The smartest dogs in the world are coming to Klamath Falls, Ore., in September 2001! The annual United States Border Collie Handler's Association and American Border Collie Association National Sheepdog Finals will be held Sept. 23 - 30, at the Running Y Ranch Resort just west of Klamath Falls on Hwy. 140.

Since Foot and Mouth Disease forced the cancellation of all of the most important sheepdog trial in the world, the eight days of action will provide a not-to-be-missed opportunity to see the most capable and most athletic dogs in North America compete for the title of National Champion.

Each of these dogs will arrive at Klamath Falls as a champion from other areas of the United Stases and Canada. But, here, all will face their toughest challenge to date. During the trial, spectators will get a chance to see these dogs moving sheep over a prescribed course made up of the kind of practical obstacles found in everyday work.

Known for their "eye," the ability to hold and control sheep with only the force of their firmly planted feet and fixed stare, it is amazing to watch one of these dogs take on a ewe four times its size with nothing more than a stare.

There will be two trails at the Finals: the Nursery Finals for dogs three years and under, and the Open Finals. The judges for the Finals will be Herbert Holmes from Texas, Ray Edwards from England, and George Gardner from Scotland. The action begins with the Nursery Championship on Sunday, Sept. 23, through Tuesday, Sept. 25. The Open competition begins on Sept. 26. All open dogs will run once during elimination round on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

The top 50 teams from the elimination round advance to a more difficult course on Saturday. The top 20 teams from Saturday continue on to the Finals competition on Sunday. The spotlight will be on these 20 dogs vying for the title of National Sheepdog Champion. Tension will mount as each dog strives for mastery of the balky sheep using only the power of its hereditary instinct and determination to achieve perfection on the grueling 800 yard double-lift course. The total purse payout to the eventual winners will exceed $40,000, making the National Sheepdog Finals one of the richest sheepdog trials in the world.

This is an opportunity to see first hand the top dogs from across the United States and Canada doing what they were bred to do. Local handlers eager to show off their talented dogs are Shane and Mandy Harley from Bonanza, Ore., Mike and Liz Hubbard, also from Bonanza, Ore., Don Moore from Sprague River, Ore., Al and Ginger Zuppan from Myrtle Creek, Ore., Elissa Thau from Roseburg, Ore., Ray and Amy Coapman from Mantague, Calif. Lloyd Leyh from Yreka, Calif., and Haley Howard from Alturas, Calif.

In addition to the National Sheepdog Finals, the first year Wild Plum Festival will be staged adjacent to the National Sheepdog Finals on Sept. 29-30. The Wild Plum Festival is a celebration of the cultural and agricultural history of the Klamath Basin, "honoring those traditions that shape character and produce good people." The Festival will feature historical displays, artwork, quilt making, livestock demonstrations, farming, ranching, and wonderful

foods. A highlight feature will be the wonderful wild and natural foods that we have around us, especially the delicious , unique-to-our-region wild plum.

This event offers something of interest for the entire family. Ticket prices are : $3 to $5 per day for adults, with senior and youth discounts available. Event and family passes are available at substantial discounts. A VIP pass, for $50, entitles the holder to admission to all days of the event, access to the VIP tent, preferred parking and a ticket to the Wednesday night social hour. Tickets may be purchased in advance by contacting Geri Byrne at 664-5871 or email Geri at geri@bordercollies.com. For more information on the National Sheepdog Finals and the Wild Plum Festival, see our website at www.shepdogfinals.com.