

Leo U Working Dog Interview

1. What are your Leo's names (past and present, registered names and call names), age and sex?

Britta von den Sieben Bergen "Britta"

Sentez Cosmo "Cosmo"

Vegas von der Lowenhole "Vegas"

Acorn's Faith "Faith"

Bijou Lilly Kellie Arcondia "Kellie"

Bluebonnet's Blazin W Mtn Dream "Sienna" (co-own)

Bluebonnet's Empress Perfect Storm "Storm"

West Mtn Artistic Image "Emee" (co-own)

Wildering's Midnight Ride Edition "Revere"

Wildering's Too Hot for You "Cinder" (co-own)

Bluebonnet's Incredible Imperial Aurora "Reba"

Bluebonnet's Joyful Goose A Laying "Ziva"

(others that I co-own – but only for purposes of keeping track of what I produce)

2. How long have you had Leos? What originally drew you to the Leonberger breed?

Since 1997. We wanted another Golden and my vet handed me a book of 200+ breeds and told me to pick something a little less common. My ocd got the best of me and for many reasons we kept coming back to the Leonberger breed. In one of the books there was a credit in the index for one of the pictures to a Patty Smith. I acquired the white pages and began to call every P. Patty Patricia Pat Smith in the book asking if they knew anything about Leonbergers. We did not have this thing called the 'internet'. Ha Ha. Finally spoke with the right Patty Smith and she put me in touch with the LCA. I received my typed one page list of breeders in the US and proceeded to call Waltraut (being as we are both in Texas). She did not have pups, so I tried my original home of Virginia – and Louise and Richard Shickle provided my first Leo – Britta.

3. For you, what is the most appealing characteristic of the breed?

I don't know why... but the 'blows bubbles in their water' is one that resonates to this day for me. Probably that they are a large, hairy breed that is also non-drool.

4. How did you first get involved in dog sports?

Janis Cook as well as my puppy temperament tester kept asking me why I didn't have any rear end titles on my dogs. Once again the ocd has gotten the best of me and I want all the titles now... LOL. There is no greater love and experience than working with your Leo towards a goal. Just when I thought my bond with my Leos couldn't get any stronger – working with them brings a whole new level of closeness.

5. What are your dogs' biggest accomplishments in the sport thus far?
I honestly think it was achieving our CD. We have gone far in Rally, but she excels where I can talk to her. Obtaining our CD and not being able to give her feedback was very difficult.

6. Are there certain characteristics that make your Leos well suited to the sport? Did you choose him/her as a puppy with these characteristics in mind?
No, I chose her for structure and compatibility with the rest of our pride. Ziva is probably not as well suited for any of the sports we do, but I love a challenge, and I love the respect we have been able to earn in all our working dog events. People genuinely want to see us succeed.

7. Do you find that training a Leo is different than training other breeds? If so, how have you changed your criteria and techniques to meet the needs of your Leo partner?
Yes, Leos simply want to please you...so too much repetition is not necessarily a good thing. You need to do lots of short training sessions to build confidence. If you train with too much repetition they feel as though they are doing something wrong, or why else would you have asked them to do the same thing so many times. My Aussie will do something a million times and glad to do it...Leos, not so much.

8. What are your Top 3 Tips for training a Leonberger?
Start EARLY and never stop. If you give them the best you have for the first two years (through all the fear stages) you will be golden.
Be sure that you have defined that you are 'working' now and make training sessions quick and to the point with positive and fun reinforcement.
Sometimes they do need to be told 'NO', but be very careful and selective about when/where you show them that they are wrong. I like horse people because they usually get it when I say you need to be in control without being over bearing.

9. Do your Leos have guilty/naughty pleasures? (Or maybe they are perfect, but most Leos seem to have that one thing that they can't/won't grow out of that becomes somehow endearing over the years 😊.)
Ziva loves pills – don't ask me why – but she will steal them off the counter tops – we have to be very careful.
Reba will eat anything off the counters – including cake!!!
Storm insists on eating mulberries from our tree – no matter how many barriers I put up, she get through them...and is actually happy that she is being bad.
Revere loves to shred paper. Any papers – bills, money, cards – you name it, he shreds it.

