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over time with scents of non-living human material, which is then transferred to outdoor and scattered conditions. Land certification is required prior to water certification.

According to Mike, Noora and Kobbi do SAR work to keep them busy—to give them a job. On Sunday afternoons they come home having had a positive experience: the dogs always find something for which they are rewarded. But this job is also an important service to the wider community. SAR teams are volunteers who are on call 24/7. They buy their own equipment and spend hours training. Most state SAR organizations rely heavily on donations from the public to support their work.

To Mike, Noora, and Kobbi—and to all SAR canine teams—thank you for your service!

—Dr. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker,

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Lancashire Heelers

HEAD OVER HEELERS

Years ago, when I worked at the American Kennel Club’s office on Madison Avenue, my good friend and cubemate Mara Bovsun and I had a saying:

I could seriously get into that breed.

Usually, “that breed” was the subject of whatever we were writing for that issue—profiles of working dogs, amazing companions, incredible canine athletes, breeds new to the AKC. Our sources told us charming anecdotes of their dogs’ antics, then sealed the deal with photos of wrinkled, waddling puppies or stunning specials—I fell in love often, and hard.

The Lancashire Heeler was one such breed.

It was 2009 when I found the rugged little drover tucked away on the Foundation Stock Service page of the AKC website, where he’d been since 2001. The few pictures I saw depicted Heelers as small, scrappy, and smiling—the

perfect companion for my black and tan Pomeranian and our studio apartment, right?

I could seriously get into that breed.

And I did—only a full decade later.

Now, I’d like to think I knew what I was getting into. I had bred and shown Pomeranians for years, titling in multiple disciplines. I apprenticed with a professional handler throughout college. I worked for the AKC, in New York City and later as a freelancer. I knew what it meant to be a responsible dog owner—to do my research and really understand a breed before committing.

But no amount of research prepared me for life with a Lancashire Heeler.

Scoop joined our family in 2019—7 months old, smack in his gangly teens. And it was apparent right away that the “world’s smallest drover” is nothing like the toy breeds I was used to.

First, he chewed everything. All my son’s stuffed

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“Small, scrappy, and smiling”: multitasking Scoop the Lancashire Heeler looks adoringly at his owner.

animals are missing ears and tails. Scoop once ate a box of crayons, which I discovered when picking up a very colorful stool sample.

OK, so he needed a job. I enrolled him in obedience and agility, where he caught on so quickly that he earned nicknames like “showoff” and “the ringer.” When the pandemic hit, we racked up title after title in virtual rally, home manners, tricks, scent work, and parkour. When

the world opened up again, we added Canine Good Citizen, Barn Hunt, and conformation.

The standard describes Heelers as “courageous, happy, and affectionate to owner.” I would add hopelessly devoted, bordering on obsession. Scoop follows me from room to room, constantly watching, observing, probably judging. He lies across my feet as I wash the dishes. He’s sleeping beside

me, upside-down, as I write this column.

And Scoop gives *constant* commentary. He barks in alert and in protest, in jubilation and frustration. He even barks in his sleep.

Heelers are believed to be related to Corgis and Manchester Terriers (though there’s some debate on that). I don’t have cattle, but I do have three small boys in a two-bedroom apartment, where Scoop’s herding instincts are on full display. He’ll nip at their heels when things get too raucous—yet shows so much restraint and gentleness when my 2-year-old grabs at his ears or tail.

Scoop loves children. He regularly accompanies us to the playground and will give any kid a spin or a paw in exchange for cheese puffs. But at home, he’s extremely protective of his palace. He greets house guests by cursing them, gives them a good, thorough sniff, then keeps a close eye on the intruders to ensure no funny business.

There is nothing this dog can’t do—and he knows

COURTESY LINDSEY DOBRUCK / RYAN RITTER PHOTOGRAPHY



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it, so he insists on being part of everything. He tags along on errands, hikes, camping trips, and outdoor restaurants. If we leave him home—well, he has a lot of opinions on that, and he shares them loudly, with the neighbors.

Scoop is everything a Lancashire Heeler should be—and he’s everything my family needs. But this breed isn’t right for everyone.

Potential pet owners should know that Lancashire Heelers are brilliant, devoted companions who thrive in an active household. They prefer not to be left home alone for extended periods of time. They excel in almost every dog sport—our club members compete in agility, rally, obedience, Fast CAT, Barn Hunt, scent work, AKC Fetch, dock diving, treibball, parkour, canine freestyle, earthdog, and, of course, herding.

Potential breeders should know that Lancashire Heelers are still very rare. The latest data available to the United States

Lancashire Heeler Club (USLHC) shows fewer than 400 Lancashire Heelers registered with the AKC. The breed is classified as “vulnerable” in the United Kingdom, with just 108 registered with the Kennel Club (England) last year. According to the AKC website, there are fewer than 5,000 Heelers worldwide.

The club has joined with the Orthopedic Foundation of America (OFA) and the Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) to guide U.S. breeders to healthy, disease-free breeding for future generations of Heelers. Primary lens luxation (PLL), Collie Eye Anomaly, (CEA), and patellar luxation are three required tests that breeders must perform to qualify for a CHIC number in the OFA database. The USLHC recommends the above listed basic health screening tests for all breeding stock.

Finally, judges should know that Lancashire Heelers are drovers—they are not terriers, nor collies,

nor toy dogs. In the ring, Heelers should show confidence and energy; they should not be skittish or cowardly. On the table, they may be aloof or suspicious of strangers. Movement should be brisk, natural, and free. The standard describes ears “showing alert lift, or erect”—which includes button, rose, or erect ears.

The Lancashire Heeler is an intense, rugged, intelligent little dog that has brought so much joy to my family—and some angst, too. I look forward to sharing more about the breed and the dedicated fanciers who’ve got us to full recognition.

And maybe, after reading one of these columns, you’ll find yourself thinking, *I could seriously get into that breed.*—Lindsey Dobruck,

[United States Lancashire Heeler Club](#)

Norwegian Buhunds STRESS IN THERAPY DOGS

In recent years Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)