

International Sheep Dog Society.

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# Sheep Dog Training



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Undoubtedly, however, a whistle is more penetrating at a distance or in a gale. In any case, as few signals as possible should be used, and it always seems to me to be silly to whistle at close quarters when a wave of the arm or a low-spoken command is simpler and more fitting.

The dog can be sent off around the sheep by a whistle—remember your dog can be trained to and by whatever signal you care to use. There is no set or secret formula, usually each man finds out his own commands, and the dog simply recognises and accepts them—a “Sh-sh” stage whisper, or a “Go-out” spoken command.

The invariable practice, however, once the dog has rounded the sheep, is to stop him with a sharp whistle or the “Whew” used by everyone who tries to whistle at anything.

The dog is then told to “Come on” either in so many words or by a different whistle or couple of whistles. He should learn to come quietly when you say “Steady,” or give a slow protracted whistle. Teach him to “Come by” on either side or flank, to go “Back” or “In here” as required.

Remember always to teach a young dog to keep sufficiently wide of his sheep when close to you. This you can do by waving him out and ordering by your voice at the same time. If he still persists, then get the sheep into a small enclosure and keep yourself between him and them.

Again remember that if you learn to exercise your superior will-power over the animal—sometimes quickly gaining the ascendancy, sometimes slowly and imperceptibly—you will obtain without the slightest ill-treatment the necessary mastery over the dog and will thus train each other.

When penning remember that the man must literally keep his end up, not only by directing the dog, but by judging when and where to move and how to coax the sheep instead of drive them.

Some strains of dogs, and some individual animals, show a tendency to circle widely round the sheep, and such dogs invariably go to the farthest point even of a scattered flock in a big pasture. It is a comparatively simple matter to train them to come in more closely when required, but it is a much harder task to teach a dog to

keep sufficiently wide when his natural inclination is to cut off the nearest group of sheep instead of rounding the whole flock.

In this case, it is necessary to direct the dog in the first instance on a much wider outer circle, and, if he still cuts in, to stop him and turn him out again as often as is required. Usually, he picks up what is required of him and either learns to run on a wider “cast” or readily turns back on a wider sweep.

#### **Shedding.**

A dog should never be allowed to “shed” or separate some sheep from the others (especially if he shows a real gift for this phase of sheepdog work) until he has been thoroughly trained to “gather” or bring in sheep. Otherwise he will constantly attempt the “shedding” he loves, no matter how disgusted the master, who wants them “gathered.”

#### **Driving.**

“Driving” is an art which many trainers find difficult, and which some collies find impossible. This is not surprising as it is against a dog’s natural instinct to drive away, every fibre of his being urging him to bring his flock to his master.

Usually it is quite easy to train a dog to drive by taking a flock along a line, with the sheep first, the dog in the middle and the shepherd bringing up the rear. Another way is to drive some sheep around the field, close to the fence or wall, again with the three parties in the same order. The dog learns easily and simply what is required.

#### **A Source of Wonder.**

It is a source of wonder to many that a dog can understand what human beings hardly can. Given the necessary patience, understanding and persistence on the part of the human half of the combination, and the requisite amount of intelligence in the collie, there usually develops between the trainer and his dog not only a useful working partnership but a closely woven bond of mutual esteem and affection, the breaking of which, whatever the cause, is always accompanied by grief and pain.



Shedding in the Championship at the “International.”