

# Dogs: ‘Never thought I’d have a dog this good’

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Some rescued animals or protected crops; others have simply brought joy to their owners’ lives. These are a few of their stories.

## Marc

“Been doing sheep for some 50 years. Never thought I’d have a dog this good,” Bob Klinger told the Capital Press.

An old friend gave Marc to the Klingers last summer, when the dog was 2 1/2 years old.

The Klingers say Marc is the ideal working dog. Piper said he learned the commands to herd sheep “in no time at all.” Bob said Marc “works the sheep in the chute like a pro” for sorting and vaccinating. When the Klingers need to pass through a section of electric fencing, Marc keeps the sheep from escaping through the gap.

He intuitively knows which critters are friends and which are foes, they say; he hunts down mice and voles, but he lets the farm’s chickens climb on his head, and he recently befriended an otter in the creek.

Plenty of Border Collies are good working dogs, said Piper. What makes Marc unique, she said, is that although he enjoys herding, he’s not obsessed with it. Instead, he’s gentle, affectionate and sticks close to Piper’s side.

Piper smiled, scratching Marc’s head, as she described their first day together.

“When he hadn’t even been here an hour, he walked over to me, put his foot on my leg and looked at me like, ‘Here I am, I’m yours.’”

## Sally

Pete Paradis scooped his 3-year-old grandson, Elias, off his lap and slid out of his truck. As the two approached the mouth of an alleyway that sloped through the vineyard, three white Maremma sheepdogs sauntered toward them.

Paradis said the smartest of the three — though a bit people-shy — is Sally.

“She’s not the nice little dog that comes up on your lap. This is about as far from that as you can be,” said Paradis. “She’s more like a farm animal, a domesticated wolf, if you will.”

Sally is a working dog, and she does her job well.

Her main role is to protect the Silverton, Ore. farm’s 100 or so Boer meat goats against predators. Alone, she faces off coyotes. Alongside the other two dogs, Paradis said she can make cougars think twice.

Sally’s deeply bonded to the goat herd. That she was down near the vineyard this winter morning, in fact, was because she had heard the maa-a-a-a of goat kids in the nearby barn.

“Isn’t that right, Sally?” Paradis said.

Sally looked up. Paradis said Sally’s intelligence startles him.

At dusk, she leads the goats to the barn or underneath trees. When it’s her dinner time, she takes turns with



**MARC**

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press



**ATHENA**

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press



**KIT**

Courtesy of Liana Livingston



**POPPIE**

Courtesy of Robin Wylie



**SALLY**

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

the other two dogs, making sure one is always on watch duty.

Although her first duty is to her goats, Sally has also protected the vineyard. Paradis recalls one night, a storm-downed tree ripped open a fence. The goat herd could have entered the vineyard block and destroyed it, but Sally guarded the hole until her master arrived in the morning.

“Sally sat on the inside of the fence, looking at me like, ‘It’s about time you got here,’” Paradis said.

## Athena

Mike Guebert and his wife, Linda Bangs, co-own Terra Farma, a small farm producing pasture-raised meat, eggs and milk in Corbett, Ore. They run a Community Supported Agriculture program, or CSA.

Ironically, Guebert and Bangs, who now run a meat operation, were once urban-dwelling vegetarians before they were exposed to humane livestock production methods.

The couple’s Great Pyrenees, Athena, guards their pasture-raised dairy cows, goats, pigs, poultry and waterfowl.

The couple recall that one night, Athena woke them up with persistent barking. Guebert said he threw on his boots and ran outside. There, he found two injured coyotes near the turkey pens, pieces of coyote skin and fur scattered about and Athena “sitting as if she’d been there the whole time.” Athena even showed her owners a portion of the fence that needed repair.

“She’s an amazing protector, and she’s also just the sweetest dog,” said Bangs.



**MOLLY**

Courtesy of Bryce Fruith

Bangs squatted down, running her fingers through Athena’s white fur. They were on a green hill inside a multi-species grazing paddock where dairy cows and meat goats munched together.

The couple were so pleased with Athena that they wanted to pass on her genetics, so they bought a male dog, Zuri, and across about six months, Athena had two litters, 20 puppies total.

“She’s an amazing mom,” said Guebert.

## Kit

Liana Livingston, 18, and her sister Emmeline, 11, say their dog Kit — named after American frontiersman Kit Carson — is one of the best parts of farm life.

Kit, a Border Collie-McNab Shepherd cross, helps drive 120 or so beef cattle at a time on the family ranch in Starkey, Ore.

“It saves a lot of time when he helps move the cows,” said Liana Livingston.

The dog also scares away coyotes and even had a battle with an angry badger.

Although Kit’s a working dog, the girls say it’s his

fun personality that makes life colorful.

Kit is 5, but the girls say he still acts like a puppy. After the Livingstons feed the cows and are about to put away hay strings, Kit likes to grab the strings’ ends and pull them for a game of tug-of-war. He also loves catching rocks and snowballs, and can shake hands and play dead.

When it snows, the Livingstons say, Kit is “very skilled at hooky bobbing.” The girls’ parents drive their truck through the snow, and the girls, along with their siblings and Kit, hook onto the bumper and squat down for a ride.

The only problem, Liana said, is that sometimes Kit grabs her pants while she’s holding onto the bumper.

“He definitely keeps farm life lighthearted,” she said.

## Poppie

Robin Wylie, 64, who owns a ranch in Nampa, Idaho, and manages several farms across eastern Washington, said her dog, Poppie, fills a hole she didn’t think anyone could fill.

When her previous dog died, Wylie was devastated.

“I said to my friend, ‘I

don’t want to get another dog yet,’” she said.

But her friend ignored her comment and called her the next day to say she found another dog for her, a 10-month-old cross-breed that a cattle rancher was giving away.

“We really bonded,” she said.

Wylie said Poppie is incredibly smart and even knows the days of the week. Wylie’s daughter visits every Monday at 9 a.m. Each Monday just before that time, Poppie waits by the door for her arrival.

“How can she know what seven days is?” said Wylie.

Poppie helped Wylie’s heart heal after the loss of her previous dog, and she also brought life and laughter to the farm. She’s interested in everything and often sports a green manure mustache. She’s gentle with Wylie’s grandchildren, but she’s tough when she needs to be, driving away skunks, stray dogs and coyotes. When inside, Poppie often curls up under Wylie’s desk, keeping her owner’s feet warm. Poppie has some English Shepherd in her, which Wylie suspects makes her a good “all-purpose farm dog.”

“She’s the most perfect farm dog I’ve ever had,” said Wylie.

## MORE STORIES WE LOVED

### Wilbur and Ellis

Delford and Marita Johnson, 75 and 70 respectively, raise 380 cattle annually in Warm Springs, Ore. Before getting dogs, they lost 10 to 15 cows per year to coyotes and wolves. Since getting two Great Pyrenees, Wilbur and Ellis, they’ve only lost one calf.

### Molly

California rancher Bryce Fruith’s dog Molly, a Lab-Border Collie cross, warns intruders to stay away, loves to lick the babies, is gentle with Fruith’s grandson and is always glad to see Fruith.

### Karma

Rancher Boyd Walton, 78, of Omak Lake, Wash., was out walking one night last fall when his dog, Karma, alerted him that a cougar was nearby and he was in danger. Walton was able to safely leave and returned later with his gun.

### Lily

Robin Loznak’s family lives on a 570-acre property with cattle, Douglas firs and hazelnut trees in Oakland, Ore. On a ridge overlooking the Umpqua River sits a farmhouse.

Founded in 1868 by Martha Poindexter Maupin, this is both a state-designated Century Farm and a Sesqui-centennial Farm, owned and operated by members of the same family for 150 years.

This is also where Lily, a mixed-breed rescue with some Border Collie in her, lives.

Loznak used to work as a veterinary assistant at Saving Grace Pet Adoption Center in Roseburg, so he had a relationship with Umpqua Valley Humane Society. Staff there knew he was looking for a dog, and one day, he got a call.

They had a rescue, they said, that had been raised in the city but was too high-energy for town.

“She was exactly right for us,” said Loznak.

It turns out, Loznak’s family was exactly right for Lily, too. She loves watching the cattle, keeping down the rodent population, swimming in the river and riding shotgun alongside Loznak in his Kubota UTV out to the hazelnut orchards.

Loznak said what strikes him is that although farmers on his land have raised a wide range of crops and livestock, one semi-constant fixture has been the farm dog. Most generations of his family had dogs, he said. He even has an old photograph, taken around the 1870s, that shows the original family on the farmhouse porch. At their side is a dog.

“There’s just something special about farm dogs,” said Loznak.

## Hemp: Funding for audit was provided by Oregon Department of Agriculture

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information for people responsible for grow sites.

Part of the audit’s purpose was to work out such kinks, helping to regulate irrigation compliance on hemp farms elsewhere, Johnstone said. With about 1,000 grow sites, Southwest Oregon has about half the hemp operations in the state.

“We hope to take this process on the road to support other watermasters,” he said.

Bruce Corn, a commission member and farmer near Ontario, Ore., said he was concerned that less than 20% of the grow sites in Southwest Oregon were visited during the audit, which seemed to indicate the agency was short-handed.

“Eighty percent were lucky and didn’t get checked,” he said. “There appears to be a pretty large problem from the data you brought back.”

Funding for the audit and additional staffing was provided by the state’s Department of Agriculture, which shifted money to OWRD specifically to study irrigation on hemp farms

last year due to complaints about unlawful water use.

Hemp production in Oregon boomed after pilot projects were federally permitted in the 2014 Farm Bill and then the crop was legalized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

The ODA has figured out a way to continue paying for the additional water rights scrutiny for another biennium, though the approach probably won’t be permanent, said Lauren Henderson, the agency’s assistant director. The agency is also asking lawmakers to pay for four more hemp enforcement positions at ODA during this legislative session.

“We haven’t been able to keep up, particularly on the enforcement side,” Henderson said. “We do need to improve our presence down there and we are working on that.”

While some of the problems with water rights are due to growers willfully abusing the system, many simply didn’t understand the complexity of water law when they began producing hemp, he said. “We had a lot of growers who were new to agriculture and saw hemp as a way to get in.”

## Seed: Residential retail makes up about 60% of total grass seed industry sales

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have worked extra.

Territorial’s farm operation supplies about 17% of its seed; the company buys the remainder from seed producers worldwide, including contracting with local growers.

Along with vegetables, Johns said people are also buying flower seeds to “decorate” their yards.

Farmers who grow vegetable seed for commercial-scale farms say that market has been less stable during the pandemic, but many seed crops are still performing well.

People are still spending more time and money on landscaping — a boon for grass seed companies.

“It feels like, in the retail

sector at least, people went crazy buying,” said James Schneider, president and CEO of Barenbrug USA, a grass seed supplier.

Schneider estimated residential retail makes up about 60% of total grass seed industry sales. Year over year, from 2019 to 2020, he said residential sales of grass seed increased 25%, and sales this spring are projected to jump 5% to 20%.

When sports fields closed last spring, sales of commercial and sports seed mixes initially took a hit. But as sports teams adapted — for example, by filling the stands with cardboard fans — sales returned to normal.

Golf courses, experts say, ordered record poundage of seed because more people have picked up the sport

during the pandemic.

“Golf has had a resurgence they haven’t seen since Tiger Woods. We’ve picked up a whole new generation of golfers,” said Scott Harer, vice president at Columbia Seeds, another grass seed company.

Kent Whittig, Western regional sales representative at Allied Seed LLC, a forage, turfgrass and cover crop seed company, said cover crop seed is in demand, along with warm season annuals, including teff, millet and sorghum.

In general, industry leaders told the Capital Press the forage sector remained fairly static through the pandemic.

“Animals still need to eat regardless of COVID,” said Schneider of Barenbrug USA.