

Joni Tietjen, Clearmont, WY – Two-time Nursery Champion with Ben

Ben is home-bred and trained by Joni and is the first dog in the history of the USBCHA to win the nursery championship twice, in 2016 and 2017. We spoke with Joni about herself and her dogs.

1. How did you get started in sheepdogs and trialing?

Back in 1990 was when I saw my first sheepdog trial, at the Black Hills Stock Show. I was ranching full time and when I watched the dogs I wanted to train one to help on the ranch. It's been a passion ever since. In the early days we only had cattle, we then added a band of ewes to diversify. Over time, the dogs became better trained. Still today, we use our dogs constantly on the ranch for both sheep and cattle work.

2. What do you do to prepare for Finals?

I go over their foundation work, I like to have the dogs consistent. I stretch them out for distance, but mostly look to their foundation. I also give them a lot of real work, as often as I can. I want to keep them free and happy and not over-trained. That's a big part, not over-training, especially for a young dog.

3. What do you regard as Ben's best traits?

Ben is a special dog with a real willingness to please. He works on the ranch as well as trialing and is biddable with nice feel and good courage. He's consistent and has a good solid brain.

4. What advice would you offer to anyone starting out in trialing?

Learn the value of a good foundation and don't rush training. Get your young dog's foundation and basics. Everyone gets in a hurry to get trialing. Enjoy the journey! Don't be in a hurry. Sometimes slower is faster. Let the dog set the pace, keep them thriving and excited for the next work.