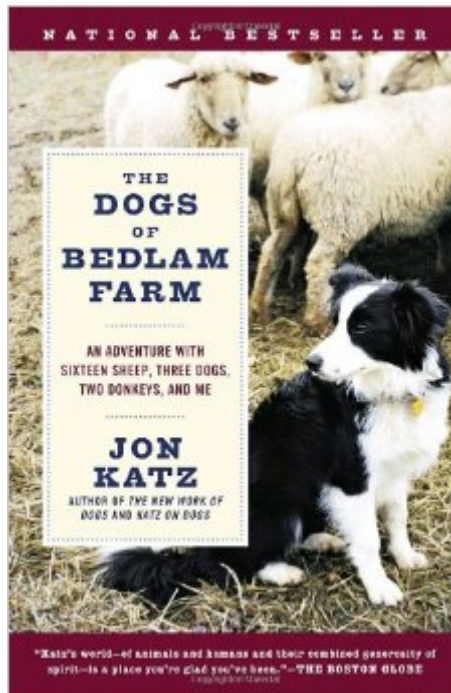


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The Dogs Of Bedlam Farm: An Adventure With Sixteen Sheep, Three Dogs, Two Donkeys, And Me



Synopsis

They can't really be held responsible for what they do. But we can.â€”from *The Dogs of Bedlam Farm*

When Jon Katz adopted a border collie named Orson, his whole world changed. Gone were the two yellow Labs he wrote about in *A Dog Year*, as was the mountaintop cabin they loved. Katz moved into an old farmhouse on forty-two acres of pasture and woods with a menagerie: a ram named Nesbitt, fifteen ewes, a lonely donkey named Carol, a baby donkey named Fanny, and three border collies. Training Orson was a demanding project. But a perceptive dog trainer and friend told Katz: “If you want to have a better dog, you will just have to be a better goddamned human.” It was a lesson Katz took to heart. He now sees his dogs as a reflection of his willingness to improve, as well as a critical reminder of his shortcomings. Katz shows us that dogs are often what we make them: They may have their own traits and personalities, but in the end, they are mirrors of our own lives—living, breathing testaments to our strengths and frustrations, our families and our pasts. *The Dogs of Bedlam Farm* recounts a harrowing winter Katz spent on a remote, windswept hillside in upstate New York with a few life-saving friends, ugly ghosts from the past, and more livestock than any novice should attempt to manage. Heartwarming, and full of drama, insight, and hard-won wisdom, it is the story of his several dogs forced Katz to confront his sense of humanity, and how he learned the places a dog could lead him and the ways a doge could change him. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

At first glance, Jon Katz seems to be a man out of his mind. First he buys a border collie that herds garbage trucks and buses in the city- then he spends the next year training this dog, and finally realizing he needs to move out of the city. So, he packs up his bags, says good-bye to his wife and daughter and off he goes with three dogs and along the way collects two donkeys and sixteen sheep. A sane man- maybe not, but a very smart one. Jon Katz has found the way- or a religion so to speak. Jon Katz is a writer and a lover of dogs. This story centers around one year of his life. A year spent on a farm in upstate New York, a very difficult year, but one he would do again in a New York minute. He has a small cabin, but realizes he needs more room and with his wife's permission he buys an old farm. He is lucky to have wonderful neighbors who come to his rescue when he needs them the most. Andy is a Vermont carpenter and adds safety and room to Jon's life. He helps to resurrect the barn and other small buildings. John has decided he must have some sheep for his dogs to herd. Along with the sixteen sheep comes a donkey- and then later on another small donkey at the recommendation of The Donkey lady. His sheep and one ram, of course, make babies and in the middle of the worst winter in New York State; 17 baby sheep are born. Jon narrates his harrowing times and what he has learned from the winter. He knows and now understands fully that you must have neighbors who understand what you are up against. He never would have made it without them. Most of his neighbors and townspeople love his dogs and love watching the dogs herd sheep. Most of these people are farmers without much money, and they look at Jon as a curious neighbor, but they too grow to respect him.

If you are a true dog lover, stay away from this book. Putting the writing aside - which is perfectly fine, if a bit mediocre and repetitive - I could barely contain my shock as I read a passage in which he describes the reasons why it is better to "buy" a dog from a breeder than to rescue one from a shelter. This guy is supposed to be a dog expert?? I looked up some of his other writing and apparently this is a great big lie that he perpetuates throughout his work. Lest you think I am a zealot, listen to this: Katz is asked by a neighbor (who believes him to be an expert on dogs) whether he should get a husky/shepherd mix puppy at the local shelter to be his "ride along dog", a dog who will essentially hang out with him all day in the car and be a companion animal. Without going to see the puppy, Katz says to stay away from the dog. Never mind that shelters routinely misclassify puppies, or that mixed breeds do not necessarily reflect the traditional traits of their breeds. He then "calls around" to his vet friends, who all agree that the guy should get a lab. Katz then seeks out a lab from a breeder, and "generously" lies to the neighbor about the dog's price and

pays the difference in order to get him to buy the expensive dog. No mention is made of whether the maligned, unseen husky/shepherd pup is euthanized, of course. He even compares the impulse to buy a purebred dog to the inclination for people to have their own children instead of adopting the children of others!! I'm not kidding, it's that ridiculous. As the proud owner of many shepherd mix mutts that have had amazingly calm and even temperaments (and the friend of many people who have bought insane, inbred labs) I can't believe how completely shallow and uninformed Katz is about dogs.

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