

Scottish shepherds brought Border Collies to U.S. in 1800s

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Long history

Border Collies descended from the domesticated, regional collies of the British Isles. Collie in old Celtic is believed to mean "useful." The term Border Collie refers to the Anglo-Scottish border and was first used by the International Sheep Dog Society in the United Kingdom in 1915 to distinguish the dogs from other collies.

The Border Collie traces back to a dog known as Old Hemp, who lived in Northumberland from 1893 to 1901. He was a quiet, powerful dog to which sheep responded easily. Shepherds used him for stud and Old Hemp's working style became the Border Collie style.

Scottish shepherds brought Border Collies to the U.S. in the 1800s. Sam Stoddart, a Scottish shepherd and well-known Oregon rancher, helped spread their use in Oregon and Idaho.

Thirty-five years ago, cattle ranchers in the West used Blue Heelers, the Australian cattle dog, more than Border Collies, says Geri Byrne, 59, a trainer regarded by the American Border Collie Association as an authority on Border Collies in the West.

"A Heeler can drive cattle, but a Border Collie is more versatile," Byrne says. "Its natural instinct is to round them up and bring them back to you."

It was at the Red Bluff Bull Sale in Red Bluff, Calif., about 30 years ago that Border Collies began catching on more with ranchers in the West, she says.

Dog stories

The Byrnes bought their first Border Collie at Red Bluff in the 1990s. They called her Moon and she proved herself well. One of her memorable moments was getting even with a cow that took advantage of her in the waters of a creek crossing.

"After they got out, I put her on my four-wheeler to save her from walking. When we got to the meadow, she found that cow and chewed on her," Byrne says.

Some years later, it was Moon's daughter, Di, who jumped off a cliff above the same creek to reach the cows.

"My husband was a little concerned until he saw she was OK. It was a steep slope of about 50 feet on which she landed a few times on the way



Border Collie Gus, 2, and his owner, Dave Billingsley, are shown at Billingsley Ranch near Palisades, Wash., on Dec. 31. The ranch house and stockyards are in the background.



Billingsley



Byrne

down. You or I couldn't have gotten where she got. I guess you could say she had more heart than brains," Byrne says. "We worried her name might be prophetic."

Another time, Byrne and her late husband, Dan, left Di in the cab of their pickup while they tended some cattle on their Tulelake ranch in northeastern California.

They returned a short while later to find the seat ripped up and the steering wheel chewed.

"We learned our lesson that Di would chew her way out to come help us," Byrne recalls with more amusement than she probably had at the time.

At Montgomery Creek Ranch north of Bishop, Calif., owner Dave Doonan, 52, recently took a 16-week-old Border Collie pup out with him to feed the cows.

"She about tore me up to get out (of the pickup) to see the cows," he said. "She scratched my neck and the seat to try to get out the window. She knew she was supposed to do something with those cows."

Doonan has had Border Collies nearly 10 years. He got them as he acquired more grazing allotments and says a good



Gus, 2, gives what Dave Billingsley calls his "RCA-Victor" pose at Billingsley Ranch near Palisades, Wash., on Dec. 31. He is one of two Border Collies on the ranch.

Border Collie equals three or four people on horseback.

"Some of our ground is boggy. The cattle know that and go out there to hide. You don't want to go out there on horse or foot, but the Border Collie can go out and bring them back," he said.

Richard and Jeanette (Stoddart) Yturriondobeitia have four Border Collies on their 12-Mile Ranch in southeastern Oregon, about 35 miles north of McDermitt, Nev.

"We use them everyday. They're just like another person. They know their job. They don't argue. They don't complain and they show up for work," Yturriondobeitia, 70, said.

The dogs make it easier to get things done with fewer people and they can take hot and dry weather better than most dogs, he said.

"Our neighbor to the north has some of the best blood lines of Kelpie (an Australian sheep dog). I wouldn't discount them but I prefer my Border Collie. On average they seem a little easier to deal with. Some other dogs don't learn as fast and don't want to work as much," Yturriondobeitia said.

"The Border Collie's natural instinct is to want to help, that's their biggest attribute. I watched my daughter lose her gloves the other day and the dog (Dude) picked them up and handed them back to her. It was pretty cool. She didn't have to get off her horse," he said.

Dave Billingsley, 73, owner of Billingsley Ranch near Palisades, Wash., said Border Collies are almost too smart, loyal and have an innate sense of bunching cattle and keeping

them together, which is needed to move them.

"The females can be a little more sensitive so you have to be careful not to act mad at them. The advantage to using a whistle is you get rid of voice inflections. If you yell too much, sensitive ones will quit and go home," he said.

Watching a good handler with a whistle at competitions is "like someone playing music" because different tones and sequences are different commands, he said.

High-priced

Walker has worked with most breeds of stock dogs but prefers Border Collies because they are versatile, easy to train, good-natured with kids and can catch cattle no one else can.

"They don't make good house pets because they will get bored and crazy and tear things up. They need a job. ... If you don't have a job for them, they'll find one," Walker said.

"When guys call me looking for a working dog and want to leave them on the porch, I don't sell to them because what will happen is the dog will be off on the neighbor's cattle and get himself shot," he said.

There are a couple dozen stock dog breeders and trainers in the West.

Walker raises a litter or two a year. He sells basic-trained dogs for \$1,500 and finished dogs for \$5,000 to \$7,500. He says that's about the norm, with dogs that are better trained fetching higher prices.

His dogs have won national championships, and on Dec. 9 he sold his top dog, Cable, for \$21,500 at the Western Bloodstock Sale in Fort Worth, Texas. Another Border Collie sold for \$27,500 at the same auction, a record high, he said.

"It's like horses or anything else. Pedigree and ability. Cable is a pretty exceptional dog. Usually when someone has a dog like Cable they don't want to sell it," Walker said.

The bite, the eye

Border Collie blood lines developed by Missouri breeder L.R. Alexander 15 years ago created the tougher Border Collies Western ranchers were looking for, Walker said.

"The rancher needs an aggressive dog he can control that gets in a cow's face," he said. "A cow dog has to bite."

Ideally, ranchers mostly move cattle in low-stress situations where biting isn't

necessary, he said. But there are times, he said, when a 1,500-pound cow is taking on a 50-pound dog and "if you're the cow dog you have to bite." Shepherds don't want dogs biting sheep so they rely on what's called "the eye." The Border Collie runs, crouching low and uses a direct stare to intimidate sheep or cattle.

"It's the intensity of the eye," said Mike Neary, president of the American Border Collie Association and a breeder in Brookston, Ind. Dogs have varying strength from strong to looser eyes, he said.

"The eye is almost hypnotic," Byrne said.

Border Collies, Neary said, have an instinctive ability to balance, meaning being in the right place at the right time to handle livestock. They look ahead, anticipating the cattle or sheep's next move.

Border Collies can be tightly controlled with commands in situations such as loading cattle without a corral. And they can be positioned by command and then allowed to follow their herding instincts.

A common command is "speak to 'em." "Away to me," means to flank the herd counter-clockwise. "Come-by" means clockwise.

"The beauty of them is they are never late, never hung over and don't complain," Walker said. "A little food and pat on the head and they're as happy as hell."

Challenges, future

Testing before breeding keeps several disorders under control, which leaves maintaining the purity of the gene pool as the greatest challenge, Byrne said. The American Kennel Club registers Border Collies bred for show and the American Border Collie Association doesn't, believing the genes should kept separate to maintain the quality of working dogs, she said.

Debbie Bailey, secretary and registrar of the association in Cataula, Ga., agreed genetic purity is a top concern. The association is pleased with the slow and steady growth of about 14,500 new working Border Collies per year, she said.

"All of us involved have our own dogs," Bailey said, "and when we go out at first light, when the steam is coming off the grass, and watch the dogs work, it is God's work at its finest."

'We have big differences with the Obama administration'

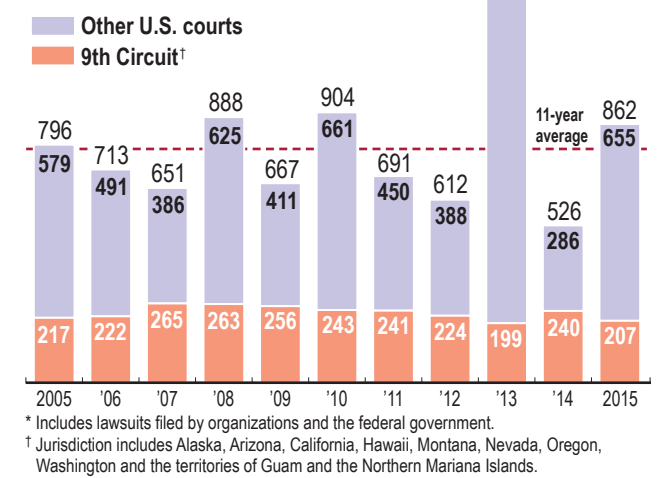
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It's unlikely the amount of such litigation will decrease until Congress changes environmental laws to give greater weight to economic and rural community concerns, she said.

Another possibility would be to make public the amount of money that environmental groups win from the federal government, which may prompt the U.S. Department of Justice to be less generous in its settlements, Budd-Falen said. "It's all public pressure."

Federal agencies have recently made several decisions that are likely to spur further controversy in coming years, said Scott Horngren, an attorney who has represented the grazing and timber industries in numerous cases.

Environmental lawsuits filed in federal courts*



For example, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has decided not to list the greater sage

grouse as a threatened or endangered species, he said. National forests are also expected to

implement management rules based on new federal regulations that guide such plans.

"My guess is that's going to spawn some lawsuits," Horngren said.

Nonprofit groups also continue to add new attorneys to their ranks who want to challenge federal decisions in court, he said. "There continues to be an expansion of people coming out of law school who feel litigation is the best tool to advance their environmental views."

The Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group that litigates over endangered and threatened species, doesn't expect the number of such lawsuits to grow in the future, said Amy Atwood, its endangered species legal director.

Past lawsuits over species often focused on the federal government's failure to make a timely decision on whether they should be protected under the Endangered Species Act, she said.

In 2011, the government struck a settlement that requires it to make ESA listing decisions for 757 species by 2018.

With that deal in place, new lawsuits are likely to focus on the substance of these decisions, but the total number is likely to fall, Atwood said.

"Those cases are not as straightforward. They take more time to litigate," she said.

While the 2011 settlement has reduced the backlog of ESA listing decisions, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has often capitulated to make life easier

for natural resource industries, Atwood said.

For example, the agency listed the lesser prairie chicken and Gunnison sage grouse as threatened when they should have been afforded greater protections as endangered species, she said. "We're dealing with findings that are actually unlawful."

Nonprofits are wrongly accused of profiting from such litigation, since they actually spend more on these cases than they can hope to recover, she said.

Atwood also disputed that environmental groups engage in "sue-and-settle," noting that they've engaged in tough negotiations when required to mediate with federal agencies.

"We have big differences with the Obama administration," she said.

Conflicts serve as microcosm of tensions between ranchers and federal land managers

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of federal lands, but on-the-ground disagreements generally involve narrower and more complex property rights issues.

"Occupying a wildlife refuge where you're not normally grazing or cutting timber is probably not the best way to make that point," Horngren said.

Ranchers who lease grazing allotments from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service are more likely to butt heads with these agencies over the use of easements for travel or to access water rights, said Mark Pollot, an attorney for the estate of Wayne Hage, a rancher who died in 2006 whose family continues to battle the federal government in court.

"Water rights are useless if you can't get to and from them," said Pollot.

When Western U.S. territories accepted statehood, they had to abandon claims to land owned by the federal government, but that did not nullify existing easements and other rights owned by private citizens, he said.

Contrary to the occupation of the national refuge headquarters, which is unlikely to accomplish anything, ranchers can win significant victories when they use legal means to stand up for their rights.

The story of Hage — a Nevada rancher and icon of ranchers' "Sagebrush Rebellion" against federal agencies — is a key example.

After decades of legal wrangling with the U.S. Forest Ser-

vice, Hage's estate won \$4.4 million from the federal government in 2008 after a judge ruled the agency had unlawfully deprived him of access to water rights, road easements, fences and other improvements his family owned on public land.

That award was later overturned for procedural reasons, but the case is still pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

In 2013, another federal judge issued an injunction prohibiting the Forest Service from impeding Hage's cattle from accessing water sources.

Government officials engaged in an "intentional conspiracy" to deprive Hage of his water rights and due process rights in a manner that "shocks the conscience," the judge found.

That ruling was challenged by the agency and is now under review by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

These conflicts serve as a microcosm of the tensions between ranchers and federal land managers.

"It comes down to the broader issue of who gets to control the water resources and the infrastructure of the West," said Pollot, Hage's attorney.

Tensions between ranchers and federal agencies also arise due to pressure from environmental groups.

Local federal land managers traditionally had practical experience in the livestock industry, but now they're more likely to focus on avoiding lawsuits over the National Environmental Policy Act, said Karen Budd-Falen, an attorney in Cheyenne,

Wyo., who represents ranchers.

"All they do is sit at their desks and write NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) documents," she said.

When the public sees the militia takeover of the refuge headquarters, though, they don't realize that ranchers have legitimate grievances with federal agencies that have been recognized by judges and lawmakers, Pollot said.

Even so, the federal government would be wise to consider why such displays of public anger are recurrent in the rural West, he said. "You should at least ask yourself if you're doing something to contribute to it."

Heated disputes over federal land management are nothing new, but the episode in Oregon and the 2014 standoff at the

Cliven Bundy ranch in Nevada are "an old story with a new twist," said Char Miller, a professor of environmental analysis at Pomona who has studied the longstanding debate over Western lands.

"They've left the civic arena and they're ignoring the judiciary," he said. "This is a new stage for the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion."

The occupation may serve as an outlet for frustration among some rural residents who feel modern urban society has passed them by, but it's a setback for ranchers and others who want to rely on legal means to achieve change, Miller said.

"This is a very self-centered, myopic rebellion," he said. "It has undercut the capacity of people with legitimate complaints to voice those complaints."