

with square mesh or (C) Simply square mesh fencing.

I don't like solid-sided working areas for a young pup, because there's no "give" if the pup or the sheep run into the sides.

My round pen is 60 feet across. And the ground is flat. It's just about perfect: I would go larger—60 to 80 feet—before I went smaller.

My round pen first served for breaking colts. I added square mesh to the outside for training herding dogs.

If anyone uses wood, they should make sure all the nails and screws are well seated, so no one gets snagged on any metal. I would make the lowest board just above or just below knee high, depending on how tall the sheep are.

Three boards tall will work fine for sheep. If the pen is to be used for other species as well, I would use four boards.

If handler anticipates he's going to have anyone watching the training sessions, I would recommend considering that factor when deciding on the height of the boards: The trainer may want people to be able to sit down and watch through the spaces between boards. Or stand, seeing over the boards.

My round pen was built years before sheep and Border Collies were on my radar. So the boards are in the perfectly wrong position to allow easy viewing while seated: The second board is at eye level.

Siting

Location of the round pen is important.

The primary consideration is building the pen in a place where operators can easily move sheep into the pen for training.

The easier it is to get sheep into the round pen, the more the handler will use it. Round pens inside a small pasture work well, since one can move sheep into the pen quickly, then train them out in the pasture when the dog is ready.

Good footing is the next concern.

I like working in a level area—on grass where there's good drainage. Grass does need to be mowed or grazed down several times a year.

Dirt will work well inside a barn.

Concrete is too slick: There's no traction and it's hard on joints, so it's not an acceptable choice in my opinion.

Sand can be too deep, making moving around difficult. But mixed with dirt, it would provide good traction without packing down, or freezing into a hard surface.

Placing the round pen out of direct sun and wind is something to think about also.



Denice Rackley employs, raises, trains and sells cost effective canine farm hands.
www.clearfieldstockdogs.com

USDA TO SPONSOR STOCK DOG TRAINING IN INDIANA

Success with Stock Dogs is a new, low-cost, three-part personalized training program designed to:

Introduce and educate livestock producers to cost-saving and labor-cutting benefits of stock dog use
Help growers learn to incorporate herding dogs into their livestock operation
Workshops are set for Autumn 2017 and Spring and Fall 2018 near Bennington, in southeast Indiana, less than a two hour drive from Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, Lexington and Dayton.
Each multi-day workshop includes demonstrations, plus on-farm clinician-assisted livestock work—to improve skills of both the dogs and their handlers.
Part One focuses on Common Livestock Work—jobs assisted by stock dogs:

- Gathering and Moving Livestock
- Watching/Guarding Gates
- Penning
- Medicating Stock
- Sorting
- Much more.

First stages of training are demonstrated using a young pup. Participants are then walked through dogs in successive age groups, ending with a finished dog.

Part Two, Individual Skills Training, includes either initial stages of training in a round pen or a small field, or actual job scenarios that growers and their dogs replicate with help from the clinician. Actual training is tailored to what's most appropriate and helpful for each dog and

its handler.

New dogs (not yet able to work in unfamiliar environments or on stock they don't know) gain fundamental skills that lead to farm chore mastery. New and uncertain handlers too, learn elements of proficiency that will develop into easier farm and ranch management.

Part Three comprises ongoing stock dog support and skill building. This is carried out through online discussion, video review and other instruction, after workshop completion.

Low stress livestock handling is emphasized throughout.

A big benefit of the program is to cut the cost for livestock producers to learn enough to know how much a herding dog will benefit their operation. Meanwhile, growers who already use stock dogs are enabled to derive more advantages from their dogs. In addition, meeting and/or networking with fellow stockmen using herding dogs speeds everyone's success. The USDA sponsorship opens a brief opportunity for solid training at a bargain price. Growers should consider taking multiple workshops while the cost is low, building on each work session, to gain a more complete picture of working with a herding dog and to quickly absorb the most knowledge and skill.

The USDA's Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education program (SARE) has made this educational course possible, funding most of its costs, resulting in only a small daily fee for workshop attendees.

For more info, contact Program Coordinator Denice Rackley at Clearfield Stockdogs and Lamb. E-mail: denice.r@lycos.com Or visit www.ClearfieldStockDogs.com.