

Beth: How long have you had or been around cattle dogs?

Dana: I got my first cattle dog in 1996.

Beth: Okay. Do you show them, or do you use them on a farm, or do you breed them or all of the above?

Dana: All of the above. In '96 when I got my first cattle dog, I did not... it was not a purebred.

Beth: Okay

Dana: And then after my daughter came along and wanted to get into showing... I had shown other breeds as a junior and then got out of them. Then when she decided she wanted to show 4-H was very limited in showing 2 fairs a year, so I decided we should do some research and get our first purebred. We started doing our research in 2008 for our first purebred.

1:31

Beth: Okay and you have them work on your farm, right?

Dana: Yes, we actually do all events. We do conformation showing as well as herding trials and other venues: agility, rally, obedience, dock diving, barn hunt, nose work. We do them all, but we do have several hundred acres here that we manage for our county parks department. And we are required to do weed abatement with your sheep. It just made sense that we already had a knowledge of sheep herding, that we combine the two so we also use our dogs here in a practical sense on our ranch.

2:14

Beth: Okay. Do they just work sheep, or do they work cattle also? Are they versatile that way?

Dana: Yeah very versatile. We don't have cattle on site, but we do train on cattle. And we do cow dog trials as well. We also work ducks and geese, so they are very versatile herders.

2:39

Beth: Okay, as far as medical conditions with the breed are there things that people should be asking breeders about or looking into before getting one? Or things to be aware of that there is something that could be going wrong in the future with this puppy that they are going to bring home?

Dana: Yeah, absolutely. There are two general medical issues that Australian cattle dogs have. One is what is called PRA PRCD, and that is a genetic eye condition. That we can test for. We know that certain bloodlines will be affected, carriers, or clear. We are looking towards... or working towards breeding clear to clear so that we never have to worry about that genetic disease. The other problem that is prevalent in the cattle dogs is hearing deafness. Unfortunately, there is no genetic test for that yet. They are doing a lot of research and working on that. But as breeders we can test our puppies after 4 to 5 days of age and know at least they have been born full hearing.

3:51

Beth: Okay, is it something were if two parents have a puppy who is deaf that they are more likely to have another one or have they not figured that out yet?

Dana: Not at all. They have no clue. There is a veterinarian Dr. Strand who has been researching it for a long time. His conclusion was that it might be in the pigment. Lack of pigment such as white boxers, white Dobermans, white Dalmatians, those things is what their thesis is but it is not proven at all.

4:25

Beth: Okay. Do you think that they would be able to be owned by somebody who lived in town? And if so, is it something where you think they should have a fenced yard? Or are hiking and walks going to be sufficient for a cattle dog?

Dana: Yes, so, cattle dogs are very active, but they are also as active as their owners are. We would never recommend them being in an apartment because they are active. Having a yard is definitely beneficial and for me as a breeder it is a requirement. There has to be some type of an outlet where they can be a dog and get some of their natural energy out besides having an active family or lifestyle.

5:16

Beth: How often would you say they need to be out for a walk or active with direct input from their humans per day?

Dana: I only believe once a day. And while these dogs have a lot of energy, they are not extremely high in energy. They just want to be part of your activities. So, during feeding times or throughout the day if you are able to just simply interact with the dog, do short training sessions, that takes over the need to go for long walks or hikes.

5:48

Beth: Okay. Are they fairly easy to house train?

Dana: Yes. They are so smart. They can pick up the good and the bad really fast.

Beth: Okay.

Dana: As long as you are consistent and they have an outlet. And I usually tell everybody I can doggie doors are wonderful because they can go when they need to go and they will come back when they are done.

6:16

Beth: Okay. What kind of sports do they enjoy the most? You said you participate in a whole bunch of them. Are there some that they prefer doing versus the others?

Dana: I think each dog is an individual. They will do whatever you ask of them for the most part. I have some dogs who... we go to a location where they do barn hunt, agility, and dock diving. I show up for barn hunt and I see my dog looking over at the pool. Or a different dog I show up to do the pool and she is looking over at the barn hunt you know. So, they will do anything I ask of them and they will do it very well, but I can see where they are like 'I would rather go chase rats,' or 'I'd rather go swim.' So that is where we will do what they like as well.

7:07

Beth: Okay. How well do they get along with other dogs if you are introducing a new adult dog to an adult dog that you already have?

Dana: Introducing cattle dogs to new dogs especially adult dogs can be very challenging. They are very territorial. They are very possessive. And they can get extremely jealous. Now I know these are human terms; however, these dogs do exhibit these types of behaviors. When introducing to new dogs, we always take them away from either of their locations where they live. Introduce them in a neutral setting and go very slow to see if they like each other. Cattle dogs are a quick judge of character both to 4 legged and 2 legged. They can react very, very fast. They can either like them or not like them in the blink of an eye. Introductions have to be very careful.

Beth: How do they do with other small critters? If somebody has cats or bunnies or something like that as another household pet, is it something where you really have to get a cattle dog as a puppy in order for them to be okay or is it something that can be introduced later?

Dana: Yeah, I tend to lump children, bunnies, and cats all under the category of your best chances of success would be getting a puppy, so they are introduced to that lifestyle early on. Adults are typically called the play police. If they don't like the scream of a child as it is running by, that can unnerve them and can go heel them or want to control them. A puppy can learn and grow up with those sounds, sights, and smells and it is absolutely normal. Whereas an adult can get very unnerved by that.

9:02

Beth: Okay. You mentioned that they are a quick judge of character with people too. Does that matter whether you are at home or away from home? Is their reactions to strangers different depending on where they are?

Dana: At home they are typically not as reactive, but even in my house ... we have 7 cattle dogs here... and when someone comes in or out of the door, they want to make sure they are protecting their family. They might grumble and become alert. And then they are like 'oh, it's just you,' and then they relax.

Now when we are out and about with stranger, they always regard strangers as a stranger, and that is within their breeding. Their protective nature is to protect their people and their belongings first and that is why they are such a quick judge of character, because it is so engrained in them to protect us before they can relax and say hi. We do a lot of training with strangers, and the 'say hi' or 'say hello' command is me giving them permission to relax and know that that is a good person.

Beth: Okay. Are they typically an all family dog? If there are multiple adults living in the house, do they kind of go to everybody or do they pick one person and stick with that person?

Dana: Yeah. They definitely tend to pick one person if it is a family; however, whoever has the food or the toy, they will be their person.

Beth: Okay

Dana: For a while. So in general they will pick one person, but if somebody has their favorite item, they will go hang out with them.

10:45

Beth: Okay. And then... would you consider this a dog that someone who has never had a dog before would be able to handle? Or is this something where maybe you should own some other breed first and then jump into the cattle dogs?

Dana: That is a tough question. These are very challenging dogs. They are very smart. For a person to come to me and say, 'I have never owned a dog in my life.' I would be very hesitant to sell them a puppy. I would need to get to know them and see their resources first. See if they are able to go to obedience classes and learn. I would err on the side of this should not be a first time dog.

Beth: Okay. As far as grooming goes, do they require very much maintenance? Are they like once or twice a year shedders or do they shed all the time? Is it something that someone could maintain themselves at home or would you recommend a groomer?

Dana: Yeah, the grooming is very simple in the cattle dogs. They are called wash and wear dogs for a reason. Occasionally they will get a bath if they are smelly, otherwise we don't bathe them. They don't require daily brushing; however, it is kind of a joke... they do shed and blow out their two coats twice a year and we joke that that twice a year is six months at a time.

Beth: (laughs quietly) Okay

Dana: So they do shed a lot of hair but they blow their hair twice a year. That is the time that you have to require some brushing to help get those clumps out. Otherwise their pretty maintenance is low.

12:25

Beth: Are they fairly tolerant of the brushing and grooming process or does that take a lot of training to get them comfortable with that?

Dana: No, once they are okay with the brush, they recognize that it feels good. And they lay down on the floor and say 'okay it's that time.'

Beth: Okay. What is your favorite thing about cattle dogs? What do you love most about the breed?

Dana: I love most about cattle dogs that each one is very unique. In the breed they are so smart. They pick up on your family on what you do, your routines. They are funny. They're cat like yet they're human like. Yeah they're just... I guess it would be how smart they are and intuitive is my favorite thing about them.

13:12

Beth: Okay, what do you find most frustrating about the breed?

Dana: (laughs) That might also be that they are too smart. Sometimes they are two steps ahead of us and we have to try to very creative in our work methods or living at the house here. We have to be on our toes. So frustrating, is they're very independent thinkers. They can think outside the box and they can go solve a problem where you didn't know there was a problem to begin with.

13:42

Beth: And if somebody is looking for a breeder... you mentioned that you are one. Where would they find information about you? And if you are too far away what are some things they should be asking a breeder before they decide to get a puppy from them?

Dana: Yeah. We do have several national clubs in the United States. My first thing is to go to a dog show or ask somebody if you know of a breeder to get personal references. But when you do find that breeder you want to ask them how they have health tested the parents. Do they work? Have they shown? Do they have titles? Why did they breed this pairing? And make sure the puppies are raised in home in a family setting and that they have a lot of exposure to a lot of different items for desensitizing them, so they can become a really great all-around family pet.

14:44

Beth: Okay, I thought I had a couple other questions... Do you find any difference in dogs who have been bred for conformations showing verses dogs who have been specifically for working? Is there a lot of temperament difference or do... is there a lot of overlap in both of those?

Dana: These days I don't find there is a lot of overlap. A lot of people who are focused on producing show dogs or dogs that judges like to put up for winning... and then you have just a handful of people who are doing both, like myself. I do conformation showing and herding trials. And then there are those people who don't care what their dog looks like as long as they work. Now, those dogs that go out and work, they typically are very tough dogs. And they're out there to do a job, so people are secondary to that job. That can lead to temperament questions. If I am going to take my dog in public, I need to know he is going to have a good temperament. Or if I need to go work him on the ranch I need to know he can do both jobs.

There are focused breeders out there. And I do think that temperaments are very specific to bloodlines and how they are raised.

15:45

Beth: Okay, so that might be another thing to ask a breeder about before you get one.

Dana: Yes.

Beth: Is there anything else you think people should know before bringing home a cattle dog?

Dana: The cattle dogs are so smart. And before you bring one home, you will want to child proof your house. I know it kind of sounds funny because not everybody has children. But having child proof locks or locking lids on your trashcans. Just think about everything a little person could get into, that dog can as well or that puppy can. So, by child proofing your house, it is going to give you a huge step up in making sure the puppy doesn't get in trouble.

Beth: Definitely a good thought for an intelligent breed to keep them from getting into the trouble in the first place.

Dana: When I brought home one of my puppies 4 years ago... we recently had her elbows done, her hips and elbows when she turned 2 for breeding.

The OFA vet said, 'so you do disc jumping with this dog.'

I went, 'No.'

Then she said, 'So you do hard core agility.'

I went, 'No.'

Then she goes, 'Well, this dog has chunks out of her elbows from repetitive motion.'

I went 'oh' (laughs) She kept... She was getting on the refrigerator at 6 months of age and jumping down way off of the refrigerator.

Beth: Oh!

Dana: And so, she was jamming her elbows. And caused a little injury on both her elbows equally. And this veterinarian saw that, and I am like 'yep they are crazy dogs.'

Beth: Okay. That is the first one I have heard of going on top of a fridge.

17:57

Dana: (laughs) And she would have to get onto the kitchen sink and then jump up on the fridge. So, we ended up putting boxes on the sink when we left or when she was alone so that she wouldn't get up on the refrigerator. But that damage was already done, and we had no idea.

Beth: Yep. Then if somebody wanted to contact you about a puppy, how would they contact you? Do you have a website or a Facebook page?

Dana: Yeah, I do. I am located in Cherry Valley California. My facebook page is just my name Dana Rochat. I also have a website www.just4mav.webs.com.

Beth: So it is dot what dot com?

Dana: dot webs w e b s

Beth: webs. Okay. it crackled a little at the end there so I couldn't hear it.

Dana: Oh gotcha. Yeah. So it's www.just4mav.webs.com

Beth: Okay, So I will definitely include that in a link when this gets posted so people can get a hold of you if they want. And I will put a link to the breed registry site so that people can look there too incase they are further away and that would be a bit of a drive for them to come see you.

Dana: Yeah that is true.

Beth: All right. Thank you very much. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Dana: I don't think so. There is so much we could go over but it is like how do you condense it and make it easy to understand.

Beth: Yeah

Dana: But thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate it

Beth: Yeah. I sure appreciate you coming to chat. It has been fun learning a little bit more about cattle dogs. I do love the herding breeds. They are fun and intelligent even if they get into a lot of mischief. So, it is fun to have more to compare it with. I grew up with an Aussie. So, a little bit different but still intelligent and get into trouble sometimes.

Dana: Yeah. A lot of people say, 'oh those cattle dogs are high energy.' And I am like, 'not like the Aussie.'

Beth: Yeah

Dana: They are high energy

Beth: Definitely had to keep him busy. He liked to have something do so. All right. Thank you very much

Dana: You are welcome

Beth: I'll post these in that group as well when I am finished with them all.

Dana: awesome, Sounds good. Thank you. Take care.

Beth: You too

Dana: Bye

Beth: Bye