



Derry Leinaweaver, right, and son Johnny, left, shows off Joe, the 6-year-old blue dog.

## Australian Cattle Dogs Herd With Intelligence

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— "Almost 6½ years ago, we decided to get a dog to work cows. I was so impressed with the intelligence of the pup, I decided to get a female," Derry Leinaweaver said.

The animal she speaks so highly of is the Australian Cattle Dog, a short, sturdy, compact dog whose muscular frame and agility enables it to herd by swiftly nipping the heels of a cows. Because of its size, only 20 inches tall, the Australian cattle dog can come in behind a cow, nip quickly, and retreat, remaining low to avoid a sharp kick.

While nature provided the perfect body and agility for the cattle dog's natural herding instinct, breeding has combined other characteristics, such as intelligence.

"The Australian Cattle Dog, whose ancestors were imported directly from Australia, is a cross between the dingo dog, the blue merle collie, and the dalmation. The dingo is supposed to be the most intelligent canine there is," Derry explained.

By defining intelligence as the ability to learn, Leinaweaver's cattle dogs demonstrate what they have learned, by helping every day to keep the rest of the animals on their 40-cow dairy farm in the right place at the right time.

Derry's 6-year-old "blue" dog, Joe, knows which individual cows are to go where. "My blue dog Joe knows when they're wrong and you can actually see him waiting for the right command to put her where we want her."

Derry said, "These dogs learn by being with you. You have to teach them the basics - come, sit, stay. You want them to be under your control, but they have the natural herding instinct there

themselves. Rusty, my "red" dog started working sheep at four months old. It's naturally there. You just have to bring it out in them."

With the instinct to herd, an Australian cattle dog can adapt well to different farming operation needs, whether it is cattle, sheep, ducks, goats, or pigs.

Leinaweaver has four dogs on a 119-acre McVeytown dairy farm she owns with her husband Keith and sons Lee and Johnny. Derry also co-owns a female dog with her mother, Derry Krause. Of her four dogs, two are blue cattle dogs and two are red. "Blue" dogs give the illusion of blue hair when black and tan hairs mix with white ones. This blue mottled variety has black ears, black eye patches, and brown eyes. "Red" dogs, the most dominant variety, have dark red markings over an even speckled base. A careful study of pedigrees will help to determine the color of a litter of pups. Blue dogs bred to blue will never result in red puppies even if there are several reds in the pedigree. Reds, who normally come from a mixed background and can carry blue genes, can produce a mixed litter. But no matter what color they may turn out to be, all pups are born polar bear white, except for the eye patches. They then start to turn color by six weeks of age.

Derry raises a couple of litters each year from more than one female and bristles at the idea of "puppy mills".

"I like to produce good working dogs for people who love their dogs as a family member," Derry stresses.

Derry also realizes that Australian cattle dogs are not for everyone. "They are a one-man dog. They work better for one person and are very loyal. They want to

be with you in whatever you're doing. But not everyone should have one. They're not a dog to be penned all day - it makes them mean. They are very protective, which can give them a bad reputation. But once they know a person is supposed to be there, they accept you."

The nature of this breed's temperament can be trained or tempered if owners want to participate in the showing. And many of the Australian cattle dogs have pedigrees that rival the Registered Holsteins they work to keep in line.

Derry's red female, whose father was a Landmaster, has "champions back her line like you wouldn't believe!" She's also expecting a litter of puppies in a week, and, Derry hopes, the lineup of champions will go on.

"I co-own a female named Addie with my mother who is down in Mercersburg. One of those pups, Brier Haven Outback Cutter, owned by Cheryl Carey of Mechanicsburg, went to the Australian cattle dog speciality in South Dakota. He won his obedience class and took high in trial in this speciality cattle dog show."

Another pup of Cheryl's, which came from one of Derry's females, qualified in all three runs at the Gaines Regional Obedience Show in York. "They run the dogs (herding) three times and if the dog does something wrong, they lose a point. If enough points are lost, the dog doesn't qualify."

Derry does her part to promote the breed by conducting herding dog clinics such as the one at the Mifflin County Youth Park in Reedsville, held October 6.

When more time allows, Derry hopes to work closer with her own dogs and to someday attend the Speciality.

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