



## **The Policy of Svenska Kennelklubben (the Swedish Kennel Club) for animal care during herding training of dogs.**

*Approved by SKK Central Board on November 14, 2013.*

### **Introduction**

Svenska Kennelklubben (SKK), in cooperation with Djurskyddet Sverige (the Animal Welfare Sweden), Svenska Fåravelsförbundet (Swedish Sheep farming Association), Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund (the Federation of Swedish Farmers) and the affiliated clubs in SKK that is engaged in training of herding dogs; Svenska Vallhundsklubben (the Swedish Herding Dog Club), Svenska Gårds- och Vallhundsklubben (the Swedish Farm and Herding Dogs Club), Svenska Working Kelpie Klubben (the Swedish Working Kelpie Club), Specialklubben för Bearded Collie (the Breed Club for Bearded Collie) and Intresseföreningen Kroppsvallarna (the Cooperation for Body Herding Dogs), have developed this policy for animal care during training of herding dogs.

The purpose of the policy is to strive for that all herding training with dogs is implemented in a proper manner on the basis of animal welfare aspect of the herded animals. Basic provisions on how the herded animals are to be kept and taken care for is specified in the Animal Welfare Act (1988: 534), the Animal Protection Ordinance (1988: 539) and Agricultural Administration's regulations and general advice on livestock farming, etc. (2010: 15). Provided that this policy and other rules for livestock and dog training is followed the activities with sheepdogs is an asset for Swedish animal husbandry.

All members of the SKK organization are expected to adhere to this policy at herding training of dogs, to meet the SKK basic rule of paragraph 1: 1 *"It is incumbent upon every member of the SKK organization to treat and care for dogs and other animals well in accordance with well established experience as applicable animal welfare legislation and regulations issued under the law"*

### **General**

There is a number of breeds in the FCI group 1, Sheepdogs and Cattle dogs, whose original use is herding the different types of animals in agriculture. Mainly are herding dogs in Sweden used to herding sheep, but also cattle and reindeer and also to some extent other animals such as goats and geese.

A sheepdog is an invaluable aid for those who work daily with herds of e.g. sheep and cattle. It is therefore important to utilize and develop herding characteristics of herding dogs.

There is also a growing interest in herding training with the dog by people who do not primarily use the dog for practical herding work, but rather see it as an activation of the dog where it can use its inherent herding characteristics such as sensitivity, concentration and cooperation. Moreover, it is a way to that under controlled conditions ensure that the original characteristics of herding breeds are sustained and not lost.

Whatever the reason for herding training with the dog, it is important that the animals in all contexts are handled in accordance with applicable laws and with respect for animals as living individuals.





In order to examine a dog at sheepdog trial and later use those in practical herding work require extensive training. This training must always be carried out in such a way that the welfare of the herded animals is guaranteed.

Herding training of dogs requires good leadership, in addition to a very good general obedience of the dog.

### **The herded animals**

- Should be in good condition, that is to be in normal weight and healthy, which means that the animals manage to be herded without any signs of that the herding stresses the animals.
- Should not be used for herding training if showing signs of poor general condition, respiratory distress, lameness or contagious disease.
- Should basically be as little inclined as possible to be stressed.
- Should be basic herding trained and well dogged, so that they quietly go away when the dog comes towards them.
- Should be basic herding trained by an experienced handler with the type of herding dog that will be used during exercise, i.e. "eye" or "body herding" dogs.
- Should be of appropriate age for to be trained with a dog. For sheep and goats, this means at least four months of age, for cattle at least six months of age and for ducks the animals has to be adults.
- Should have access to food, water, shade and dry lying area and get rest at appropriate times during training. Exercise duration and frequency should be adjusted to the animals' circadian rhythm so that they can graze rest and so on. Short training sessions are recommended considering both the dog's learning ability and the animal's welfare.
- Should be given suitable rest with access to water and food between work outs. The animals' natural rhythm when moving is walking or light trot. If the animals are herded at a higher tempo they will become more stressed and the training sessions should be shortened. If the animals become wheezy and reluctant to move the training should be discontinued and the animals allowed to rest undisturbed for a longer period.

Ewes and lambs should be weaned in an animal ethical manner.

Ewes should not be used in the first six weeks of gestation, and should not be used the last eight weeks of gestation.

If pregnant cattle are used, these must not be over six months of gestation.

The number of animals should not be too small, but it has to be a flock.

For sheep and goats it means about six individuals, for cattle at least four individuals and for ducks at least ten individuals.



All animals should fit into the flock, i.e. the animals in the flock must be accustomed to each other previously.

Herding training should only be done when weather and temperature is appropriate, i.e. not likely to affect the herded animals' welfare.

### **Training location**

All risks of accidents for the herded animals should be prevented. This can be done by :

- Secure that the place for the herding training is appropriate with respect to fences and obstacles.
- Secure that objects, bumps or holes in the terrain is avoided.
- Secure that the gates are controlled so that they are not broken, might roll over or are constructed with sharp or protruding parts that constitute a risk of injury.
- Secure that the ground on the training area is adequately drained.

### **The dog handler**

- Expects to acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the herded animals.
- Shall seek full control over the training situation, so that neither the herded animals nor the dog is exposed to undue stress or rough handling. If the herded animals run away or seek refuge with the people, the handler must immediately be able to stop the dog.
- Should have experience from herding training, if failing that, a well experienced instructor shall be included in the training situation. All instructors / trainers who are responsible for herding training in Sweden should have received appropriate education in animal welfare.

### **The animal owner**

- Has the ultimate responsibility for good animal handling when herding training takes place on the owner's animals.

The SKK organization supply information on how owners / attendants shall take care of the herded animals and how the herded animals react when exposed to herding training with dogs.