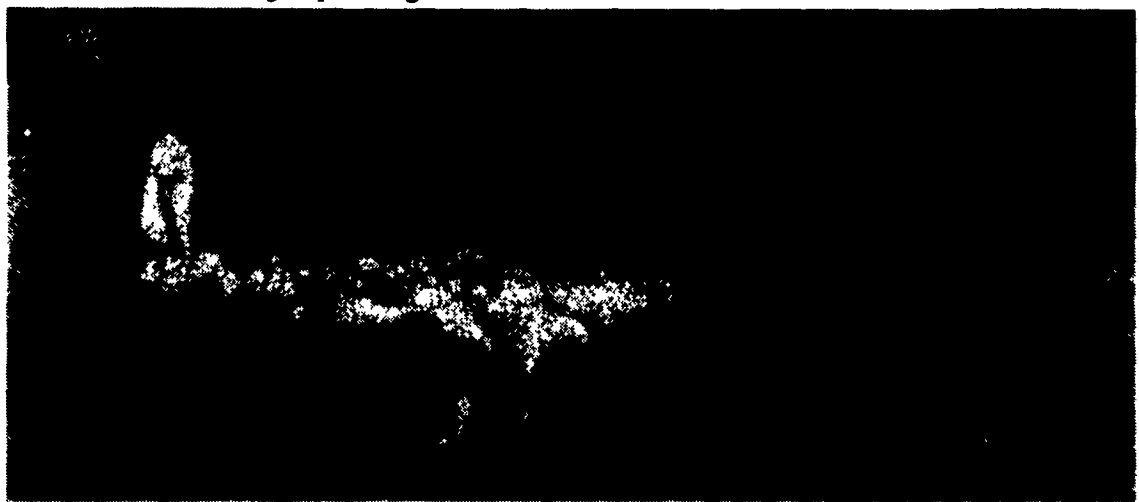
The affection that Doug and Ann have for their dogs is evident. One of the Aussies acted as ring bearer at their wedding three years ago, and another accompanied them on their honeymoon, which lasted only a day, as they had to get to a dog show the next day!



**Ann pauses with Hillside's Remembrance during a recent trial show. The dog, nicknamed Megan, is well on her way to championship status.**



**Doug and Ann relax with CH Propwash Absolutely and Kel-Mar's Herd'em of Colorado. The ribbons on the wall are a few of the awards they have won at shows. Kel-Mar, a gift from Ann to Doug, has a pedigree that goes back 17 generations.**



**Jody works on rounding up a flock of sheep with Ann.**