

## HOW TO SUCCEED ON "A" COURSE WITH A BRIARD

Follow the instructions completely and you can finish titles in "A" course sheep with your briard!!! First you need a willing partner. If your partner is hyperactive, never stands still... "A" course is probably not for you. Try C course for this type of high energy dog. C course also blends well with doing agility. "A" course requires more thought, more precision, more calculations by both the handler and the dog..basically a slower dog. "A" course requires more obedience and less independence than C course. "A" course needs a dog that looks to you, the handler, more than C course type dog who says I can do it all by myself.. go away!

Items Needed for success .....

you must have a stop, recall and stay on your briard... anytime/any place you ask for it

your dog must have a walk... a nice slow walk and must be able to do it on command.

your dog must have a WIDE, 'hug the fence' outrun that is executed at a slow trot or walk.

your dog must listen and obey any command you give.

You need to be able to practice at least once a week. Then you will get hooked and the next thing you know you have sheep or join a coop with sheep.

Lastly you, the handler, need to know the game. Study other handlers, buy herding books, see if you can practice with a finished dog to "get the idea".

And you don't knitpick at your briard, you ask once and if it doesn't happen, you correct the dog and then praise. (as if it were the dogs idea all along!)

A stop: practice anywhere there are distractions, then ask for a stop... anytime, anyplace your dog must stop. In the training of this, reward with praise or food or toy. This is also a necessary training element for general living... say your dog is playing at the park. He is running and doesn't see a strange dog coming toward him. You yell "stop". He stops. Then you either recall or tell him to stay. That introduces two more commands you need for herding.... A recall and a stay. Practice these all the time with distractions until your briard is coming fast, stopping on a dime close and at a distance, and staying wherever you yell "stay". Lots of rewards for correct behavior. Redo incorrect behavior but don't dwell on the negative. Just keep asking many times a day for this behavior. Then expect with the sheep added, you will need to do it another 100 times.!!! Practice at your training facility while others are herding and of course during your runs.

A walk: Some dogs walk easier than others. If you see your briard is having a lot of trouble walking when asked... go back to the basics. You ask for a walk, your briard trots... you run at your dog and grab him and say "I said walk" and walk beside him so he is understanding what walk is. In the beginning, you fetch sheep with yourself in front, then space, then sheep, then space, then your dog WALKING behind the flock. If the dog is "pushing" and not walking, the sheep

overrun you and that isn't pleasant. When you start driving, the walk is important in keeping the flock calm and moving steadily forward through the obstacles.

Wide Outrun: Picture this... 3-5 head of sheep nervously standing in the arena near the put out of hay or grain. A big hairy sheepdog runs toward them.... All heck breaks loose. Now picture this... the briard leaves the handlers post quietly walking.. maybe a little trot out to along the far fenceline. Sheep notice the dog is not out of control. When the dog reaches the lift point, you ask for a stop and the good briard stops. HMMMMM say the sheep. "the handler is in control of this situation. We won't get chased or eaten". Then the briard walks the sheep up to the handler and post.

Biggest problem to a big wide outrun is going toooo quickly. Start in a small arena and ONCE you have it perfect, move to a bigger arena and so forth until full sized. If your briard starts cutting in on the outrun, go back to the smaller arena and perfect it before moving on.

Starting in a small round pen, I use a long piece of PVC or such to point at the ribcage of my briard to push him out to the fence. You may have to touch him with the stick to goose him out. Whenever he cuts in I position the long stick at the ribcage again to push him out. If he starts speeding up I position the stick at the front of his head to block forward movement. If he tries to turn, position the stick at his rear to keep him going forward, LOTS OF PRAISE . Be consistent. And I say "waaalllllk" over and over. So he walks slowly around the arena on the fenceline is the goal. If any of you have horses, it is just like longeing a horse. Then take the operation to a little bigger arena ONLY when you have this done perfect.

If I have really skittish sheep, during my walking outrun I stop the briard along the fenceline... showing the sheep I am in control and "taking the hit for a stop and redirect" on the scoresheet. If my sheep bolt right after sending the briard at the handler's post, I stop the dog and wait a few seconds to show the judge my dog didn't cause anything as he is walking on the fenceline. Then I command the dog to wherever he needs to be to cover the sheep,

Listening: The briard must follow your commands BUT your commands must be correct or you loose face with your dog. Sometimes you know better and the dog figures out later you were correct... so when you give a command you better be ready to back up WHY if asked by your briard. When your briard is moving slowly as in walk, it is easy to think and figure out your next move... another reason to walk. This ties in with knowing the game. Read herding books, go to trials, watch good handlers and bad ones to see what happens. At my place I put beginners on HC Zia who will work for anyone... that way you get an idea of correct herding and I know if you give the wrong command as she looks at me ("is this handler stupid?!") and you get the feel of doing it correctly.

Knitpicking: will ruin any briard. Don't do it in any aspect of their lives. You ask for a behavior ... you get it or you get after them. You ask for a come once... if you continuously ask 3 times, guess what... the briard will come on the third time!! You yell "come" and briard doesn't come... you run to briard grab beard (which they are used to from puppyhood) and pull along saying "I said come" for a few feet. Then release and say... YEA, GOOD COME while jumping up and down smiling and giving treat also. Then wait a few minutes and repeat your command ...do this until you get an immediate come each time you say it the first time. I find off and on I have to go through this lesson again as I get sloppy and lazy.

Practice: As with any sport, practice makes perfect. You need to expose yourself and the briard to sheep as many times a week that you can. The herding camps are a great way to plunge into daily herding . One camp I attended in Ca many years ago had me working sheep sans dog for days... this taught me pressure, how to move sheep, how close you can get, where to position yourself to move sheep forward, left or right.

You notice I only talk about sheep herding not ducks or cattle. Both of those are a different type of herding.

Happy herding.