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## The Hangin' Tree Cowdog

By Carolyn White

Hanging trees were once associated with outlaws but today it's the name of one of the newest breeds of working dogs.

The Hangin' Tree breed was developed by the late Gary Ericsson in the 1980's and named after his ranch's brand. A cowboy, rancher, and internationally recognized artist from Salmon, Idaho, Ericsson understood the value of a good stock dog for gathering, sorting, and holding sheep.

During the 26 years Ericsson raised Australian shepherds, one of the standouts was a male called Hangin' Tree Buddy. The dog not only worked reliably in tough situations but was also smart, fast, and aggressive on cattle. Crossing Buddy with his best-producing female, Zephyr's Angel Blue, he took pick of the litter and named it Hangin' Tree Black Bear.

In 1989, Bear won the Idaho State Stock Dog Finals. Another Ericsson-bred dog named Hangin' Tree Red Zephyr, handled by Gary's younger son Con, was also winning many trials. The two males became the foundation sires for Gary's vision of a whole new breed of dog. He wrote down what he wanted to create:

- A cowdog that's a gathering, retrieving, herding type dog.
- A tough, aggressive dog that has the courage to stand up to and handle all types of stock.
- An intelligent dog that's easy to train.
- A dog with a good disposition that's not overly sensitive.
- A short or slick-haired dog that can stand the heat when needed and shed burs and mud with minimal coat maintenance.
- A dog with good bone structure that can take the abuse from being kicked and run over.
- A dog that's deep and wide in the chest with endurance that will stay when the going gets tough.
- A dog that can wind and trail cattle

With the help of his oldest son Choc, Ericsson started breeding selectively to get the exact type of dog he had in mind. Daughter-in-law Kathryn says, "He never did anything without a reason, and meticulously selected the genes for his new breed, crossing the best to the best over a period of four to five years."

The Hangin' Tree Cowdog is three-eighths Border collie, one-fourth Kelpie, one-fourth Australian shepherd, and one-eighth Catahoula. "The four breeds he used were specifically and carefully chosen," Con says. "Hangin' Trees are multi-faceted and highly intelligent. They have a strong work drive

and exceptional endurance - additionally, a toughness to work the wildest of cattle and the sensitivity to work everything from sheep to young ducks.

"However," Con advises, "they're not house pets. They're a working person's companion, held to a standard, and are considered the ultimate tool for working stock."

"I love mine," says Shay Marah of Cedaredge, Colo., who got her first Hangin' Tree Cowdog, 3 years ago. "The thing I like most is her personality and how easy she was to train." Shay is also impressed at how versatile her dog Gypsy is at both heading and heeling cattle.

All true Hangin' Tree Cowdogs should be registered with the HTC Association, whereby they will be DNA typed, and must meet a standard of qualifications before they can be fully registered. That DNA should trace the dogs back to Gary's original lines.

Unfortunately, says Kathryn, "We're seeing many people crossing the dogs with other breeds such as Heelers, which my father-in-law couldn't tolerate."

Ericsson began traveling around the U.S. entering his dogs in all the open trials within the Stock Dog and ABC (American Border Collie) competitions. When he consistently won, including the 1991 Supreme Champion at NAPSHA (The North American Professional Stock Dog Handlers Association) and the North American Grand Championship, people began standing up and noticing. Livestock owners expressed interest in getting a Hangin' Tree Cowdog of their own.

Along with his wife Donna, Gary Ericsson left Idaho and moved to Oklahoma in 1994. They settled on 800 acres near Coalgate. Going into retirement, the couple downsized and purchased a small ranch in Ada. In 2019, they moved in with Con and Kathryn due to declining health.

Choc Ericsson, a senior Agent with the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics, was tragically killed in the line of duty on November 18, 2005. Gary passed away on February 24, 2022, at age 82. The Hangin' Tree Cowdogs they created, however, will continue to carry on their legacies.

Gary Ericsson stock dog training videos are available for \$45 through Facebook at *Hangin' Tree Cowdogs - Gary Ericsson - Legacy Page*. If interested, send a private message and you'll be directed to the payment link which provides invoicing and shipping information.

## Nutrient Rich Corn Produces Its Own Nitrogen

Foundation Direct has Nutrient Rich Corn (NRC) seed with more protein than #2 yellow corn and more oil, carotene, methionine, and lysine, as well as micronutrients like manganese, boron, iron, copper and zinc. To top it off, it even fixes some nitrogen. There's only one problem, according to Steve Mohr, Foundation Direct Seed and Foundation Organic Seed.

"It has about 15 percent yield drag," says Mohr. "We have new genetics that we'll be introducing that will yield within 5 to 10 percent of standard hybrids."

Even with the yield drag, the NRC may prove to be worth as much per acre in nutrients as a higher-yielding variety. In addition to 5 to 10 percent more protein, it has 40 to 55 percent more carotene, known for giving egg yolks a deeper orange color and a beneficial antioxidant for humans and animals.

Even more interesting for many farmers is the corn's limited ability to fix nitrogen. It's estimated that it produces about half the nitrogen it needs for maximum yield.

"It doesn't produce enough nitrogen for a 170 bushel per acre crop," says Mohr. "However, without supplemental nitrogen, it does about 100 bushels per acre. If your goal is to grow corn without off-the-farm inputs, it might be a good option."

Foundation Organic Seed had four of the NRC hybrids listed in their 2023 catalog. He's unsure, as yet, if any of the NRC seed will be available until 2025 as he introduces the new genetics.

Mohr has the exclusive rights to germplasm developed by Walter Goldstein, Mandaamin Institute. Goldstein has long worked to develop nutrient-rich, open-pollinated corn. After an ancient landrace corn that fixed nitrogen was discovered in Chile, he founded the Mandaamin Institute to develop it and



**Foundation Direct NRC corn has lower yield but is higher in nutrients.**

other open-pollinated grains.

To boost yield levels, Goldstein has switched from open-pollinated lines to single cross hybrids.

"Walter is redoing the parent lines of the hybrids we've been working with," explains Mohr. "This year, we plan to grow the males and females. In 2024 we'll cross them to produce hybrid seed for farmers in 2025."

He says these unique hybrids will be well suited for a select type of farmer and farm operation. "Extensive testing by several universities has helped determine where these hybrids fit and where they don't," says Mohr.

He remains optimistic that the NRC lines will continue to improve in yield and hopefully in their ability to fix nitrogen.

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**LaForge makes a drive-over ballast that lifts securely to the undercarriage of Deere 7R tractors.**

## Drive-Over Weights Simplify Ballasting

Farmers and contractors who need to switch frequently from front and rear-mounted equipment on Deere 7R tractors can change ballast quickly with the EZ Ballast from LaForge. The 3,750 lb. ballast is a drive-over system that fits all Deere 7R Series tractors made since 2011. The EZ Ballast mounts or dismounts to the undercarriage of the tractor without the operator needing to leave the tractor seat.

For mounting, the operator simply drives over the EZ Ballast and activates the mounting valve control on the CommandARM. The lift arm lowers hydraulically allowing the lift pin to slide into a center bracket on the ballast. Activating the valve control in the cab raises the lift arm and the ballast, securing it tightly to the undercarriage of the tractor

with a safety lock. With EZ Ballast, no weight transfer occurs when front or rear weights are added because the ballast maintains the tractor front/rear weight split.

If the tractor is needed for light-duty work, the EZ Ballast lowers to the ground, and the tractor operator backs up and over the ballast. Releasing the ballast saves fuel and allows the tractor to pull a larger payload over the road. Attaching the ballast increases productivity and reduces slippage.

The EZ Ballast can also be combined with front and rear weights, so the tractor is equipped with a very low power-to-weight ratio for heavy draft applications.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, LaForge Systems, LLC (ph 855-408-3332; www.laforgegroup.com).