



About Border Collies

The Border Collie developed centuries ago in the border country between Scotland and England as a herding dog to help manage and move the large flocks of sheep that grazed the vast hilly pastures of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. One of their most notable traits is their outstanding and pronounced gathering, or fetching, instinct - a natural desire to guide the direction of stock to a handler.

The fact that Border Collies were and are first and foremost bred for their working ability on a variety of stock means that they have much more variability in physical appearance than most breeds, who are often nowadays bred to meet an arbitrary physical "standard" versus effectiveness of purpose. Border Collies range from under 30 to over 60 pounds, with varying builds, and can have a rough (long), medium, smooth (short), or even curly coats. In addition to the most commonly recognized black with white blaze, collar, feet, and tip of tail, Border Collies can also be red, blue, sable, brindle, or yellow with white, blue or red merle, black and tan, or even be predominantly white or black. A large variety of markings are seen in the breed as well, including white or split (half white/half black) faces, tricoloring (black and white with brown points), and freckling or ticking. Eyes can be brown, blue, or gold, and ears can stand straight up, flop all the way down, or do anything and everything in between!

Border Collies tend to typically be attentive and desire to engage with people. They are inquisitive, sensitive, quick and keen to learn, as well as athletic and agile, and possess unbelievable stamina, requiring vigorous exercise daily. They also have a strong work ethic and unsurpassed ability to focus, especially visually. This is exemplified no better way than by the Border Collie "eye" – an intense stare accompanied by a crouching, stalking movement that is very effective at moving stock without ever having to come too close to them. Their incredible observational skills and predisposition for learning verbal cues has resulted in their being touted as the "smartest" of all dogs.

The unique temperament and abilities of the Border Collie are, however, a double-edged sword. Thanks to its reputation as an intelligent breed and their appearances in movies and on television, Border Collies are increasing in popularity. This has led to the BC moving from the farm and ranch to suburbia, bringing with it challenges in adapting to life as a companion animal. The very qualities necessary to performing the jobs they have been bred to do are the very qualities that can make the BC a troublesome and difficult pet for many families. These dogs were built for long days of unending movement in hilly terrain, working in cooperation with a shepherd moving stock over vast distances. It should come as no surprise, then, that they are high energy dogs that need direction and activity on which to focus their keen mind and endless energy. They are usually very sensitive to changes in the environment as well as space and sound. They are also very reactive to movement - be it that of stock, cars, bicycles and other moving things, like running children - and can be nippy when their herding instincts are aroused. BCs with strong herding instinct and "eye" may exhibit bizarre-appearing behaviors, such as circling, staring, stalking, and freezing up. Their human-oriented nature means they don't do very well left alone for long periods of time, and their renowned endurance means that a 1-2 mile run is barely a warm up for most members of the breed. BCs require substantial stimulation daily - mental, emotional, and physical - much more than other breeds. They need a guidance and direction, and if not given any, they will find it - be it chasing cars, barking, learning how to open cabinets and doors, or redecorating your living room, to name just a



few - in not so lovely ways. A bored, underexercised and understimulated BC often exhibits neurotic, obsessive, destructive behaviors - none of which are particularly pleasant for dog or human. Clearly, they are not the best choice of pet for most people. The fact that BCs require a large time and energy commitment from their owners means many end up in shelters.

The calm, well-behaved dogs seen at sheepdog trials are the result of careful attention to the dogs' mental and physical needs. While many BCs would certainly love to run the hills herding all day long, they certainly can adjust to life as a pet well given the right circumstances. In an active and involved home that engages extensively with their pets, BCs can make wonderful, entertaining, and delightful companions. Their long history of being bred for human-partnered work translates to excellence in canine-human partnership sports such as agility, obedience, frisbee, flyball, and freestyle, and they can sometimes make great candidates for Search and Rescue and Therapy work. Their athleticism makes them ideal active outdoor adventure companions for the runner, hiker, biker, or skier. The common misconception that that the sole requirement to having a Border Collie is "room to run" - that more property, a bigger yard, or a "farm" is the answer - is simply not the case. What a BC needs is YOU - not being left alone in a yard where, like many types of social dogs, they become lonely and unhappy and are unlikely to self-exercise. With a committed owner who understands and can meet the needs of the breed, BCs can and do live happily and thrive in all kinds of places, even in cities and with yardless apartment dwellers. (All that being said, of course, there ARE exceptions to the norm. Mellow BCs do exist, and many BC mixes or BCs in middle age tend to decrease in intensity and can be a little less demanding.)

If the idea of a high energy, super-interactive, busy and intelligent canine companion always ready to go appeals to you, and you have the financial resources, stability, and interest in adding a dog to your family, a BC may make a great choice. (And yes, we do get those mellow members of the breed in rescue as well, if a loving and bright but more relaxed partner is more your speed.) As there are many wonderful BCs in danger of being euthanized TODAY in overcrowded shelters, if you are interested in considering adopting, we'd love to talk to you! Info about our adoption process and adoptable dogs is available on our website, wbcrecue.org If you can't adopt, but admire the breed - consider helping volunteer or donating to our all volunteer, nonprofit organization, so we can help save even more lives. Don't hesitate to contact us about what you can do to help this unique breed. We'd love to hear from you!

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