

Letter to Potential Owner

Burradoo Ranch Australian Kelpies

A letter of introduction to the Australian Kelpie and what you should expect with this wonderful working breed.

G'Day from the Burradoo Ranch, home to a group of top rate Australian Kelpie stock dogs. In order to introduce you to our web site, we have included a short letter that explains our dog program and what you should or shouldn't expect from puppies or older dogs purchased from our ranch. First a little background. Bill was born in Australia and had his first exposure to Border Collies and Kelpies at an early age. These dogs were literally tools of the stations and performed their duties or were culled. It may sound cruel, but in reality the Australian properties of days gone by, and to the present, were labor short, hence the use of good dogs was a necessity versus a novelty as you see in many areas of North America. Janice has been a small animal veterinarian for over 35 years. She has seen breeds of dogs that were wonderful using animals turned into breeds that are non-functional and only beneficial to the show dog mentality.

The Burradoo Kelpies have been selected from various lines in Australia with different backgrounds. The Riana line goes back to the very foundation stock of the Kelpie in Australia, while the station dogs imported from Tom and Ian Gilcrist of Casterton, Victoria are proven dogs that work stock on a daily basis. In our breeding program, we go to Australia annually to buy adult dogs that we personally watch on both sheep and cattle to make a determination as to whether they will fit into the mountain country of south central Montana. We deal primarily with cattle in the rugged terrain of the Beartooth Mountains and foothills using horses for our gathering ventures. Now let's be honest, which is something not always seen in the dog and horse selling world. Will every puppy leaving our ranch be a world beating stock dog? The answer is "NO" and any breeder that professes that they can produce that result is either lying or not dealing in reality. What will we promise you? We will promise that we have incorporated into our breeding program the best working dogs we could purchase and we have imported them from

Australia, the birth place of the Kelpie breed. The puppies we produce all come from working stock. The other realities that the potential buyer must face is one of their own ability to train dogs, the type of stock worked, the type of country where the dog is expected to perform and most importantly what the Australian Kelpie has been bred for over 100 years to DO.

We have talked to frustrated stock owners with generations of livestock ownership asking why Kelpies always go around to the head versus pushing from the rear the way they want! Kelpies have been bred to go to the head and to utilize the Kelpie as he has been bred, the dog is to pull to the drover/cowboy, with driving being one of the last things to be taught to the dog. Since these dogs have been bred to go to the head, you can either adjust to them or train them to adjust to driving. Every one of our breeding animals has been observed working “large” flocks of sheep (1000-9000 head) and mobs of cattle (100-500 head) by themselves or with one other dog and have handled them quietly and efficiently with very few commands. The difference in Australia is that there are not five to ten cowboys available to help move those animals, so the dogs have to do the work or it doesn't get done. In America we still expect to take the local contingent of cowboys and volunteer riders out and then have dogs work well with multiples of orders by different people and each of these riders moving their horses in a fashion that should and does confuse any smart dog in trying to read their positions relative to the stock. Hence, there usually is a resulting wreck of cattle with nobody knowing what the hell is supposed to happen. **DON'T BLAME THE DOG!**

The first order of business for the new Kelpie owner is to buy some books or DVD's showing the Australian Kelpie's working style and historical background in order to understand why they shouldn't be expected to work like a Blue Heeler or a Border Collie. The Kelpie most closely works like a Border Collie and has a similar personality. Note the word similar, as the Kelpie is typically more independent and tries to do their own thinking in tough stock situations. One major difference is that many Border Collie lines have become either 3-5 sheep trial dogs or

Frisbee catchers, with very little thinking ability as there is a whistle being blasted into their ears and a down command every three seconds. Don't get me wrong, as the Border Collie is a great breed and there are many breeders now focused on breeding dogs for the real needs of a farm or ranch. We still keep a couple around our ranch and always will. We have many neighbors with our Border Collie blood lines working on their ranches, with that line of dogs coming originally from Ireland with Sean Derrig. Sean excelled in trialing Border Collies in both single and brace trials and is now very successful in the horse back pointing dog trials throughout the U.S.A and Canada, with many championships under his belt. If it wasn't for Sean, we might not be where we are today in the stock dog arena.

The Queensland Heeler is a dog that soured many stock people to working dogs as the owner typically only saw the rear end of the stock as it was running off with dogs nipping at their heels. As many ranch owners can attest, most of this breed ended up as a truck dog and was left chained up on the truck bed until dinner time back at the house. They can be great dogs in the right environment, but again misunderstood and improperly used in most cases.

The above two breeds are most familiar to stock people outside of Australia, but the Australian Kelpie originated and developed on a continent that has one of the harshest environments to which a dog could be exposed. In the summers the heat can be unbearable and then when winter rolls around you have cold and damp all the way to snow. The Kelpies are expected to work through all these conditions and live a Spartan life in a no nonsense kennel. Many survive on cull livestock or other game shot to feed the dogs. Tough is as tough does. The Kelpie adapted and is now considered the primary stock dog in Australia.

In January 2010, we attended a 38,000 mixed sheep and lamb sale at Forbes, New South Wales with Kevin Howell and his seven dogs. They worked from dawn to dusk alongside other stockmen and their dogs in 90 degree heat. My survey during the day indicated that there were 80 plus dogs working the stock yards and only one was not a Kelpie! The

truck drivers, stock agents and owners each had a dog or two, or in our case seven, and the dog of choice was the Kelpie. Please note that we are not advertising our dogs as only open country operators! We breed and import dogs that are expected to work the open range, to handle stock in corrals (yards in Aussie) and to load and unload trucks, in addition to attending a field trial on the weekends, if their owners have time. This is a versatile breed and our lines reflect multiple use backgrounds.

Finally, this letter was written for our web page to provide an honest and informative discussion on whether Kelpies, specifically the type we are aiming to produce for farm and ranch work, will fit you and your program. Our intention is to educate the North American public about this breed and how they can fit into the more recently adopted handling techniques being promoted. A good working dog can cut down on operational costs, keep stock in a calm and healthy state, and at the end of the day, be a partner on which you can depend in what we all know is a very risky business. Happy Trails to you, your horse (or mule) and your faithful Kelpie!

Sincerely,

Bill and Janice Mytton