Life is good among the smell of fresh cedar chips, the warm glow of heat lamps and the sound of puppies playing coming from the spacious pens at Watson Ranch, home of Sagecreek Aussies. Jim and Pam Watson are living out a dream on an almost 100-year-old family farm just south of Bolivar, Mo., where they own and operate a purebred Australian Shepherd breeding operation. With six to seven mature females and rotating the breeding schedule so as to have puppies ready for sale is a constant challenge. Pam is constantly researching and staying abreast of the finest lineage to achieve the highest quality of Aussie prodigy and to maintain the level of desired characteristics. Life is good among the smell of fresh cedar chips, the warm glow of heat lamps and the sound of puppies playing coming from the spacious pens at Watson Ranch, home of Sagecreek Aussies. Jim and Pam Watson are living out a dream on an almost 100-year-old family farm just south of Bolivar, Mo., where they own and operate a purebred Australian Shepherd breeding operation. With six to seven mature females and rotating the breeding schedule so as to have puppies ready for sale is a constant challenge. Pam is constantly researching and staying abreast of the finest lineage to achieve the highest quality of Aussie prodigy and to maintain the level of desired characteristics.

When asked what to look for in picking a pup “temperament and disposition” Pam said without hesitation. Conformation such as large paws, big bone structure and markings are also important, but behavior is the principle reason they have chosen Aussies over other herding breeds. Pam went on to say, “These dogs are great as a family pet and are very useful on the farm in a working environment as well as a great companion.” The desire to please and their high intelligence make them a good fit on many farms. Pam educates would-be buyers and first-time Aussie owners on the work ethic and energy level of this breed. A spacious backyard or farm is the ideal situation. An apartment or condominium lifestyle is not a good fit. A small lap dog with a less energetic personality may be a better choice for those families and homes. Educated with a degree in Animal Nutrition from the University of Missouri, a high quality diet is at the forefront for all of Pam’s adult and maturing dogs as well as a necessity in starting the pups on solid food at three weeks of age. “Much dog food is loaded with grain such as corn and soybean meal.” She goes on to state, “That’s fine if dogs were ruminant animals but the ideal ration is a meat based diet of a 16 percent protein dry food and a filler such as beet pulp for the heavier, older canines.”

The other half of the Watson Ranch is Jim Watson, who is a professional auctioneer and is required to travel an extensive amount often leaving him unavailable to help manage the farm and dog breeding operations. He easily chided while laughing “This is all Pam’s operation but while traveling to livestock and car auctions I will deliver a pup to Saint Louis, Mo., or Wichita, Kan. and all points in between to get a puppy to a client that’s on my route. I’m happy to help out when and where I can but that is about the extent of my duties at this point.” Pam usually takes two to three dogs with her when doing her daily farm chores of feeding the horses, sheep and cattle. The dogs range in age from three months to mature adults. The dogs are not always required to work the herd but they are required to at least be quiet and well behaved around the herd. Pam enjoys training the pups and evaluating their skill levels.
What’s the secret to dog training? “That’s easy,” Pam says with a chuckle, “A pocket full of puppy treats!”