

Some days I regret I taught the dog to tell time

Most people know we have a border collie named Hamish.

And like most border collies, Hamish is pretty smart.

He learns things very quickly, he trusts me implicitly and he's faithful as they come.

His one job every day is to bring the sheep in from the feedlot at night (so I don't have to walk through the "stuff" on the concrete to herd them inside.)

He learned that job after I put him on a leash, and led him down one side of the feedlot, past the sheep, then walked him back, herding the sheep ahead of us.

It took three times for him to catch on to what I ex-



TED BROWN
A Ted Bit

pected, and then instinct took over from there.

So, he's great to have around. In fact, I couldn't imagine "not" having him in the barn during chores.

Naturally, we try to overlook those moments when he gets a bit distracted - like when he chases a squirrel to the back 50 of the farm.

But, having said that, three sharp blows on my shepherd's whistle generally brings him running.

When I blow that whistle three times - he knows I mean business.

For the most part, he's totally silent and only barks when he's play-growling. Being silent is ideal for a herding dog - we don't want him barking at the sheep and scaring them, rather just quietly coax them inside the barn.

So, all in all, Hamish is a pretty darn good dog.

But he does have one small trait that can be a bit unsettling.

He can tell time.

Yup, he knows when I should be at the barn to do

chores in the morning, afternoon and in the evening. When he spends time at the house with The Sidekick and I, he also knows when it's time to return to the barn for the night.

We can be sitting there, watching TV and just as the program finishes at 10 p.m., he wanders in from snoozing on the rug in the kitchen and lays his head in our lap, meaning, "OK, it's time for you to take me to the barn."

Some days, I regret I "taught" Hamish how to tell time.

Now I know exactly how it happened - he is naturally driven by habit - and that's why he and I get along.

I'm one of those people

who always makes sure all the clocks are set at the same time - the "exact same" time - none of this one or two minutes apart, they've gotta be the same.

And Hamish has picked up on it by osmosis.

When it's lambing season in the middle of the winter, I often sit in the warm room we have at the barn, watching the sheep go into labour. (It's best to not bother them until they are well into their labour.)

At the same time, I watch Hamish making his "rounds" in the stable.

He has a cosy bed made of straw, and he lays there when he's not on patrol.

Watching him on the closed circuit TV, when his

internal clock strikes, he gets up, circles all the pens in the barn, almost always in a clockwise rotation, and then returns to his "nest" to curl up until the next "check," which is usually about 15-20 minutes later.

It's a deeply ingrained habit he's adopted, and he seems to carry it out whenever he's in the barn.

I know he has an internal clock, and I'm actually amused that, like me, he is driven by that clock.

But I do draw the line when he reads my feeding notes and breeding records written on the chalkboard in the barn.

And then being the prankster, shares my notes with the sheep.

THE WAY WE WERE

During its last day of operations, a trio of librarians welcomed visitors to the Acton Library, Feb. 24, 1967. Operating from the YMCA building on Mill Street since 1935, the Acton Centennial Public Library opened in June of that year. Pictured are (left to right) Mrs. R.P. Watson, chief librarian for more than 40 years, assistant librarians Madge Chapman and Esther Taylor.



Photo courtesy of Esquesing Historical Society
Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills

LETTER

Drug deaths very concerning

It's very disturbing to see many young adults losing their life through overdosing and using adulterated drugs. My heart goes out to their family members.

The government is trying very hard to stop this.

One way the government is trying to prevent this is to create safe injection sites. This helps, but what is being done to prevent drug use among teens?

Just talk to your teens.

This helps but many teens start using drugs when older kids introduce them to drugs. How do you prevent this?

Teens, I feel, will never snitch. Have the police tried other methods like financial rewards in catching these adults?

We all know that when teens take drugs, crimes are committed and they become addicted sooner.

Rajalingam Panchalingam

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