

Freja's Foray into Herding



Or

Who Is This Guy and He
Wants Me to Do What?

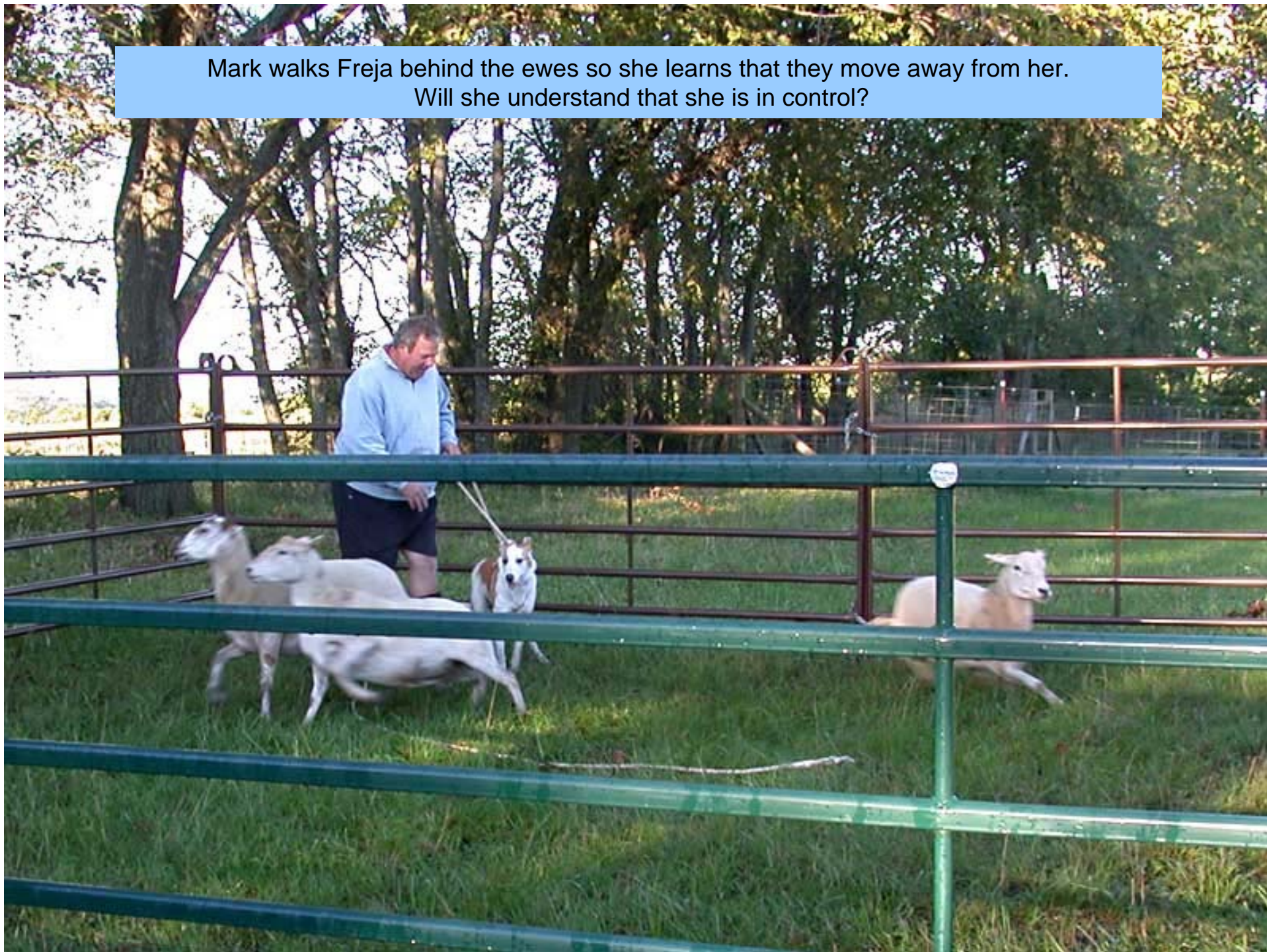
We drove out to Ad Astra Farms outside Lawrence, KS, where we met Mark Hodges. Mark had placed three hand-fed ewes in a small holding pen so that he could introduce Freja to them. Freja was placed on a long lead, and Mark introduced the animals to each other in different situations while he looked for signs of herding instinct in Freja. He told us if she had herding instinct, we would see it click. Mark also kept up a very informative running dialogue that let us know what each party was doing and why, and what sorts of behaviors one should expect in a herding dog. We learned a lot in our short visit.

The Herding Capability Test rated the following:

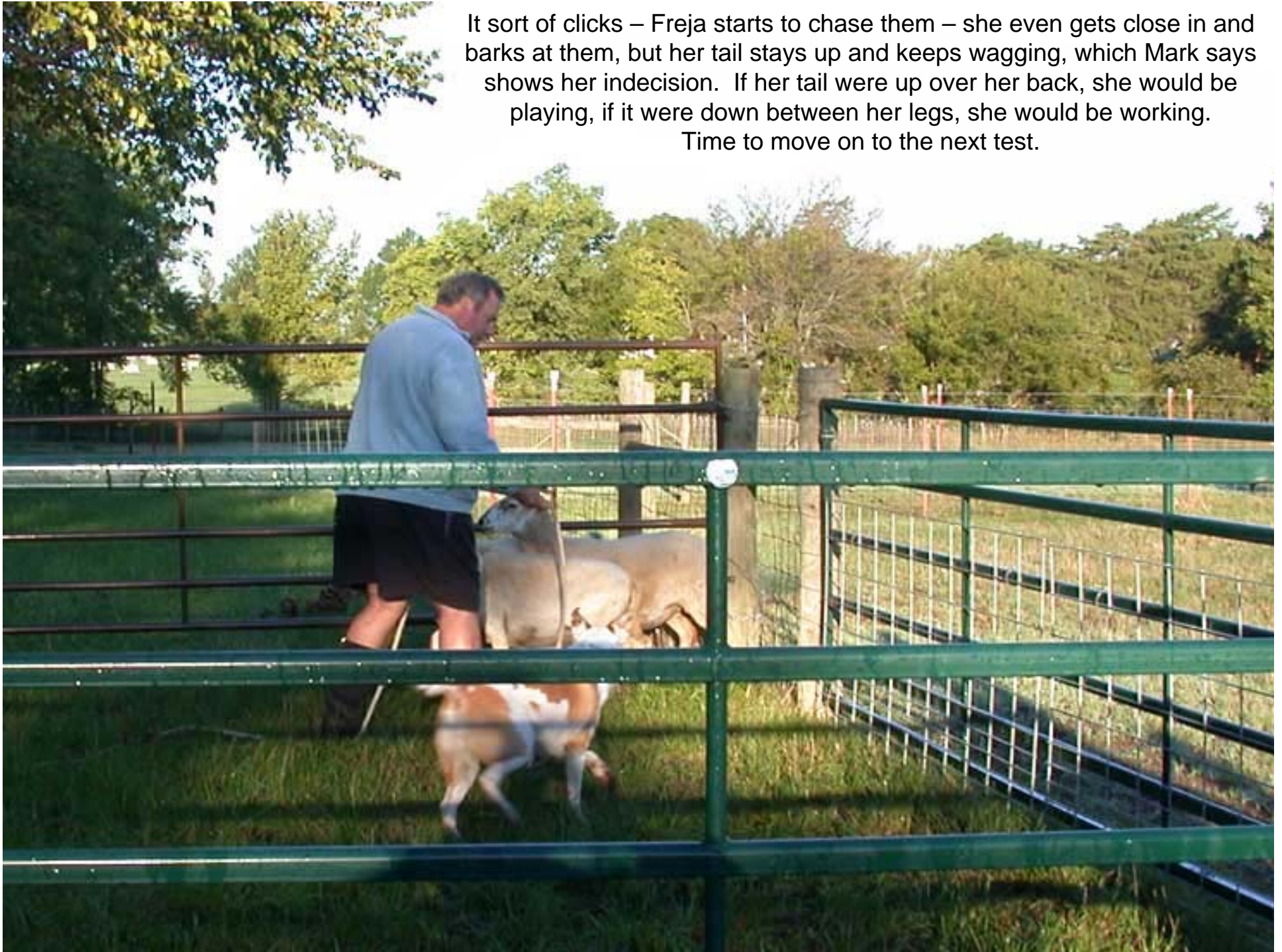
- A herding style (gathering or driving)
- Style of approach
- Eye (how the dog eyed the stock)
- Wearing (how the dog responded to stock movement)
- Barking (amount and type)
- Temperament
- Amount of interest
- Power (is the dog forceful enough to move stock?)
- Responsiveness to human guidance
- Grouping of stock (what kind of contact? Grouping, singling out, chasing, etc.)
- Balancing stock with the handler



Mark walks Freja behind the ewes so she learns that they move away from her.
Will she understand that she is in control?



It sort of clicks – Freja starts to chase them – she even gets close in and barks at them, but her tail stays up and keeps wagging, which Mark says shows her indecision. If her tail were up over her back, she would be playing, if it were down between her legs, she would be working. Time to move on to the next test.



Mark works the sheep into a holding position, then places Freja in a down stay. He explains that some types of herding dogs relax and hold the sheep in place; other types are more controlling with the movement of the sheep. Freja's disinterest is readily apparent.



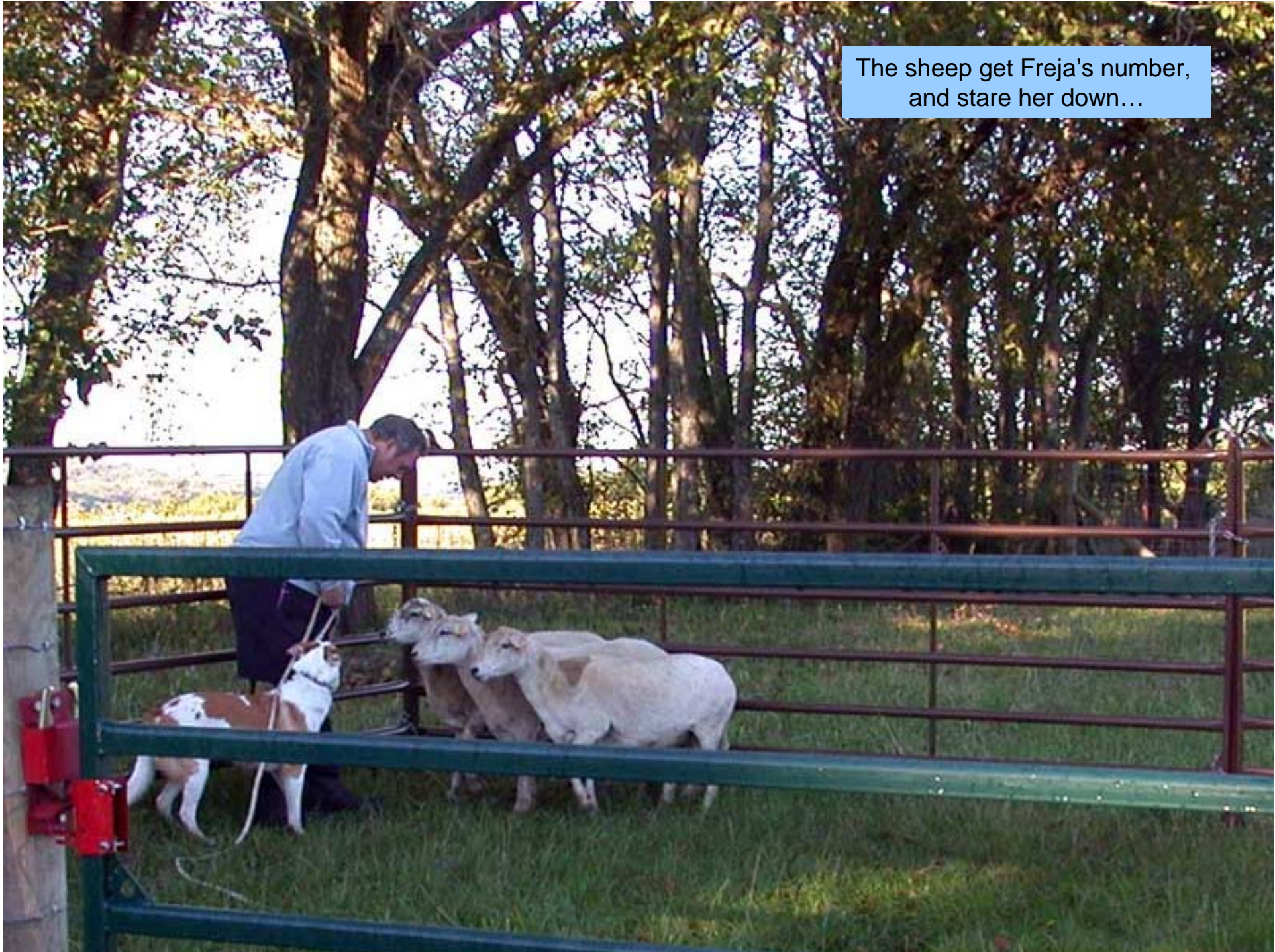


Time for a face-to-face confrontation. This time, Mark brings Freja around the front of the sheep. They stare at this strange dog and stamp their feet to warn her away.



Freja tentatively sniffs the air, trying to gauge this new situation...

The sheep get Freja's number, and stare her down...





The sheep win.

One Final Test: If the sheep are between Freja and her pack (Stefan and Julie), will she push forward, driving the ewes in front of her to reach her goal?



Mark gets Freja is in the perfect position to drive the sheep to us...



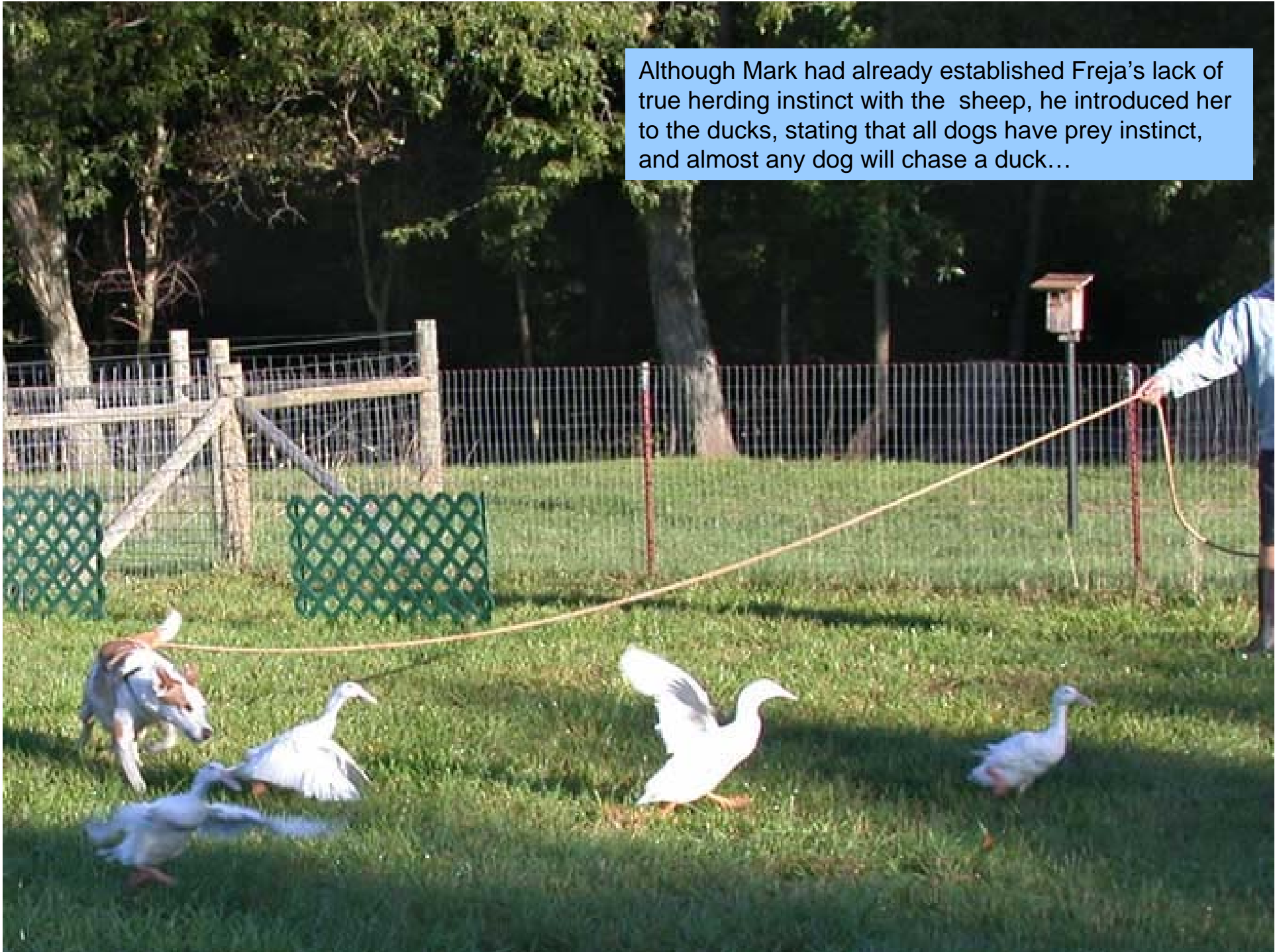
But she is intimidated once again...



Just like a politician, Freja is given a photo op for her last run...



Although Mark had already established Freja's lack of true herding instinct with the sheep, he introduced her to the ducks, stating that all dogs have prey instinct, and almost any dog will chase a duck...



For a couple of seconds, Freja obliged...



but in the end, Freja's response was the same as with the sheep...





Get me out of here!!!



We'll stick to agility,
thank you very much.