

Tanya Wheeler: Herding Bio

Tanya Wheeler has been working with animals her whole life. She graduated with her Master's Degree in Biology (Wildlife Science) and an undergraduate degree in Psychology (Animal Behaviour). She has studied principles of Behavioural psychology and understands well the positive reinforcement training methods and uses them in her own training methods.

Tanya Wheeler acquired her first Aussie in 1993 (Tucker) and has raised Australian Shepherds since 2000. Her first love is herding but she has been active in agility, obedience and rally achieving many Advanced and Excellent titles, and on many of her dogs; Versatility and Supreme Versatility titles.

She is successfully training and competing in the highest international, competitive level of stock dog herding world, advanced/elite level agility and obedience (CKC, ASCA and AHBA) with her Australian Shepherds and has either owned and bred or bred and trained the top herding dog in Canada (all breeds) for over 10 years. She and her dogs have been invited as one of the top 10-20 dogs in the world to compete at the Internationals ASCA stockdog Championships (cattle sheep and ducks) 8 years consecutively and placed in the top 10 overall with 3 of her dogs.

Tanya has experience with many breeds and travels considerably delivering clinics and seminars in North America and Europe. She is a licensed herding trial judge with ASCA, AKC, CKC and the AHBA. As a herding teacher her focus is on foundations and more specifically developing the natural talent of a useful dog. She has trained and competed at the world level with three of her Aussies and although competition is important, she emphasises the importance of a real working dog and so her approach is to bring the best out in the herding dog so that it can think independently and perform useful jobs.

Her approach leads to a more dependable working dog and trial dog whose strength is in reading and evaluating its' stock and working to please the handler. Her technique is not uncommon but there is a strong emphasis on body language, pressure and looking at things from the dog's point of view. Much of her training came from a variety of talented instructors over the years including many years with Mr. Bob Vest. She is capable of working with a range of talent and helps you find the best in your dog and to develop your communication skills with your herding partner.

Tucker Creek is the first Hall of Fame (HOF) Kennel in Canada and achieved HOF excellent in both Canada and the USA (with the CKC and Australian Shepherd Club of America). It has always been her goal to demonstrate the versatility of her dogs by training dogs in herding,

agility, obedience, rally, tracking and conformation. Her Aussies have ranked #1 in Canada for top herding dog for many years consecutively and in the top 10 in the world finals competitions for many years as well.

Her dogs have also been in the top ten for Most Versatile Australian Shepherd at the ASCA Nationals and qualified 7 years in a row within the top 15 dogs competing worldwide. Earning more than just advanced herding titles, she achieved Elite Agility titles and advanced and Open Obedience titles with her Aussies, Versatility Champions, herding Champions, Breed champions. The kennel Tucker Creek – is the first and only Hall of Fame Excellent Kennel in Canada (CNASA) and a Hall of Fame Kennel in the USA as well, for attaining, the most combined venue advanced titles herding, agility, tracking, obedience, rally, and conformation breed titles.

Tanya: "I enjoy training dogs and have tried to establish at least a basic understanding of as many of the dog training and trialing venues as possible. It has helped me to understand the variety of training methods used today to achieve success in the wide range of dog sport. Personally, I feel the most challenging dog sport of them all is working with dog and livestock under high drive and operating with instinct as the motivator with talented dogs.

Over the years I see people changing their methods and using training aids and collars and new methods to achieve success. I have come to believe one of the most important things for success, particularly in a multi venue dog handler team is building on relationship.

Although I was formally educated in behavioural methods based on positive reinforcers and conditioning responses, I think it is actually one of the most complicated training methods to use. Many trainers and handlers don't fully grasp the potential and the level of detail and consistency for this method to work exclusively when working with dogs. Positive reinforcement training methods are often used without fully understanding the principles and overlook the importance of "Relationship". It is important to see things from the dog's point of view and establish first the most basic of needs for a dog to feel confident and a full partner in a working relationship. A positive working relationship with a dog is based on trust, the ability to understand correction with positive energy, and confidence that the handler is a fair and kind leader in life."