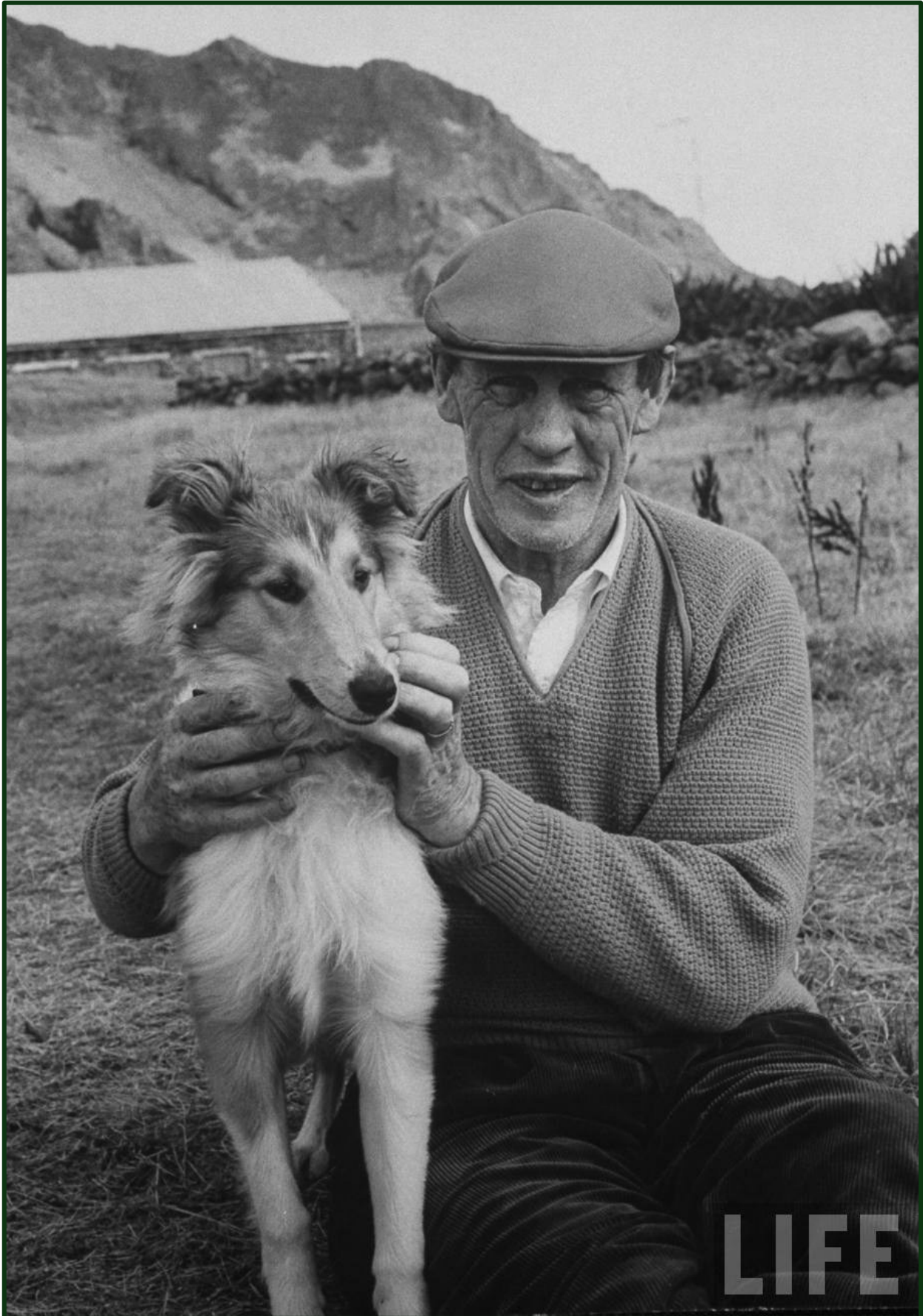


The TAILWAGGER



Shepherd with his young collie

Serendipitous Collie History

From the Editor

In trying to find more information about the cover of this Fall's TAILWAGGER, of which I was unsuccessful, I came across the most interesting photograph of a shepherd tending his flock with his rough collie in the middle of Brooklyn's Prospect Park!

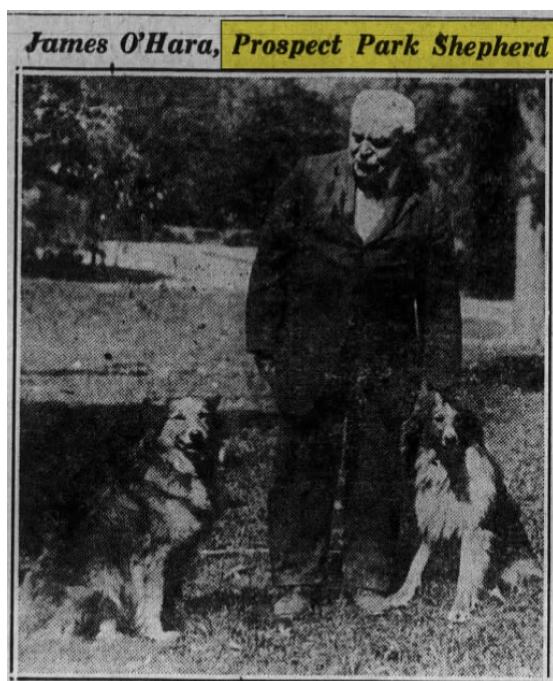


The flock circa 1900 with shepherd James O'Hara, and collie on duty.

Photo by Detroit Publishing Co. via Library of Congress

James O'Hara's journey as a shepherd began long before he set foot in America. In his youth, he worked on Lord John Brown's estate in Ireland, continuing a family tradition; his father had been a herder before him.

After arriving in Brooklyn, James O'Hara quickly became a familiar sight in Prospect Park, which officially opened to the public on October 19, 1867. Needing the grass to be mowed, James S. T. Stranahan, known as the "Father of Prospect Park," appointed O'Hara in 1885 as the park shepherd. The newspaper picture included his two dogs, Gyp and King.



Regarding the collies Mr. O'Hara had over the years, he said he found them to be of high virtue and of a faithful nature.

He was a man of few words, so the following is the only quote I could find to give us a sense of who he was: "I was a herder in Ireland, before I came here, on the estate of Lord John Brown. And my father was a herder before me. In the old Country, the weather was not so warm as it is here, and the lambing season would come a bit later. There were 800 acres in his lordship's domain, and naturally, he could graze enough sheep to make it pay him. The poor man thereabouts who tried to make something on keeping sheep would have a hard time of it. It would be twelve or fourteen, or maybe eighteen acres that he would have, instead of his lordship's 800. Or maybe there would be a few who had gotten, all in all, piece by piece, a matter of 50 to 100 acres. And the few, then, might prosper."

Throughout his 36 years as Prospect Park's shepherd, James O'Hara was known not only for his skill and dedication but also for his kindness. He never had a single sick day and never uttered a harsh word to the countless children who flocked to him, eager to learn about his sheep and his dogs. It is a pleasure to learn about him and catch a glimpse of our beloved breed at work over a hundred years ago.





UPCOMING EVENTS

AKC Obedience & Rally Trial

October 4 – 5, 2025 @ SDTC



AKC TD/TDX Tracking Test

Oct 26, Sprague WA



Scentwork Seminar

November 1 – 2, 2025 @SDTC



IECC Obedience Trial

Friday, November 7 @SD



IECC Fun Matches

January 18th

February 8th

March 8th

@ SDTC

How Corporatization Is Reshaping Veterinary Care

A Quiet Shift in Who Owns Your Veterinary Clinic

Introduction

Picture this: You bring your dog to the same veterinary clinic you've trusted for years, expecting the familiar touch of a local, independent practice. But lately, you've noticed something different. The bill seems quite a bit higher, and the waiting room looks a bit slicker. Curious, you check their website and find glossy stock photos, corporate-sounding mission statements, and vague promises about "excellence" and "values." It all feels a little less personal, a little more polished—and you can't quite put your finger on why.

This isn't just your imagination. Across the country, an unprecedented wave of corporatization is transforming veterinary medicine, fueled in large part by private equity investment. What once felt like a neighborhood business is increasingly part of a larger, profit-driven network. The COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated this trend, making it nearly impossible for pet owners not to notice that something fundamental has changed.

The Shift from Private Practices to Corporate Ownership

Traditionally, most of us saw our local veterinary clinic as a small business run by a passionate doctor devoted to animals and the community. Supporting a private practice felt good; it meant trusting someone with a personal stake in your community. However, in recent years, the business side of veterinary care has begun to evolve into a different beast altogether. Enter the corporate consolidator.

There are a few types:

- Veterinary-led organizations
- Wealthy families
- Private equity (PE) firms

It is of note that many veterinary-led groups receive financial backing from PE firms—so are they truly veterinarian-led? And what exactly is a PE firm?

A private equity firm is an investment management company that consolidates capital from affluent individuals and institutional investors, including pension funds, hedge funds, banks, and insurance companies, to acquire ownership interests in businesses. The primary objective of every PE firm is to generate *profit*. While veterinarians at clinics owned by such firms remain committed to patient care, clinical autonomy is often reduced under these models. The priorities of investors are typically focused on financial returns rather than fostering community relationships or prioritizing patient-centered treatment.

Impact on Veterinarians

Many veterinarians have spoken out about depression and burnout. Lori Kogan, a clinical sciences professor at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, surveyed nearly 900 veterinarians in 2022 about their experiences and

DID YOU KNOW?

Corporate consolidators were estimated to control almost half of the veterinary care market share in 2021 — *Brakke Consulting*

perceptions of corporate vs. privately owned veterinary clinics. Even though most of the veterinarians surveyed reported working for corporate-owned clinics, Kogan found more than half said they would prefer to work in privately owned clinics. The benefits offered by corporate chains, such as health insurance, didn't seem strong enough to override other preferences. They reported feeling more pressure to generate revenue and see more clients per shift. Participants in private practice reported higher satisfaction across the board.

Corporate Investments and Anti-Competitive Practices

Corporate investments in the veterinary industry drive up prices, contribute to veterinarian dissatisfaction, and

may engage in anti-competitive practices. A regional example of this issue began in 2017 at the Pet Emergency Clinic (PEC). The PEC, owned by Spokane-area veterinarians and managed by an elected board, was in acquisition talks with National Veterinary Associates (NVA). To facilitate the sale, PEC required its veterinarians to sign contracts with noncompete clauses. Doctors Dru Choker and Matthew DeMarco balked and were summarily dismissed, prompting them to sue PEC and NVA for alleged monopolistic practices. The merger discussions ended, and after their antitrust case was dismissed and upheld on appeal. In May 2024, Choker and DeMarco petitioned the Supreme Court and await its decision to hear their antitrust case. They now own

and operate Emergency Veterinary Hospital in Coeur d'Alene.

It is worth noting that NVA is one of the most prominent players in consolidating the veterinary market through acquisitions and is one of the largest operators of veterinary practices, which raises no minor concerns about potential anti-competitive effects. NVA describes itself as “locally owned by veterinary shareholders,” which is misleading as it is owned by the PE firm JAB Holding, as of 2019. On an interesting aside, JAB Holding is a German conglomerate with investments in food and beverage brands.

Local Veterinary Practices Overview

Private Practices

These are the independents:

- *SouthCare Animal Medical Center*
- *Latah Creek Animal Hospital*
- *Union Animal Hospital*
- *Hunter Veterinary Clinic*
- *Spokane Cat Clinic*
- *Garland Animal Clinic*
- *Audubon Veterinary Clinic*
- *Indian Trail Internal Medicine*
- *Animal Eye Clinic of Spokane – owned by WA State University*
- *South Grand Veterinary Clinic*
- *Inland Empire Veterinary Imaging – shares location with Pet Emergency but owned by Dr. Siems*
- *North Spokane Veterinary Clinic*
- *Lincoln Heights Veterinary Clinic*
- *Fairwood Animal Hospital*
- *Wandermere Animal Hospital*
- *Valley Veterinary Clinic*
- *Mountain Empire Veterinary Services*
- *Suncrest Veterinary Services*
- *Argonne Veterinary Clinic*
- *Lilac City Veterinary Services*
- *Cheney Veterinary Clinic*
- *All Creatures Veterinary Clinic*
- *Deer Park Veterinary Clinic*
- *Emergency Veterinary Hospital*

Gray Area

Some practices fall into a more ambiguous category:

- *The Animal Clinic of Spokane*
- *Mt. Spokane Veterinary Hospital*
- *Regal Veterinary Center*
- *Pet Emergency Clinic*
- *Liberty Lake Veterinary Center*
- *Pet Urgent Care of Spokane*

Pet Urgent Care of Spokane is owned by American Veterinary Group (AVG). However, AVG is backed by the PE firm Oak Hill Capital. Their focus is on a “buy and build” consolidation strategy.

The Animal Clinic of Spokane was purchased by Dr. Matt Schmidt and Dr. Luther McConnell in 2011, following the construction of Mt. Spokane Veterinary Hospital. Both doctors are partners with Associate Veterinary Partners (AVP), which positions itself as an alternative to traditional corporate veterinary groups. This is how they work, according to their website: AVP purchases the majority of the practice's equity, while the doctor retains a minority equity stake, maintaining complete clinical control. How one might maintain complete clinical control when investors oversee expenses is a matter of debate that I would love to lend an ear to. Additionally, and for the curious, AVP's website states: "Looking for veterinarians who want to monetize some portion of ownership interest while allowing partners to enjoy financial benefits." The site also states that AVP has partnered with 21 veterinary hospitals across 13 states. Their tagline is "Who is AVP? You are." AVP also says that they are not a PE firm, so I looked it up. In 2022, Swift Anchor Holdings, a PE firm, invested in the group.

Liberty Lake Veterinary Center, according to the Spokane County Tax Assessor's office, is owned by People, Pets, and Vets (PPV) LLC and PPV of Washington PLLC. PPV is headquartered in Olympia and claims to be "veterinarian-led." Their website states: "The Company offers a compelling value proposition to veterinarians looking to sell their practice, as well as to associate veterinarians to share in the Company's growth through retained ownership." Further investigation reveals that Cressey and Company, a healthcare investment business, owns PPV.

Regarding the PPV of WA PLLC, another stakeholder to Liberty Lake Vet, according to the tax assessor's office, a brief investigation revealed that it is not BBB-accredited and has an F rating due to six unresolved complaints. Interestingly, the website www.peoplepetsandvets.com redirects to a company called Vector, which owns more than 30 practices in the state, 4 in Spokane. Their website states 3 of those are **Regal Veterinary Center**, **Liberty Lake Veterinary Center**, and **Mt. Spokane Veterinary Hospital**. Their tagline is "Life is Better Here." However, verifying ownership of Regal and Mt. Spokane has been confusing; the Spokane Tax Assessor lists Regal Vet Clinic as owned by BDCF, LLC. The management group behind BDCF, LLC is unclear.

Fewer than 15% of corporate consolidators put their brand on the practices they buy. —
Todd Nemet Arizona consumer advocate

The Corporate

The Mars Family owns:

- *Banfield Pet Hospital*
- *VCA Manito Animal Hospital*
- *VCA North Division Animal Medical Center*
- *VCA Peone Pines Animal Hospital*
- *VCA Ponti Animal Hospital*
- *VCA Kootenai Animal Hospital*
- *VCA River City Animal Hospital*
- *VCA North Idaho Animal Hospital*

Other notable corporate-owned clinics:

- *Blackhawk Veterinary Hospital* – Western Veterinary Partners partners with veterinarians, but PE firms such as LGT Capital Partners, Hamilton Lane, and Apogem Capital hold the largest stakes in their 250+ practices.
- *King's Veterinary Clinic* – Barry Holdings LLC, a PE firm

- *Medical Lake Veterinary Hospital* – bought by Sloan Industries, a PE firm, in 2021

What Can You Do?

1. Support independent veterinary practices.
2. Urge your state to review large acquisitions by corporate chains and PE firms to maintain competition and quality of care.
3. Talk about it!

Corporate investments have changed the landscape of human healthcare. Hospitals, physician practices, nursing homes, and medical equipment manufacturers have all been targets of PE firms. In Washington State, regulatory measures are evolving to address concerns about PE firms, particularly in the healthcare sector, through proposed legislation like SB 5387 and SB 5496. These efforts include requiring notice and approval for healthcare transactions and limiting PE ownership in healthcare. There is no small thought in the back of my head that local dog groups and clubs pay attention to the groundwork being laid out in these bills. Let us also keep an eye on whether the Supreme Court will hear the case of *Choker et al. v. Pet Emergency Clinic PS et al.*



What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.

Dot on a memory with Sandy:

Sandy and I went to Salt Lake City for the Beehive shows and Collie Specialties. I did not show at one of the specialties because the judge was my bitch's breeder, Carmen Leonard of Lisara Collies, but I wanted Carmen to see how she had matured. Skye did eventually finish her championship with Penny King handling. Her Finishing photo is attached. The Judge is Arnold Wolff. The other picture is a major reserve photo from a specialty show in Puyallup, judged by Danny Cardoso. It was Skye's first specialty; she was just over a year old.



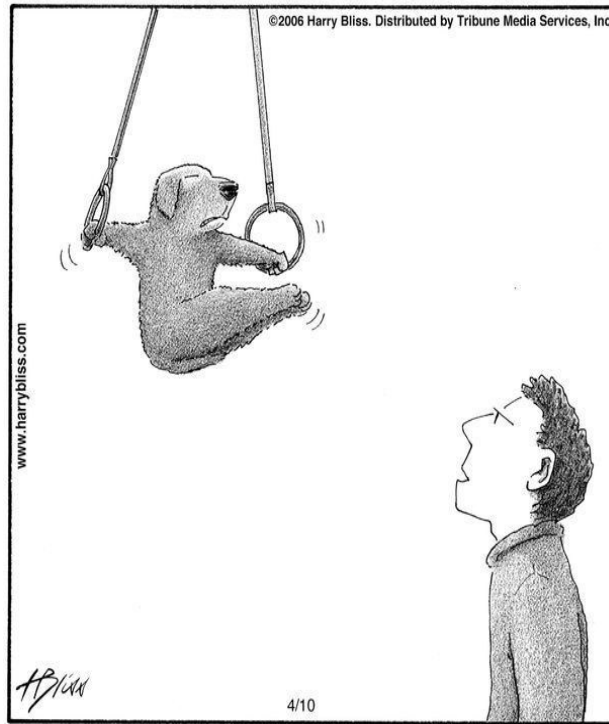
Club Highlights & Brags

The club received a thank you note from the Daughertys, who served as our judges for the Specialties even:

June 18, 2025
Dear Linda + Inland Empire Collie
Club
Thank you so much for inviting us to judge.
We had a fabulous time thanks to
great organization. Beautiful dogs,
Wonderful dinner and the pens
w/ box are beautiful.
Cathy + Bill Daugherty



Highlights and Brags



“That’s impressive, but I asked you to roll over.”

From Sharen:

ANYA and *BONNIE* got their int’l Ch titles at the IABCA show recently. *LILLY ROSE* is due with a litter in October!

From Ali:

TANIS: Completed her Rally Novice title and has two legs towards her RA. Also obtained one leg towards her Novice Jumpers agility title.

HUCK: Completed his Rally Intermediate title and has two legs towards his RA.

WREX (Shiba): Completed his Novice Jumpers Preferred agility title and has one leg towards his Open jumpers title.

WAYN has two legs towards his Novice Interior and Novice Containers scentwork element titles.

From Teri:

Both *KYLO* and *BODHI* received their HT titles at the regional event, and *KYLO* received a leg towards his PT. *KYLO* completed his Rally Novice title . . . and just got his first point for winners dog!!

From Chase:

At the show in Graham, *LYLE* beat his brother. He is also eating consistently every day with a new food this week. Lyle is also swimming a lot right now!

From Linda Ward

I decided to take the 8.5-month-old puppies to The Fall Roundup Cluster in Helena, Montana. Four dogs, show equipment and stuff for 5 days for me. Traveling back and forth from Helena to Great Falls each day to where the "gang" stayed with Barb Flaherty and her wonderful hospitality! Lots of driving, but worth it.

9/18 Gallatin Dog Club, Judge: Edweena (Teddy) McDowell

KIKI - Sinkona's New Beginnings - WB, BOW, BOV over a Special 4 pt. Major

Bridger - Sinkona's Finesse To Win - WD, BOS over a Special 1 pt.

Co-Owner: Barb Flaherty

Kestrel - Moxie's There's Your Trouble BN RN CGC RWB (3 pt Major)

Co-Owner: Allison Seeber Waite

9/19 Gallatin Dog Club, Judge Harry (Butch) Schulman (Breeder Judge)

KIKI - Best Puppy, BBE, WB, BOW, BOV over a Special 4 Pt. Major

Herding Group BBE Group 2

Bridger - WD, BOS over a Special 1 pt.

Rain - Sinkona's Winter Rain - RWB (3pt major)

Co-Owner: Ali Seeber Waite

9/20 Helena Montana Kennel Club, Judge: Yvonne Savard

KIKI - WB, BOS 3 Pt. Major

Bridger - Best Puppy, WD, BOW 3 Pt. Major

Kestrel - RWB (3 Pt. Major)

9/21 Helena Montana Kennel Club, Judge: Mrs. Linda M Riedel

KIKI - WB, BOS 3 Pt. Major

Bridger - WD, BOW 3 Pt. Major

Rain - RWB (3 pt. Major)

Sire of pups: Cynclair A Chorus Line - Bennett

Dam of pups: Sinkona's Mystical Vortex PCD BN RI NAP OJP OFP SIN SBN SBA SHDN CGC - AELLA

I want to thank Nancy Mathes, who helped this litter happen. She went over and above to help me get the breeding. Peggy Deuzabou, who helped to show dogs every day. To Barb, who was there to support and help me and hold dogs ringside. She also had to drive back and forth every day. To Ali, who let me take Kestrel, and I also had Aella. Maria Siebeck, who had her Special Titan - GCH CH ABILITY'S TO THE MOON AND BACK

CD BN RE HSAD HSBS HSDS HIAS HSASM FDC AX AXJ MXP MJP3 MJPB MXF MFPB DCAT SCN CGC TKN, for all of her help and support. Maria & Barb for helping to have handlers at the ring to get all of the girls into the ring for WB. It truly took a village (family) to accomplish this. I can't tell you how much all of this meant to me. To all the people who checked in to ensure I had help and support, and to congratulate us. A lot of miles and work, but it was worth it.



Kiki



Rain



Bridger

every

Linda:

GCH CH PACH2 RACH UCDX UROM
Sinkona's Dream Catcher UD BN GN GO
RM3 RAE2 HSAdS HSBd HSAsM MXP8
MXPG MJP10 MJPC PAX2 MFP T2BP
CA BCAT

CGC JHD GV – **ELSA**

7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally
Choice Q – 1st Place Collie – 2nd Place All-
Breed

7/19 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog
Club – Rally Choice Q – 3rd Place

7/20 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever
Club – Rally Choice Q – 2nd Place

7/25 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog
Club – Rally Choice Q – 3rd Place



Puppy Elsa in 2014 ♡

CH UCD RO1 Sinkona's Black Magic CD BN RI HSAd OAJ OF
OAP AJP CGC VX – **EBONY**

7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally – Rally Excellent Q – 1st Place
Collie - RE TITLE!

Sinkona's Mystical Vortex PCD BN RI NAP OJP
OFP SIN SBA

SHDN CGC – **AELLA**

4/11 - Spokane Agility Club – Novice Fast
Preferred – Q 2nd

Place – NFP TITLE!!!

4/26 - Helena Montana Kennel Club – Agility –
Open Fast

Preferred – Q 1st Place

5/17 - Great Falls Dog Training Club – Agility –
Open Fast

Preferred – Q 1st Place

5/18 - Great Falls Dog Training Club - Agility –
Open Jumpers

Preferred – Q 1st Place – OJP TITLE!!!!

5/22 - IECC – Specialty AM – RWB

5/23 – Spokane Kennel Club - RWB

5/25 – Coeur d'Alene Dog Fanciers – RWB

5/30 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog - Agility – Open
Fast Preferred – Q 1st Place – OFP TITLE



Aella

- 5/31 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog – Agility – Excellent Jumpers Preferred – Q – 1st Place
- 6/07 - Lilac City Dog Training Club – Obedience – Beginner Novice – Q
- 6/07 – Lilac City Dog Training Club – Obedience – Novice B – Q
- 6/21 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Handler’s Discrim – Q
- 6/21 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Interior – Q
- 6/22 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Handler’s Discrim – Q – SHDN TITLE!
- 6/22 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Interior – Q SIN TITLE!
- 6/22 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Container - Q
- 7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally Novice Q – 1st Place Collie – 2nd Place All-Breed
- 7/19 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Rally Novice Q – 1st Place
- 7/19 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever Club – Rally Novice Q – 1st Place – NOVICE RALLY TITLE!
- 7/26 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Preferred Novice Q 1st Place
- 7/27 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Preferred Novice Q 1st Place
- 8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club – AM Trial - Rally Intermediate Q 2nd Place
- 8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club – PM Trial – Preferred Novice – Q 1st Place PREFERRED NOVICE TITLE!
- 8/30 - Great Falls Dog Training Club – PM Trial – Rally Intermediate Q 1st Place
- 8/31 – Great Falls Dog Training Club – AM Trial – Rally Intermediate Q – 1st Place RALLY INTERMEDIATE TITLE!
- 8/31 – Great Falls Dog Training Club – PM Trial – Rally Intermediate Q – 1st Place
- 9/12 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Advanced Buried Q – 2nd Place
- 9/12 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Exterior Q – 2nd Place
- 9/13 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Advanced Buried Q SCENTWORK ADVANCED BURIED TITLE!
- 9/14 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Novice Exterior Q – 1st Place
- 9/14 – Spokane Dog Training Club – Scentwork – Excellent Buried Q



Linda:

Co-Owned with Barb Flaherty
CH Sinkona's Jazzman CDX BN RE PT FDC OAP OJP
XFP
ACT1 SWE CGC VX – **LOUIE**
9/06 CCA Western Herding Regional – Course A Ducks –
3rd
Place HSAd Title!



Tanya:



CH UCD RO2 Cairdean's Tsesit Stone Sinkona CD PCD BN
GN RE OA OAJ OAP OJP OF BCAT CGC – **PETRA**

7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally Masters – Q 4th Place

7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally Excellent – Q

7/18 – Inland Empire Collie Club – Rally Advanced – Q RAE

Leg

7/19 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Rally
Masters – Q 3rd Place

7/19 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Rally
Excellent - Q

7/19 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Rally
Excellent – Q RAE Leg

7/20 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever Club – Rally Masters –
Q 1st Place

7/20 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever Club – Rally Excellent

– Q 1st Place

7/20 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever Club – Rally Advanced

– Q 2nd Place RAE Leg

7/20 – Inland Empire Golden Retriever Club – Rally High

Triple Q

7/26 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Open A –

Q 1st Place

7/27 – Greater Spokane Shetland Sheepdog Club – Open A –

Q 1st Place High In Trial!

8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club AM Trial – Rally Masters

Q – 4th Place

8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club PM Trial – Rally

Excellent Q – 2nd Place

8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club PM Trial – Rally

Advanced Q – 2nd Place

8/31 – Great Falls Dog Training Club AM Trial – Grad Open Q

– 1st Place

8/31 – Great Falls Dog Training Club AM Trial – Rally Masters

Q – 1st Place

8/31 – Great Falls Dog Training Club PM Trial – Rally

Excellent Q – 3rd Place

8/30 – Great Falls Dog Training Club PM Trial – Rally

Advanced Q – 2nd Place

Moonstone's I'll Pine For You TDX, HSAd, HSBs, HIDs, HXAs – TORREY

Friday, September 5: qualifying scores in Intermediate Ranch course and Advanced Ranch course, completed intermediate level ranch title (HIDs)

Saturday, September 6: qualifying score in Intermediate Open Field course

Sunday, September 7: qualifying scores in Intermediate Open Field course and Advanced Arena courses, Reserve High In Trial



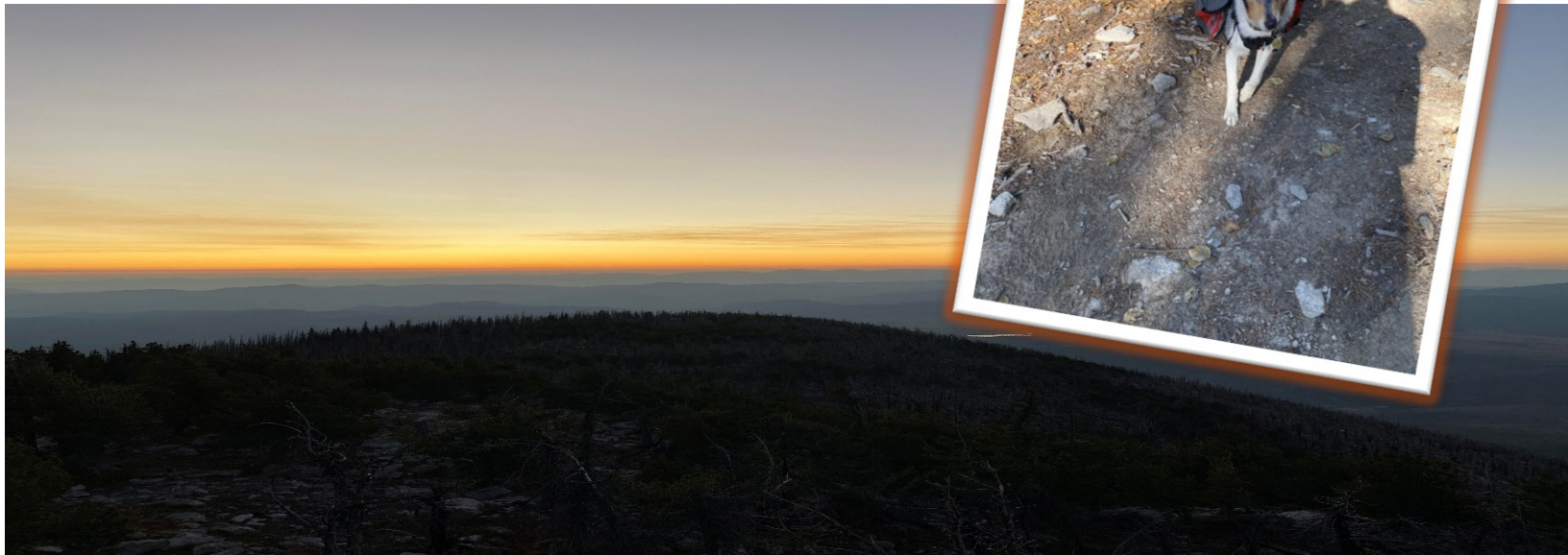
"Your shepherd, Louie, has retired. I'm Mr. Smathers. I will be your grazing-resource coordinator and flock welfare-and-security manager."

BRYCE and **PEG** relaxing after a long day of herding. We stayed for a week after the Regionals to practice.



'Oh, great...here comes our crazy stalker again.'

HAP recertified with Pet Partners and was rated complex!
We also certified as an Animal Assisted Crisis Response team. And he went on his first overnight backpacking trip carrying his own pack!



"WHEN THE WORLD IS
MUD-LUSCIOUS"
e.e. Cummings

WESLEY and I got a Rally Novice title at the Rally Roundup the weekend of July 18th. This was our very first rally trial, and we earned two perfect scores at the event. Last May at the Memorial Day Spectacular, we earned our Beginning Novice obedience title, improving our score each day.

The first photo is of **Wesley**, myself, and **Stella** Rowlett the judge. The second photo is of the IECC Specialty Rally Novice winning collies from both Novice A and B.

