

Stockdog Corner

Terry Martin • Bryan, Texas

Why it Still Matters . . .

One thing I have avoided doing in this column is writing about my own dogs or doing so only in a very general way. This week I received an e-mail from someone who bought a puppy from me and the story he told me illustrated so much my passion for the working Australian Shepherds that got me into this breed in the first place. It seems like I am constantly having to convince people that the Aussie is still out there on real farms and ranches doing things like the dog in this did that day. So I shared it on my personal Facebook page.

I had no idea what was going to happen next. People started sharing it, and then I was approached by **The Virginia Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders** for permission to share my post. I was well aware of who they are because they are always actively a voice for us when the animal rights activists are making trouble for dog owners through attempts at legislation and lashing out at breeders. They are based in Virginia but involved all over the country. I was so impressed at the way they presented it as a story that showed the importance of *purebred purpose bred dogs*. Next, I found out that another wonderful group had picked up the story from them. They had put a perfect headline on it: “**Why it Still Matters.**”

Awesome! It *does* still matter that dogs are bred to herd or hunt or guard or to search and save lives!

In the meantime, this year-old ranch dog named Jimmy has had his story go viral. I am sharing it here with those of you who share the love of “purpose-bred dogs,” namely Australian Shepherds. This is from the group **National Purebred Dog Day** who shared it from **VFDCB**.

Why it Still Matters

January 12, 2018 National Purebred Dog Day®

We share this with consent from the Virginia Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders (VFDCB), a marvelous anecdote of why breeding purpose bred purebred dogs still matters:

VFDCB said

1-12-18: Just a reminder of why we are all here. This is a post from Terry Martin, who lives in Texas, and has been breeding working Australian Shepherds for 5 decades. This story about “Jimmy” exemplifies what purpose-bred dogs are all about. It also reminds us that breeding programs like this do not happen overnight. And



once a program is destroyed – it is gone forever. That is why we – The Virginia Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders, and hundreds more organizations and people like us- fight so hard to preserve purpose-bred dogs. No stray off the streets off Kuwait, Egypt, Turkey, Thailand, Peru, Korea – just to name a few places people are bringing dogs from into Virginia and the US – can ever hope to do what purpose-bred dogs do.

The rest of the text is below:

I got an e-mail this morning from Doug and Jennifer Putnam. [edited slightly to keep my dogs' names out of the story] – TM

“Good morning, Terry,

Burr, it's cold today in Kansas. Almost blizzard like. Just wanted to drop you a note and the on-going saga of Jimmy, the wonder dog.

Today my daughter and I looked out and saw one of our good coming two-year geldings stuck in the middle of the pond. We had three days of 50-degree weather which melted the ice. But last night the weather changed and it dropped 32 degrees within three hours. The gelding wandered out on the new ice and went through getting stuck with ice surrounding him. Jimmy and I went down to see how we would get him out. Obviously, he had been in the water for a few hours. I thought I would have to either rope him with a horse



the little donkey it struck me that he had done this before. How he “knew” to go around and force the horse to break through the ice and go to shore can only be attributed to his instinct to move the horse and probably his limited experience moving cattle. Aussies that can “think for themselves” have many times saved the day for ranchers and farmers.

Finding the calf in the snow is a story I have heard before and experienced when living in Colorado. It’s another part of natural working with a human partner and some inner knowledge that one head of stock off by itself is not supposed to be there. Whatever combination of instinct and realization played a part in this story, I am glad so many people have had the opportunity to read it and wanted to share it here.

and drag him out, or worse, pull him out with a tractor across the sharp ice. As I was leaving to go back to the barns to get equipment I turned to see ‘Jimmy’ crossing the ice and walking up to the gelding. Unbelievably he went and licked the gelding’s face then went to his rear and bit him driving him through shallow ice following him on paper thin ice. So unbelievable if you didn’t actually witness it! He drove him into the corral and we took him inside a box stall. Then we went to feed the pen horses and cows. The snow and sleet were driving so hard it was tough to see. I noticed I had a little angus calf missing. Jimmy and I went looking for it. Then Jimmy took off. I could just barely see through the sleet and snow as the dog ran down to the creek. Pretty soon I saw a black blur and then Jimmy. He found the calf nestled in the creek. Obviously Jimmy put the calf back into the pen with her mother.

~Doug Putnam

After I realized this story was being shared all over Facebook and that two serious organizations promoting purebred dogs felt it was worth sharing, I heard from Maria Russell, who is Doug’s wife, Jennifer’s mother. She is obviously a very good photographer and sent me photos of Jimmy and her granddaughter with permission to use them. She also sent them to the VFDCB to use on their post. I want to share them with you also. I found it rewarding that this was shared with many people who do not have Aussies or a ranch or a farm, but they can enjoy reading the adventures of a man and his dog, a horse, and a calf – in a snowstorm.

I had several people ask me how this young dog would know to do these things on his own. I cannot get inside a dog’s mind, but I can speculate. The dog is, as the VFDCB stated, is a purpose-bred dog. But he is also a partner with his owner and is comfortable with the place and the livestock, and has moved cattle. Dogs sense stress and fear from both people and other animals. Jimmy had to know his master was upset and no doubt the horse in the water was extremely stressed. Why he ventured out there and licked the horse’s nose is anyone’s guess. I have seen dogs do that with horses and cattle both so it probably is some sort of communication that we do not understand. When I saw the photo of Jimmy and

