

Clinic Review

Whidbey Island Washington April 2007

Well, the Kelpie Clinic was ALL you could have wanted and then some! It was WONDERFUL, and VERY helpful.

Simon took us through all the steps of raising a Kelpie, from young puppy-hood (and he brought four of the cutest pups with him!), to getting them out on the trial field.

He showed us how important the "shape" of the out-run and fetch was, and how to train it. How to teach your dog to go to the head, and how to hold sheep to the fence. He emphasized how important "obedience over instinct" was, in certain cases. We even got to try "backing", and got the instruction on how it was taught. It was obvious that the younger the dog got started on this, the easier it would be to train! However, we all enjoyed watching our dogs struggle as they walked along on the backs of the very surprised sheep!

Then we surprised our dogs by dropping them in to a "packed" 8 x 8 pen with about 15 sheep, and asked them to flank around the inside, pushing between the rails and the sheep, first one way, then the other. They were supposed to do this WITHOUT biting!! Those who bit, got a tap on the nose, and as soon as they let go, -praise! It didn't take long for the dogs to figure out that they could do this by simply pushing, and that they didn't NEED to bite!

Simon was a wonderful instructor, fun to work with and easy to understand, as soon as he learned to speak "American"!! He had a great way with dogs, and was very patient.

Susan's farm is one of the most beautiful places you could imagine . . . big green fields, lots of paddocks, arenas and holding pens, and a wonderful "meeting room". Susan and her daughter Allison prepared fantastic lunches and breakfast snacks. They were gracious hosts (hostesses?) and very organized, which is important as the sheep were always being moved from one place to another, for another lesson.

Hopefully Simon will come back next year, and anyone who is interested in getting to know how to work a Kelpie, should do everything in their power to attend. You won't regret it :-)

**Carol and Jim Hibbard -who were lucky enough to work Mowgli, Libby and Boomerang.
Oregon USA**

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My name is Shirley Oberg, and I am the very proud owner of my first purebred Working Kelpie pup. Teddy is a ten-week-old red and tan pup that I recently bought from Simon Leaning, of Marionvale Working Dogs in Mt Helena, Australia. Simon was here in Washington to give a fantastic Clinic at Susan Crocker's beautiful farm on Whidbey Island. He brought with him four beautiful pups to four lucky Northwest herders, and I'm one of them! This pup is a dream come true for me. I've owned Australian Cattle Dogs for 25 years, and many years ago I had a truly wonderful ACD/Kelpie cross who was one of the best dogs I've had the pleasure to know. Since that old fellow passed on several years back I have wanted a purebred Working Kelpie and at last that dream is realized! Kelpie ownership is a true adventure for me, and I am constantly amazed at the aptitude, intelligence and agility of this little guy when compared to my beloved cattedogs I've had for so long. Taking nothing away from ACDs, I am finding that the Kelpie is a dog of quite a different type and I am loving every minute of the discovery process.

Simon Leaning gave a truly incredible Clinic at Susan's, and is a wonderful handler and teacher. He has a true sense of what each dog/handler team needs and the gift of communication to help them to achieve it. He reads dogs the way that most of us read a book or a newspaper! I am so hopeful that he will come back to us all here next year, and I hope to be able to show him how my pup has come along! I had the opportunity to work my cattedogs with Simon after the clinic, (which was a very positive experience for me and my dogs) and on that day we put nine-week-old Teddy in the pen for his first look at sheep, and the result blew my mind! The pup was unbelievable, doing things naturally that my cattedogs have not mastered after training for nearly two years - as just a tiny puppy! I believe I am going to like this Kelpie thing! I'm relatively new to herding, and am a self described AVID student... I am a student of Susan's, and I take every opportunity I can to learn by attending clinics and lessons.

Shirley Oberg

Arlington, Washington USA