

September 9, 2008

It's raining again. Only a light rain and the forecast is for clearing this afternoon. I was planning on today being a light day for the dogs, and that's how I kept it in the morning. We walked up the lane to the hay field, that small field at the head of the lane. It's only maybe 200 yards square. I started with Jess, leaving Jen tied up at the gate. There were about 10-15 lambs in there grazing, so I cut out 5-6 and pushed the rest thru the stone wall and down the hill. I drove mini trial courses with Jess, concentrating on keeping her off the sheep, keeping her steady and taking slow flanks when told, fast flanks when told. I guess I pushed the sheep around the field 3-4 times. I want Jess to go steady. I finished up with a couple of splits, taking 2 sheep off the bunch and then a couple of singles. She did well. I hope it holds up for when she runs on Friday.

I switched her out for Jen. Ran the same exercises with Jen, also concentrating on keeping her off the sheep, keeping her steady and taking slow flanks when told, fast flanks when told. Then I finished up with the same shedding exercises as I had done with Jess. Jen was a bit sluggish. She had a bout of diarrhea the night before. I forgot my Tylan at home, thought I had it in my dopkit. We'll go into town later and get something at the pharmacy. I need to change some money anyway.

That evening was a different story. Jen is still a bit sluggish even after her meds. Hope she comes around by the time she runs on Thursday. There were a LOT of sheep on the big side hill. So, I figured I could send Jen left for just one more run on her worst side. Well, those lambs saw her coming and scooted up that hill fast. She didn't even see them going and locked on to a couple that had stayed behind. I gave her a look-back and she didn't believe me. Finally, after a couple of attempts she took it and went up to the top and over. She brought back about a hundred lambs. There must have been more up over the top. She got them to the gap in the stone wall and stalled. I had to really work her to get her to push them all thru the gap. So much for an easy workout.

Changed her out for Jess. Now that the flock was down the hill, I was able to cut out 5-6 to work in the hay field. But, these lambs wanted no part of staying away from the rest. So, our quiet and controlled driving in the small field wasn't so quiet and controlled. I didn't like either workout much; I didn't get to concentrate on the areas I wanted to work on. I'll just have to count on our morning exercises and their rest for the next day or two to stand me in good stead for their preliminary runs.

September 10, 2008

Today's my travel day. The sun's out and it's looking like it's going to be a nice day. I want to leave around 8am, hoping to get to Llandeilo early. Check-in is from 1-5:30pm at the Llandeilo Rugby Club and I want to go to my host's farm to settle in a bit and give the dogs a run. I got up fairly early, packed up and loaded the car. I dropped the back seat in the car, so I was JUST able to fit both of those giant 500 crates in the back. I had to turn one to get it done.

I finally got on the road by 8:20. Most of my route was thru the mountains. It would have been a beautiful drive, had the roads not been so narrow. I was nervous all the way. But, my GPS took me right to Llandeilo. So, I didn't have to think about maps and routes, just staying on the left and not getting too close to the ditch.

After checking in at the farm and having a bit of lunch, I went over to the Llandeilo Rugby Club (our check-in point) and got the handlers' bag with all the badges, tags, tickets, etc. Included in the bag is a bright red vest with our number on it. It looks like the vest that road workers wear. Guess we'll have to wear it on the field???

I went over to the fields to check them out. I'm on field 1 with Jen tomorrow and field 2 with Jess on Friday. Both fields slope gently down from the handler's post, then drop off a bit faster, then rise up a hill. Field 1 has a rather steep slope up, field 2 more gentle. The outrun is about 400 yards, but that's all there is. The Sunday double-lift is going to be on field 1 and it's rather small by international standards. I got to walk both fields, so I have the cross-drive markers pretty well set in my head.

A bigger problem with field 1 is that the set-out isn't more than a couple hundred yards from the handler's post in field 2. So, any whistling (particularly finger whistling) in field 2 will be heard by the dog on its outrun on field 1. Since the preliminary rounds on all three fields will be going on simultaneously, there could be some major interference from field 2 on the dogs running on field 1. I'll be able to see that as I watch some of the runs tomorrow. It won't be a problem for Jen on field 1, only a potential problem with Jess on Friday on field 2.

Well, I'm off for the parade in the town square now, the greeting by the Town Council and the reception afterwards. Then, a good night's sleep for all of us and an early start tomorrow.

September 11, 2008

Woke up to an off and on rainy morning. I wanted to get an early start so as to get to the field well before the big rush of traffic. I came down to a breakfast at 6:30 of cereal, eggs, sausage, bacon and fried potatoes; oh toast as well!!!! I haven't eaten that much for breakfast since summers on my uncle's dairy farm. I got to the field at 7:30am and a good spot on the fence right in front of the pen. I was parked right next to Hubert Bailey and Ted Johnson, over to spectate. So, when the sun was out, I could stand outside the car and watch, as the rains came I could get back inside to stay somewhat dry.

Well, Jen's run. I took her out of the car 3-4 dogs ahead of her run. She was shaking, panting and just not herself. I walked her around, away from the field to try to settle her down, no luck. I put her back in the car. I got her back out as the run before me started.

I went to the post and set her up to the right. That was really the only outrun possible on that field. Remember, this field has a slight downward slope then a rather steep slope up. She started out okay from my side, but part way down the hill, she slowed almost to a

stop. So, I blew her out and she seemed to pick up speed up the hill but cut in at the top. The lift was okay and most of the fetch. The sheep were really good, there was no excuse. Then, as the sheep came toward the post, they started to drift to my right. I needed them to my left for the beginnings of a right hand drive. I blew her left, but she barely moved; she was REALLY sluggish (not like her). She didn't catch them until they were well to my right and behind me. As she finally got over there, they bolted towards the exhaust, behind me and to my left. Sent her right, but again she moved as if in pain. They got all the way over to the exhaust before she got them. I moved them back to the post and started my drive. Lost 32 on the fetch (out of 40) and 20 off the drive with that maneuver around the post. The rest of the drive was good and the split went well. We had trouble with the pen, again because she was moving as if in pain. Lost 16 with all that fooling around at the pen. Single went well. I still don't know what was wrong with her. She really looked as if she was in pain. Sure, by the next day she seemed back to normal. I'll work her again before I leave just to see how she's doing.

September 12, 2008

Finally, it appears as if we're going to have a proper day. It's foggy, but the forecast is for good weather. Up again to a HUGE breakfast and off to the trial field. This time, I parked just off the exit road and under a big oak tree – shade for the dogs. We're supposed to start at 8am, but with the fog, it's 9:30. Jess is up #13 on field 1. I get her out of the car 5-6 dogs ahead, and she's fine, looking all ready. Finally, it's our turn. She's watched at least 5 outruns on that field, she knows where the sheep are being set. At the post, I set her up to the right (again, on this field, it's the only possible outrun). I'm not liking the way she's looking. She's set up pretty close to me and straight ahead. Sure enough, I sent her and she heads out straight. Now, she often does that for 20 or 30 yards and then kicks out. But, this time she keeps going, so I blow her out – no response. I ended up trying to blow her out 2 or 3 times more, but she keeps going and crosses over. Nice outrun, nice lift, but with a cross-over. The rest of her run went really nicely until the pen. We had one ewe that was not going to go into the pen. I tried everything, including putting her on the inside, closest to the gate, trying to make her have to go through the other 4 to escape. But, she still managed to pull out around them and get away. It was going nowhere, and with the cross-over, it was time to retire.

September 13, 2008

I went over to the field later today, just because it was easier on my hostess to make only one breakfast for all of us, rather than to have to feed me separately. No problem. With the fog, the trial didn't start til 11:30. I stayed thru the runs of Tommy Wilson and Alasdair McCrae. I saw some VERY nice dogs. I might just have to make a trip back some time to check out some of the dogs over here.

Tommy's run. He had an okay set of sheep, but erratic. Both he and Alasdair were at the end of the day, and the sheep were definitely more unpredictable. They had been locked up in the holding pen all day with nothing to eat. So, when they came out, some of them wanted to eat, some wanted to run. Tommy and Sly did okay until they got to the cross-

drive panels. All of a sudden, out of the blue, the entire set of 5 bolted for the top. He sent Sly, but it was too late, they missed the panels high. He got them back to the shedding ring, got the split but then had a battle at the pen. He had one or two that just kept breaking away. He finally got them in, but probably with a heavy deduction, and went to the shedding ring. He maneuvered until he was able to take one of the collared sheep off, took it off but it wasn't called. It may have been out of the ring, but I wasn't sure. The woman doing exhaust thought it was a shed and sent her dog. The Steward told her to call her dog off, which she did, but, by then, the sheep were heading for the hills. Tommy was called off for the Standard.

Alasdair came to the post with Nap. His sheep came out a bit rough, but looked okay. Nap had a nice outrun and the beginnings of a decent lift. But, two sheep stood there grazing while three headed off running to the right. He had to send Nap to catch them. Every time he would try to send him back to pick up the two grazers, the three would head off running. He got the two about halfway to the fetch panels with a LOT of effort. He finally put the three runners thru the fetch gates and went back for the two grazers, putting them thru the fetch gates. By then, the three runners were way off to the right. He gathered them up, put them back with the grazers and had them pretty well on line for the beginning of the drive. His drive-away was okay, turn okay, but then it happened again. He had to spend the entire cross-drive putting the two groups back together. He got them thru the cross-drive panels, but they split again – the runners heading far to the right, the grazers lagging behind. The path to the shedding ring was way off line by the time he got everything back together. He was called off for the Standard.

They both got the end of the day, erratic sheep and not much chance to get anything done properly. Bad luck all the way round.