

It is the first Sunday in June, and though official summer doesn't begin until the solstice that is on the twenty-first this year, we tend to regard June, July, and August as the "summer months." This is not my favorite season of the year, but I know we need warm weather if we are going to have food for ourselves and feed for our livestock for the next winter. And, the occasional cool summer can be a real pleasure. But, I still look forward to fall.

If you look at the new June pictures on our website, you will have a pretty good idea of what today was like here on Coe Creek. The cattle are out on green pasture now and all sleek after losing their winter coats and burnishing their hides as they groom one another. At the present, they are consuming the excess grass on what we call The Home Pasture, an area usually occupied by Alvik and Bjorgy, the Norwegian Fjord team and Pony, the Haflinger pony. But, Alvik and Bjorgy have been helping an Amish neighbor work some fields the past couple of weeks, and Pony has had the luxury of a shady pasture the sheep left some time ago. So, the cattle are cleaning up the canary reed grass and some other greenery in the horse pasture. They will soon move to the Speicher Woods, but for the present, they are in this close paddock, easy to see from the cabin.

We moved sheep this morning. They had been in the East Pasture for a few days, and it was time for them to make the trek across the corner to the South Eighty. I am always a bit nervous about this move, as the lambs are still quite young, and if they do not follow immediately, they sometimes panic and are almost impossible to herd in the right direction. With only border collie puppies—untrained as yet—for help, it can be a circus.

We had Blue and Kate on leashes this morning, not something we would do with trained dogs, but they are not in that category yet. Blue went with Runo, and he herded the sheep into a tight bunch at the corner where we would open the gate. When that opening is made, the old ewes—the ones who know exactly where they are going and are eager to get there—run madly across the road and down the slope into the South Eighty. Today, the lambs all followed with two dogs behind them, urging but under control. This corner the sheep must navigate is a "four corners crossing", north and south road—with stop signs—and the east and west road that has the right of way. The roads are both gravel and not highly traveled, but there is the occasional incautious driver who barrels down the hill from the east and across the corner. So, we park the tractor or pickup at the top of the hill with the caution blinkers flashing.

But, all went well, and the dogs lay in the grass when we got home, probably thinking their sheep duties were all too short today. In any case, they find plenty to do. The picture of the pots of flowers on a shelf on the woodshed wall gives an indication of another of Blue and Kate's main occupations.

In the past, I have had a few moderately nice flower beds with perennials, some annual flowers, several herbs and a little other greenery. That is not possible this year. I decided I would just have flowers in pots—except for the perennials that the dogs have, for some reason, left alone. I brought up an old, gray chair from the other house and set a big pot of colorful petunias and other

flowers on it. I was pleased that getting the flowers up out of the ground seemed to have removed the dogs' desires to dig them up. The next morning, I looked out and saw that the flower pot was nowhere to be seen, and Blue was sitting proudly on the old chair. As it turned out, she hadn't harmed the plant. I put it back, and it stayed that way for a couple of days. Then, one evening we came in from checking cattle and sheep to see the chair empty again, but this time, the flower pot and its contents were scattered over the yard, completely torn to pieces.

Overestimating the energy and resourcefulness and, it must be said, the "naughtiness" of a border collie puppy is impossible. Although, I must say that Kate, the black pup, is not inclined to mischief on her own. Blue is the leader and instigator, and will probably—if we can manage the training—grow into a superb sheep dog. Blue's mind is constantly busy, and her skinny body isn't far behind. Just this morning, I saw that she had left the yard—this time, because the gate was open, though she doesn't mind digging her way out, either. I called her and she came soon, as she usually does. But, I called and called and did not find Kate. Then, a "light came on," and I came back into the cabin. Of course, Kate was sleeping under an old armchair.

The two dogs did get out of the yard together a few days ago. When I noticed them, they had worked as a team and were holding the cattle in a tight bunch on the knoll in the Home Pasture. Though they had been naughty to even go into the pasture, we had to admire what a good job of herding they had done. The main problem with border collies is, of course, that they are more intelligent than we are.

So, as the summer progresses, we should see some improvement in livestock herding techniques. Sadly, the flower situation is not liable to improve this year.