

# Prairie FARMER

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Page 12

Sidedress to make up for lost N  
Page 21

Kentucky tradition influences this Illinois cook  
Page 32



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## Veteran herder

By JOSH FLINT

**A**T 13 years old, Smokey still moves cattle back and forth to the milking barn twice a day, seven days a week.

Owners Tony and Gail Tadie, of Wataga, say Smokey has been a great companion and a big help since he joined the farm 12 years ago. It's that combination of companionship and work ethic that makes Smokey this year's *Prairie Farmer* Favorite Farm Dog. The Australian shepherd learned long ago not to let his dairy cows get the upper hand, even when they give it their best try. "He's been injured a lot, but he always goes back out," Gail adds.

### Key Points

- Smokey named *Prairie Farmer's* Favorite Farm Dog.
- Smokey has been herding cattle for 12 years.
- His personality keeps his owners in good spirits.

When it comes to daily chores, Smokey knows his role. In the morning, he checks the silos for raccoons and other lurking critters. "He just scares them off though," Tony notes. "He's never killed one."

With that out of the way, Smokey "goes to work" herding cows back and forth to the milking barn. If Tony decides to take a break, Smokey toler-

ates it, but only for about an hour. "He starts getting anxious and coming up to me when he knows we still have work to do," Tony says. "He's very much about routine."

Smokey also keeps the bull at bay. Anytime the bull is near, Smokey keeps an eye out for Tony. Should the bull get a little too close, all Tony has to say is, "Go get him."

### A new shepherd

In the past, the Tadies kept only German shepherds. The dogs didn't herd cattle, but the Tadies liked them for their intimidation factor. On the day the family put down their last dog, they received a call about a 1-year-old Australian shep-

herd named Smokey.

Tony says Smokey instinctively knew how to herd animals. However, it took him a little time to learn the ins and outs of the farm.

When Smokey first started, Tony saw him get kicked by one of the cows. Even though he was hurt, he returned to his herding duties the next day. The same cow tried to kick Smokey again, but he was too quick. "I don't know if he's brave or just stupid," Tony says jokingly.

Smokey's personality also sets him apart from the pack. Tony swears that sometimes Smokey will smile at him. "He makes me laugh," Tony adds.

Gail says Smokey has taken a liking to their female milk in-

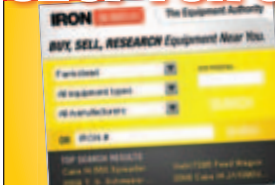
spector. When she shows up, he gets excited and follows her around the farm.

Smokey also has a good time chasing killdeer in the spring and hiking through the timber. On days when he seems depressed, Tony jokingly calls him "Smokey the mope." After a bit, his spirits quickly return.

Smokey has made such an impact on the Tadies that Tony says he's not sure if they'll own another dog. In her nomination letter, Gail pretty well summed up their feelings for Smokey. "Our love for Smokey is unconditional, and in turn he is our loyal, faithful companion."

■ For more top farm dogs, check out pages 4 and 5.

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