

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 that 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. Farmers with small operations 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

Oklahoma Academic Standards

GRADE 3

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: R.7; W.3. Vocabulary: R.1,3; W.1,2. Research: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2,3. Multimodal: R.1; W.1,2. Measurement: 2,3,4,5. Life Science: 3-1; 4-2

GRADE 4

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: R.7; W.3. Vocabulary: R.1,3; W.1,2. Research: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2,3. Multimodal: R.1; W.1,2. Measurement: 2,4,5. Life Science: 1-1

GRADE 5

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: R.7; W.3. Vocabulary: R.1,3; W.1,2. Research: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2,3. Multimodal: R.1; W.1,2. Measurement: 2,2



Vocabulary

breed—a group of animals that are different from related kinds (a breed of dogs)

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

the 1860s until the 1930s.

English Language Arts

1. Before reading background information to students, ask questions to determine their prior knowledge. Question Prompts:
 - Name breeds of farm dogs that farmers and ranchers use?
 - How do farm dogs help farmers and ranchers?
 - How do farm dogs know what to do when they are working?
2. Provide copies of the Farm Dogs Reading Page included with this lesson.
 - Students will read the page individually or in small groups.
 - While they are reading, students will think about the questions and their answers and “Connect, Correct, and Collect” as they read.
 - CONNECT: Can students find the answers to the questions you asked?
 - CORRECT: Did their answers match the information they read, or do they need to correct their answers?
 - COLLECT: Were students able to collect any new information to answer the questions?
 - Students will answer the questions at the bottom of the Reading Page.
 - Use the questions to lead a class discussion of the text.
3. Discuss vocabulary words and their meanings
 - Students will list the vocabulary words included in this lesson.
 - Students will write the definition for each word in his or her own words and draw pictures to illustrate the words.
 - Students will act out the words. Examples:
 - For the word “fetch” student will fetch something to bring back to his or her desk
 - For the word “companion” student will find a companion to walk with.
 - For the word “gesture” student will use only gestures to communicate with his or her companion.
4. 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 charts to illustrate the information about the dogs.
5. Create a “Herd or Guard Chart” on your wall, using the “Bred to Herd or Guard What Farm Animal” column from the “Common Herding Dog Breeds” chart. List the farm animals on the wall.
 - Students will use online or library resources to find pictures of the farm dogs.

—Students will draw or print pictures of the farm dogs and post them with the farm animal it herds or guards.

—Students will work individually or in groups to develop questions to ask the class, using the results of the “Herd or Guard Wall Chart.”

Possible questions:

How many animals do border collies herd or guard? What breed of dog herds/guards fish? Are farm dogs used more often with sheep or pigs?

6. Each student will select one of the dogs listed, write a research report and present their findings to the class using Power Point or other computer technology.
7. After completing the lesson, students will write in their own opinion which farm dog they think is the best. Students will use 100 words or less and include facts from the lesson and their research to persuade others that they are right.

Math

1. Use the size information from the “Common Herding Dog Breeds” chart to create a size chart on your wall. List each dog breed.
 - Provide students with twine to find the length of each breed of dog.
 - Students will use standard or non-standard units of measurement to find the lengths.
 - If appropriate for your grade level, students will convert their measurements from one unit of measure to another. Students can work individually or in groups.
 - Students will tape their twine to the wall next to the appropriate breed.
 - Students will use the size chart to answer questions. Possible questions:
 - Which breed of dog is ____ long? How much longer is the ____ than the ____? Which of these dogs is the shortest? ____

Science

1. Students will use the information in the “Common Herding Dog Breeds” chart to create dichotomous keys about farm dogs.
 - Students will work in groups to create the keys.
 - Students will create the keys on paper, poster board or smart board.
 - Students will share their keys with the class.

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.

Ag in My Community

Ask a local farmer or rancher to bring his or her farm dog to the school to demonstrate commands used with herding dogs.

Take a field trip to a farm or ranch to watch a farm dog at work.

Use an online search engine to find video of herding dogs at work Search for “Sheep dog voice commands” and “Herding whistle signals,” or use the following links:

Sheep dog voice commands:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63kEtzehiXo>

Herding whistle signals:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tqWur9OUc4>

- 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

FICTION

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.

NONFICTION

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.

Farm Dogs

Dogs have been the companions of farmers ever since they learned that 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. Farmers with small farming operations 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.

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Comprehension Questions

1. How did early farmers get dogs to work for them?
2. List three possible jobs for dogs on a farm.
3. Name other breeds of dogs that have jobs? How are their jobs similar to farm dogs' jobs? How are they different?
4. How do farmers let their herding dogs know what they need for them to do?
5. Identify the most common farm animals for which herding dogs are used?
6. What does it mean that herding behavior is "modified predatory behavior?"
7. Use your own words to describe early herding dogs.
8. Compare and contrast "Headers" and "Heelers."
9. 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				

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Name _____

Common Herding Dog Breeds (answers)

Breed	Originally Came from What Country?	Bred to herd or guard what animal	Size	Color
Australian Shepherd	USA	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	46-66 cm; 20-30 kg	varied
Border Collie	Anglo-Scottish border	sheep	18-22 in; 27-45 lb	varied
Catahoula Cur	American	cattle, pigs	10-26 in; 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 in; 33-40 lb	
Kangal	Turkey	sheep, cattle	28-34 in; 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	17-23 in 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
Come-by Bye	Go to the left of the stock or clockwise around them.
Away to me Away Way	Go to the right of the stock or counterclockwise around them.
Stand	Stop, although when said gently may also mean just to slow down.
Wait (Lie) down. Sit	Stop.
Steady Take time	Slow down.
Cast	Gather the stock into a group.
Find	Search for stock. (A good dog will hold the stock until the shepherd arrives. Some will bark when the stock have been located.)
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.)
Hold	Keep stock where they are.
Bark Speak up	Bark at stock. (Useful when more force is needed.)
In here	Go through a gap in the flock. (Used when separating stock.)
Walk up Walk on Walk	Move in closer to the stock.
Look back	Move in closer to the stock.
That'll do	Stop working and return to handler.