



“Come By” or “Away to Me”

Brian Jacobs' superior stock dogs can do the work of several horsemen.

By Rebecca Colnar Mott

Brian Jacobs, of Golden State Stockdogs, sits on his perlino stallion, Chrome, in the arena in Adin, Calif., demonstrating how his stock dog, GS Poe, works. The dog, owned by Heather and Tom Nielsen (See *RANGE*, Fall 2024), listens for the next command, dropping down when given the command, quietly moving to the left or right when asked. As several Angus heifers trot into the ring, Brian gives either voice commands or a whistle, depending on the level the dog is working. The 34-year-old cowboy-turned-stock dog trainer exudes confidence that transfers to the intently listening, watching and waiting working dog, who quickly responds to “Come By” or “Away to Me.”

Brian spent his early years in Riverton, Wyo., surrounded by horses and cattle. His mother’s side consisted of ranchers, farmers



ABOVE: Brian and Haylie Jacobs enjoy teaching their son, Lyle, about horses and stock dogs. The family travels together to compete in dog trials across the country when they’re not working on their Adin ranch. AT TOP: Stock dog Stash.

and veterinarians, while his father trained reined cow horses. In 1995, his father accepted a job training horses in Woodland, Calif. The family was showing reined cow horses and started training colts.

Sale. “I won with him and the public reached out, and many people wanted me to train their dogs.” In 2010, Golden State Stockdogs was born. In 2019 Brian moved to Hollister, Calif., to manage the El Toro Ranch while

Brian’s interest in stock dogs began in his early teens. “I had been training a dog and my father was cutting out cattle to deliver to a supplier,” Brian remembers. “But my dad was unable to be there when that supplier arrived to transport the cattle. I was there, so I used my dog to help bring the animals in. The trucker for that supplier was so impressed he bought my dog then and there. That sparked my interest in training working dogs.”

He started working with stock dogs and took one he raised to a competition at the Red Bluff Bull & Gelding

continuing to train horses and work with stock dogs. His good fortune continued when he met young local rancher Haylie Stelling. They had a common interest in horses, dogs and each other and tied the knot in 2022.

Hoping to expand their horse and dog training business and to raise cattle, they found a place in Northern California, 30 miles from the Oregon and Nevada borders in Modoc County. Head down their long driveway when you turn off County Road 87 near Adin and you'll find their house, barns, corrals, a round pen, kennels and large haystacks. The land is relatively flat, surrounded by rougher hills. Brian quickly points out that cattle remain a crucial part of their lives. Not only do they run the cattle at the ranch in Adin, but they still have leased pasture in Hollister where they run commercial black cattle with Haylie's father, Marc Stelling.

It's not uncommon for the couple to have 15 canines in training. On any day you might discover blonde-haired Haylie working her dogs in the corral, the stud tied to a trailer, two-year-old Lyle wandering around with Brian, and a couple of older cow dogs following in their wake. The young cowgirl is an essential part of the program. She helps with day-to-day operations, feeds animals, works with horses and trains dogs. She has been successful with her dog training, competing nationally as a novice handler.

Brian and Haylie also breed horses for competition in working cow horse and barrel racing. Those that don't work as show horses will be sold as dependable ranch horses. They have a stud and four foals, and they expect nine foals in 2025.

Brian's enthusiasm for their life is apparent: "I really like the natural ability that working dogs have. I train every dog to what fits them, their style and mannerisms. A dog should move like a good cutting horse and understand its instinct. I won't tolerate dogs that don't respect livestock and want to bite or chase them. I want a dog that wants to learn to work livestock quietly."

Training a dog can take as few as four months or as long as 18 months. A good ranch dog takes only about four months to train. The difference

Ranch dogs need to think for themselves.

between training competition dogs and ranch dogs is at the trials. Trial dogs need to be "mechanical" and await each command, while a ranch dog needs to trust their instincts and think for themselves since their handlers could be too far to give commands.

When Brian talks about ranch dogs, his voice shows pure admiration. "A well-trained ranch dog easily replaces five guys in rough country." A good ranch dog knows when it's time to go and eagerly jumps into the pickup.



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Training stock dogs from the back of his quarter horse stallion, Chrome, allows Brian Jacobs to teach both the horse and the dogs about cattle. Jacobs trains both working dogs and trial dogs.



Klem, GS Mojo, GS Bentley, Jolene and RKB Lacey heading to field trials at the Huckleberry Mountain Invitational Trial at Warnock Ranches in Oregon. RIGHT: Lyle and his shadow, six-month-old puppy, Jim, who comes from a long line of Brian Jacobs' best dogs. BELOW: Brian refines Stash's maneuvers for his next trial. Stash is the first dog Brian guided his wife, Haylie, to train.



It's a partnership built on mutual trust. Often they're a cowboy's only companion outside of their horse.

Working dogs are smart and quickly learn the lay of the land. "They know where the gates are and where the cowboy is headed. A good dog will train your cattle; they will teach a cow to give in to pressure and pick up and go," Brian says, explaining that the "leave your dog at home" folks have probably not seen a trained, handy stock dog.

A \$10,000 dog might seem expensive, but figuring what an employee would cost over eight years or more, having a trained dog might be the wiser option. Plus, they're going to be happy to work even in snow or rain. "I've taken two dogs," Brian says, "and the three of us gathered 600 pairs."

Brian purchased Moose, a registered border collie, at the Red Bluff Bull & Gelding Sale and after five years of training and competing, Moose became a stand-out dog and the main male for Golden State Stockdogs. At 14 years Moose was inducted into the National Cattle-dog Hall of Fame, one of only three dogs to be so honored.

Family remains essential. Even at a young age, towhead son, Lyle, is learning all about working dogs. Brian will fill the dog bowl and ask Lyle, "Can you give this one to Jolene?" and he does. He loves petting and playing with the dogs and he can even get them to lie down. "He already thinks he's a trainer," Brian says with a smile.

Brian has a reputation as an exceptionally successful cow dog breeder and trainer. His dogs have won open championships at every association in the country, and one sold in Pendleton, Ore., at the Cattle Baron's Sale for \$48,000. Others in stock dog competitions note how helpful Brian is at trials, offering advice to other competitors. Brian and Haylie plan to promote these competitive, enjoyable contests by hosting trials at their Adin ranch.

"I'd love to see more people involved in this sport," Brian says. "It's an inviting group of people from across the country, with many ranchers or working cow horse people. Everyone parks their trailer in a circle, then serve up potluck dinners while sitting around the campfire telling tales. It's just one big family." ■

Rebecca Colnar Mott ranches in Custer, Mont., with her husband, Casey. She had a fast trip to Modoc County to meet the folks at Golden State Stockdogs. When not tracking down RANGE story ideas she serves as the director of publications and media relations for Montana Farm Bureau.