

Farm Dogs

Objective

Students will read about working farm dogs and answer comprehension questions about the reading. Students will learn some commands used for herding dogs and work in groups to “herd” each other using the commands. Students will play games related to herding dogs.

Background

Dogs have been the companions of farmers ever since they learned the farmers would feed them if they helped with the livestock instead of eating it. Dogs have many jobs on the farm. They protect livestock from predators, help control mice and rats, and help find lost animals. There are even dogs that help farmers with disabilities do their work. Some dogs are also trained to herd sheep or cattle.

Herding dogs are dogs that either have been trained in herding or belong to a breed developed for herding. They are trained to respond to the sound of a whistle or word of command.

Some herding breeds work well with any kind of animal. Others have been bred to work with specific kinds of animals. Cattle, sheep and goats are the most common farm animals with which herd dogs are used.

Herding behavior is modified predatory behavior. Through selective breeding, humans have discouraged the natural inclination of dogs to prey on cattle and sheep while at the same time keeping their hunting skills.

Early herding dogs were large, powerful animals that were rough with stock and difficult to control, but they displayed an instinct to gather sheep. Over the years farmers needed gentler dogs that were easier to control. Small farmers needed dogs that could also hunt game and sniff out sheep buried in snow. Because this dog would work far away from its master, it would also have to respond to the human voice, whistle and gesture.

Dogs work animals in different ways. Some breeds, such as the Australian Cattle Dog, will nip at the heels of animals. These breeds are called heelers.

Other breeds, like the Border Collie, get in front of the animals and use what is called strong eye to stare down the animals. They are known as “headers.” The headers, or fetching dogs, keep livestock in a group. They go to the front or head of the animals to turn or stop the animal’s movement.

Before widespread fencing of the American West, sheep were often tended by shepherds, who camped out with their flocks or took them out daily to graze. Tending of grazing flocks in unfenced areas also occurred in midwestern and eastern farming areas and even in urban areas. Into the early 20th century, sheep were being grazed in Prospect Park in Brooklyn and Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park. The Sheep Meadow in Central Park in New York City came by that name due to the sheep that were grazed there from the 1860s until the 1930s.

Oklahoma C3 Standards

GRADE 3

Social Studies PALS—
A.1,3,B.4,5,C.7;
2.A.2,B.6,C.7,D.10;
3.A.1,3,B.4
Social Studies Content—
3.2.B

COMMON CORE

Language Arts—
3.RI.1,3,4,5,9,10; 3.RF.4;
3.W.2bcd,4,6,7,10; 3.SL.4;
3.L.1,2,3,4

GRADE 4

Social Studies PALS—
1.A.1,3,B.4;
2.A.2,B.4,6,7,9,10; 3.B.4
Social Studies Content—
1.5

COMMON CORE

Language Arts—
3.RI.1,3,4,9,10; 3.RF.4;
4.W.2abcde,4,6,7,10;
4.SL.4; 4.L.3,4

GRADE 5

Social Studies PALS—
1.A.1,B.4,6,C.7,9;
2.A.2,B.4,6,C.7,8,9,10
Social Studies Content—
2.6

COMMON CORE

Language Arts—
3.RI.1,4,6,7,9,10; 3.RF.4;
5.W.2abcde,4,6,7,10;
4.SL.4; 5.L.1,2; 5.L.3,4

Vocabulary

breed—to produce (plants or animals) by sexual reproduction

companion—one that often accompanies another

disability—lack of ability, power, or fitness to do something

fetching—going after and bringing back

flock—a group of animals (as birds or sheep) assembled or herded together

gesture—a movement of the body or limbs that expresses an idea, a feeling or a command

graze—to feed on growing grass or herbs

herd—a number of animals of one kind kept or living together

inclination—a feeling of liking or of wanting to do something

instinct—a natural ability or inclination

livestock—animals kept or raised; especially : farm animals kept for use and profit

predator—an animal that lives by killing and eating other animals

prey—an animal hunted or killed by another animal for food

selective breeding—the process of breeding plants and animals for particular traits

tend—to have responsibility for as caretaker

Language Arts/Social Studies Activities

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
2. Provide copies of the table Common Breeds of Herding Dogs, included with this lesson.
 - Students will use online or library resources to find information to complete the table.
 - On a large map of the world, students will use map pins to mark the country of origin of each of the dogs.
 - Students will develop graphs to illustrate the information about the dogs.
3. Each student will select one of the dogs listed and write a research report and present their findings to the class using Power Point or other computer technology.
4. Provide copies of the reading page included with this lesson.
 - Students will read the page and answer the questions at the bottom of the page.
 - Use the questions to lead a class discussion of the text.

Physical Activities

1. Before class, inflate two white balloons.
 - Attach short pieces of black curling ribbon to make sheep tails, and use a black marker to draw faces on them.
 - Glue pictures of two different breeds of dogs onto two fly swatters.
 - Divide students into two teams—the Border Collies and the German Shepherds.
 - Give the first student on each team one of the fly swatters.
 - Students will use the fly swatters to herd their team’s “sheep” across the room and back to the next player in line.
 - The first team to finish herding their sheep wins! (You may want to have “sheep” clones ready in case the originals pop.)
2. Divide students into two groups.
 - Students will take turns acting as “working dogs” while the other students act as sheep or cattle.
 - Provide an area for the corral.
 - The “dogs” have to herd all of the “sheep/cattle” into the corral without losing any strays.
 - Review the “Basic Herding Dog Commands” included with this lesson.
 - Call out the commands to direct the student “dogs” in their herding.

Extra Reading

Drummond, Ree, *Charlie the Ranch Dog*, HarperCollins, 2011.

Erickson, John R., and Gerald L. Holmes, *The Case of the Perfect Dog* (Hank the Cowdog), Maverick, 2012.

Katz, Jon, *Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm*, Henry Holt & Co., 2011.

Urbigkit, Cat, *Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs: How They Guard Sheep*, Boyds Mills, 2005.

Name _____

Farm Dogs

Dogs have been the companions of farmers ever since they learned the farmers would feed them if they helped with the livestock instead of eating it. Dogs have many jobs on the farm. They protect livestock from predators, help control mice and rats, and help find lost animals. There are even dogs that help farmers with disabilities do their work. Some dogs are also trained to herd sheep or cattle.

Herding dogs are trained to respond to the sound of a whistle or a word of command. Some herding dogs belong to special breeds that have been developed for herding. Border collies and German shepherds are examples of dogs that have been bred for herding.

Some herding breeds work well with any kind of animal. Others have been bred to work with specific kinds of animals. Cattle, sheep and goats are the most common farm animals with which herd dogs are used.

Herding behavior is modified predatory behavior. The natural inclination of dogs is to prey on cattle and sheep. Through selective breeding, humans discourage that inclination but keep the dogs' hunting skills.

Early herding dogs were large, powerful animals that were rough with stock and difficult to control, but they displayed an instinct to gather sheep. Over the years farmers needed gentler dogs that were easier to control. Small farmers needed dogs that could also hunt game and sniff out sheep buried in snow. Because this dog would work far away from its master, it would also have to respond to the human voice, whistle and gesture.

Dogs work animals in different ways. Some breeds, such as the Australian Cattle Dog, will nip at the heels of animals. These breeds are called heelers. Other breeds, like the Border Collie, get in front of the animals and use what is called strong eye to stare down the animals. They are known as "headers." The headers, or fetching dogs, keep livestock in a group. They go to the front of the animal herd to turn or stop the animals' movement.

Before widespread fencing of the American West, sheep were often tended by shepherds, who camped out with their flocks or took them out daily to graze. Tending of grazing flocks in unfenced areas also occurred in midwestern and eastern farming areas and even in urban areas. Into the early 20th century sheep were still being grazed in Prospect Park in Brooklyn and in Baltimore's Druid Hill Park. The Sheep Meadow in Central Park in New York City came by that name due to the sheep that were grazed there from the 1860s until the 1930s.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did early farmers get dogs to work for them?
2. List three possible jobs for dogs on a farm.
3. How do farmers let their herding dogs know what they need for them to do?
4. What are the most common farm animals for which herding dogs are used?
5. What does it mean that herding behavior is "modified predatory behavior?"
6. Describe early herding dogs.
7. Name the two ways dogs work farm animals.
8. Shepherds camped out with flocks or took them out daily to graze before what occurred in the American West?

Name _____

Common Herding Dog Breeds

Use online search engines or library resources to complete the information about these common breeds of herding dogs.

BREED	ORIGINALLY CAME FROM WHAT COUNTRY?	BRED TO HERD OR GUARD WHAT ANIMAL	SIZE	COLOR
Australian Shepherd				
Australian Stumpy Tail				
Basque Shepherd Dog				
Bearded Collie				
Beauceron				
Belgian Shepherd Dog				
Border Collie				
Catahoula Cur				
German Shepherd Dog				
Kerry Blue Terrier				
Kangal				
Lapponian Herder				
Old English Sheepdog				
Portuguese Water Dog				
Rottweiler				
Samoyed				
Swedish Vallhund				
Welsh Corgi				

Name _____

Common Herding Dog Breeds (answers)

Use online search engines or library resources to complete the information about these common breeds of herding dogs.

BREED	ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED IN WHAT COUNTRY?	BRED TO HERD OR GUARD WHAT FARM ANIMAL?	SIZE	COLOR
Australian Shepherd	US	Australian sheep	18-23 in.; 40-65 lb.	black, red, blue merle, red merle
Australian Stumpy Tail	Australia	cattle	46-51 cm	speckled red or blue
Basque Shepherd	Spain/France	cattle and sheep		yellow
Bearded Collie	Scottish	sheep and cattle	20-22 in.; 40-60 lb.	black, blue, brown, fawn with white or tan markings
Beauceron	Northern France	sheep	60-70 cm high; 30-45 kg	black and tan or tan and gray
Belgian Shepherd	Belgium	sheep	56-66 cm; 20-30 kg	varied
Border Collie	Anglo-Scottish border	sheep	18-22 in.; 27-45 lb.	varied
Catahoula Cur	American	cattle, pigs	20-26 inches; 40-90 lb	varied
German Shepherd Dog	Germany	sheep	53-65 cm; 22-40 kg	tan with black saddle
Kerry Blue Terrier	Ireland	cattle, sheep	18 1/2 inches; 33-40 lb	
Kangal	Turkey	sheep, cattle	28-34in; 90-175 lb	pale fawn or tan
Lapponian Herder	Finland	reindeer	46-51 cm; 70 lb.	black, dark grey, brown
Old English Sheepdog	England	sheep	61 cm; 46 kg	grey, grizzle, blue, blue merle
Portuguese Water Dog	Portugal	fish	17-23in.; 35-50 lb.	black, black and white, brown
Rottweiler	Germany	cattle	56-69 cm; 35-60 lb.	black with tan markings
Samoyed	Russia	reindeer	19-23.5 in.; 17-30 km	white
Swedish Vallhund	Sweden	cattle	31-33 cm.; 9-14 kg	grey, greyish brown, greyish yellow, reddish brown
Welsh Corgi	Wales	cattle	12 in.; 30 lb.	varied

Basic Herding Dog Commands

These commands may be indicated by a hand movement, whistle or voice.

COMMAND	RESPONSE
1. "Come-bye" "Bye."	Go to the left of the stock, or clockwise around them.
2. "Away to me." "Away." "Way."	Go to the right of the stock, or counterclockwise around them.
3. "Stand."	Stop, although when said gently may also mean just to slow down.
4. "Wait." "(Lie) down." "Sit."	Stop.
5. "Steady." "Take time."	Slow down.
6. "Cast."	Gather the stock into a group.
7. "Find."	Search for stock. (A good dog will hold the stock until the shepherd arrives. Some will bark when the stock have been located.)
8. "Get out." "Get back."	Move away from the stock. (Used when the dog is working too close to the stock, potentially causing the stock stress. Occasionally used as a reprimand.)
9. "Hold."	Keep stock where they are.
10. "Bark." "Speak up."	Bark at stock. (Useful when more force is needed.)
11. "In here."	Go through a gap in the flock. (Used when separating stock.)
12. "Walk up." "Walk on." "Walk."	Move in closer to the stock.
13. "Look back."	Return for a missed animal.
14. "That'll do."	Stop working and return to handler.