

By JOSH FLINT

JUDGING from the overwhelming response to this year's competition, it seems the farm dog is an integral part of many operations.

This year's winner is 13-year-old cattle herding veteran Smokey. Owners Tony and Gail Tadie, of Wataga, say Smokey still works the milk cows twice a day, seven days a week. More than just a hard worker, Smokey's a devoted companion to his family and even offers up a "smile" now and then. For earning top prize, Smokey takes home \$100.

Temple Grandin, a 1½-year-old heeler, border collie and Aussie mix, took second place. Named after the famous animal science

doctor, Temple shines by working cattle and pinning escapee steers against the fence line. Owners Dave and Jo Hendrickson, of Rochester, brought Temple home from the local animal shelter. For second place, she receives \$50.

Third-place Buster, a collie-sheltie mix, is an unconventional sort of farm dog. However, he put the spring back in the step of 1973 Master Farmer Bill Furry, of Charleston. Buster keeps Bill company, an important job considering Bill's wife of 60-plus years had to be moved to an assisted living center. Bill picked Buster up from the local welder. For third place, Buster receives \$25.

Keep the camera close by. Entries for the 2010 Favorite Farm Dog Contest will be due next spring.

Honorable mention:

Best photo

EVER had one of those "I wish I had my camera" moments? Lucky for April Tatham, Avon, she did.

One day, April's 7-year-old daughter, Gracie, decided to pull a chicken out of the coop and put it in the swing. Gracie then hailed her mom to show her what she'd done. When April walked outside, she found a chicken in the swing with Stella, the border collie, keeping guard.

When Stella isn't watching chickens, she keeps herself busy with the Tathams' other farm animals, including cattle and goats. "When the goats first joined the farm, Stella's herding activities were fairly simple, as the goats were actually fainting goats and did so each time she approached," April adds.



WATCHDOG: After April Tatham's 7-year-old daughter placed a chicken in a swing, Stella took up her post.

Honorable mention:

Best team

Bear and Sandy, American Kennel Club-registered purebred collies, are this year's best team. Owner Randy Tuthill, of Wyoming, says it only made sense to nominate them as a duo because they are always together.

Bear is an excellent herder, Randy says. Bear helps rotate calves and cows from one lot to another while Randy feeds silage. Bear is also willing to put himself in danger to protect his owners. "Last April, my father was working with a newborn calf and was knocked down by the mother cow," Randy explains. "I was 10 feet away, but Bear barked long enough to distract the cow for him to get out of a potentially dangerous situation."

While Bear works during the day, Sandy cares for their pups. To date, Sandy has raised four litters of puppies. "She is a prolific milker and has yet to raise a runt," Randy adds.



TEAMWORK: Bear helps his owners work the herd while Sandy cares for their pups. Thus far, they've produced four litters.

Honorable mention:

Best owner

CARLEA Kiddoo, of Joy, nominated Champ, her "best friend in the whole world."

An 11-year-old aspiring writer, Carlea's essay was filled with stories of her and Champ's exploits over the past couple of years. They enjoy playing ball and splashing through the creek together. Carlea says Champ has a few peculiar habits as well. "Whenever we're weeding the garden, he likes to catch them in his mouth and chew them up," she adds.

Champ is also a great jumper, but Carlea says he doesn't know it. As a result, Champ nearly broke his leg once. He also enjoys sprinting through the timber. Carlea says he runs so fast, he once caught a stick in his eye and almost went blind.

"We joke and say Champ's name really should be Lucky," Carlea notes. Even though Champ is quite intelligent, Carlea says he doesn't always act like it. Case in point, Champ quickly learned his owners were hiding his medication in peanut butter. On the other hand, Carlea says he still hasn't learned his lesson when it comes to skunks. This spring, Champ took off after a skunk during his evening walk. He quickly returned after the skunk lifted its tail. "I don't know if he learned his lesson," Carlea says. "He didn't learn it the first time."



BEST FRIENDS: In her essay, Carlea Kiddoo says, "Champ has trained us to play with him whenever he wants by using his 'cute powers.'"

Honorable mention:

Most determined

SCOOBY proves you don't have to have all of your legs to be an asset on the farm. Owner Tori Will, of Sigel, says, "He has added so much to our lives, we even put him on our family Christmas card."

Chris Will, Tori's mother, says Scooby lost his leg a couple of years ago. His leg was run over while chasing a car. Chris says Scooby was unable to stop because the grass was wet.

Despite losing a leg, Scooby hasn't slowed down a bit. "He can do anything a four-legged dog can do," Chris adds. In fact, Scooby never misses a trip to feed the heifers. He helps by keeping the bull in line. "The bull turns away at the mention of Scooby's name," Tori adds.

STILL RUNNING: Even though Scooby lost a leg, he hasn't slowed down on the farm. He helps out by keeping the bull in check.



Honorable mention:

Unique breed

THE day a shih tzu wins top farm dog may never come. While not as far-fetched, dalmatians are rarely thought of as farm dogs. However, Mayze proves dalmatians can do more than look good on a fire truck.

Owner Betsy Maertens, of Cambridge, says until last year, Mayze was a city dog. "After her owner met a farmer, fell in love and got married, Mayze quickly learned how much fun farm life can be," Betsy adds.

Mayze has developed a taste for homegrown vegetables, including hot peppers. She also enjoys swimming in the river, snoozing in the sun and chasing raccoons. Thus far, the only farm activity Mayze has regretted was the night she tangled with a skunk.

CORN DOG: Even though she grew up in the city, Mayze loves life on the farm. Mayze was particularly proud of last year's sweet corn crop.

