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The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead,
Hertfordshire AL4 8AN, UK
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Estimating the economic value of Australian stock herding dogs

ER Arnott, JB Early, CM Wade and PD McGreevy*

Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia

* Contact for correspondence and requests for reprints: Elizabeth.arnott@sydney.edu.au

Abstract

This study aimed to estimate the value of the typical Australian herding dog in terms of predicted return on investment. This required an assessment of the costs associated with owning herding dogs and estimation of the work they typically perform. Data on a total of 4,027 dogs were acquired through The Farm Dog Survey which gathered information from 812 herding dog owners around Australia. The median cost involved in owning a herding dog was estimated to be a total of AU\$7,763 over the period of its working life. The work performed by the dog throughout this time was estimated to have a median value of AU\$40,000. So, herding dogs typically provided their owners with a 5.2-fold return on investment. When respondents were asked to nominate the maximal, one-off, veterinary expenditure they would consider to remedy an illness or injury for an especially valued dog, the median response was AU\$1,001–2,000 which is not concordant with the dogs' calculated median lifetime value. The current findings equip working dog owners with useful information to make financially appropriate expenditure decisions related to their working dogs. This is expected to increase farm profitability and improve welfare for farm dogs.

Keywords: *animal welfare, canine value, farm economics, owner survey, stock herding, working dog*