

# WE LOVE PETS

SOUTH AFRICA

OCTOBER 2025

## ITALIAN SPINONE

A gentle giant with a noble nose

## DOG AGILITY

The incredible bond between dogs and their handlers

RIDGEBACK LOVE

*from Cape Town to Norway*

## CREEPY CRAWLERS

THE HIDDEN PARASITES AFFECTING YOUR PETS

*Mr. Miyagee*

THE TINY DOG WITH A GIANT HEART WHO INSPIRED A NATION

## WHY

is your dog wearing a muzzle?

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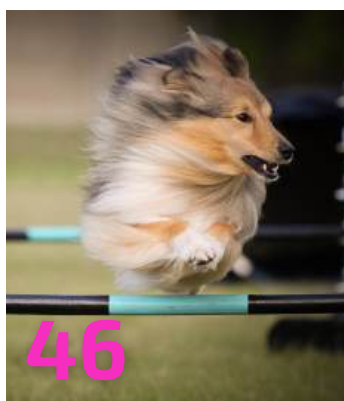
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**Photo Credit:** Cover Photo by Kate Davies Photography



## Belle Lumière Foto

Grass stained jeans? Occupational hazard. Drool on my lens? Comes standard. Lee is a Cape Town-based dog photographer with 23 years of professional international shooting under her belt, who firmly believes that zoomies, belly rubs and a good dose of organised chaos make for the best portraits. What lights her up is capturing the bond between people and their pups: the kind of moments you'll want to frame, share and laugh about years later. Forget stiff poses (ok maybe one "nice one" for the fridge). "I'm all about puppy grins and belly laughs. Because in my world, the moments may not last forever, but the photos do."

[www.bellelumierefoto.com](http://www.bellelumierefoto.com)



# Pet photographers.

They capture the unique personalities and fleeting moments, preserving memories that bring joy for years. Freezing moments that might otherwise fade, allowing us to relive the love, giggles and connection we feel with our pets, even as time moves on. Here are 3 of our favourite pet photographers.



## Tilanie Grote Photography

Based in Durban, photographing pets (mainly dogs) is one of her big loves and passions. As a rule, her family shoots are pet friendly, but she also loves a photoshoot dedicated to pets, so time can be spent with them. She has a love for both studio and location shoots. The most important part of dog photography is patience and time. "In dog photography, patience and time are so important. With that, you'll get some amazing images of your dog, showcasing their personalities."

[www.tilaniegrote.co.za](http://www.tilaniegrote.co.za)

## Whimsy Dreams Photography

Geraldine Duncan is a professional pet photographer and the heart behind Whimsy Dreams Photography. With many years in the field, she has perfected the art of capturing the magical, whimsical moments that reveal the true spirit of beloved pets. A devoted dog and horse mom, Geraldine combines patience, creativity, and a gentle touch to create portraits that feel timeless and enchanting. Each photograph is more than an image - it's a story of love, loyalty, and connection. Guided by her passion for animals and artistry, Geraldine transforms every session into a dreamlike experience where pets shine as the magical souls they are.

[www.whimsydreams.co.za](http://www.whimsydreams.co.za)



# SPOTlight

## Two pet businesses born from passion & paws

### Vicki Fox - The Driving Force behind Pet Friendly Adventures & Agility Fun

Vicki's love for animals sparked early. Growing up with a Dalmatian, she turned into a "show pony" through backyard agility, unaware of the sport at the time. Her journey deepened with horses as a riding instructor, then shifted to dogs after adopting an abandoned 5-week-old puppy, Bella, in 2011. Bella was pushed through the gate at Vicki's work and her boss asked her to take the puppy to the welfare. Bella never made it to the welfare; instead, she kick-started Vicki's dog training path, leading to agility addiction by 2016.

“When my husband laughed at my idea for K-9 Adventures, I took it as a challenge and proved him wrong!”

♥ Vicki

### ... Let's Explore

#### The Spark for K-9 Adventures

Born in May 2019 during a stay at Oryx Hut with her husband and three dogs, K-9 Adventures solves the frustration of unreliable "pet friendly" listings. Vicki created a platform featuring only places she's personally visited, ensuring true pet friendliness for easy booking. No more guesswork when choosing a pet friendly stay. K-9 Adventures has been growing from strength to strength since "hubby" laid down the challenge asking:

"Why would any establishment invite you to visit?"

♥ Cobalt





# Strand Agility Centre

I took Bella to puppy school with Rose in Somerset West. There were some obstacles that I loved doing with Bella, and asking if we can't carry on with something similar after puppy school, Rose told me about Agility and to contact Vineyard Agility Training in Stellenbosch. We started agility but gave up after a month as I thought there is no hope for my dog; she has too much energy. We returned in 2016 and that is where the addiction started.

**About 2 years ago, during a lunch date, Vicki's mom asked how Cobalt's agility training was going.**

I told her about the struggles of training. No access to equipment, the closest training facility to the Strand is Vineyard and the sessions are limited to 1 hour per week!

Strand Agility Centre started off by just offering beginner agility training, but we are now also offering Trick Training, Introduction to dog dancing, rally and so much more.

What started off as a dream is busy growing into a small family. When time allows we host fun events, workshops, walks, or socials.

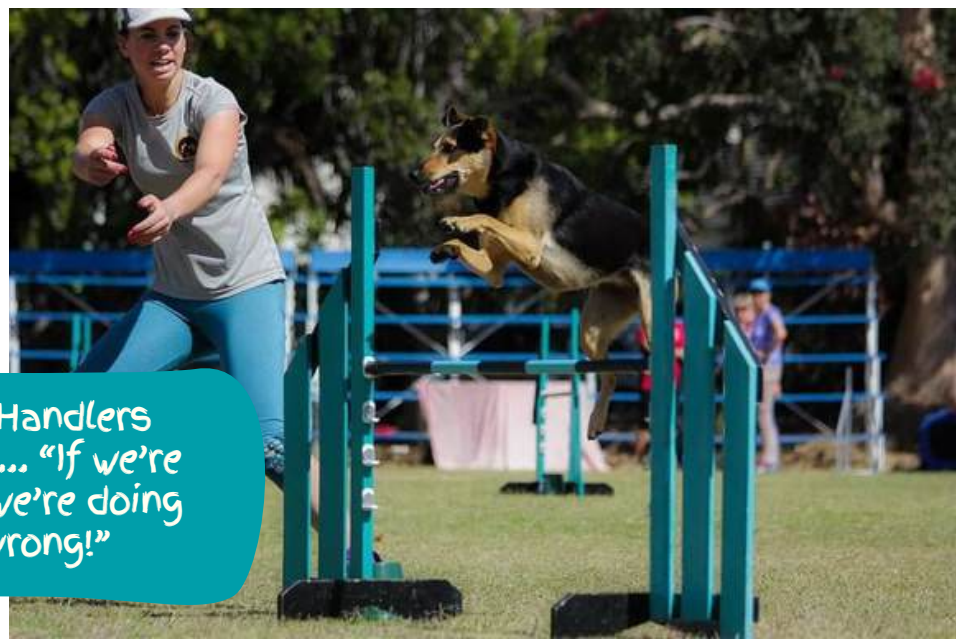
**I never planned on giving any training, but 2 months after opening Strand Agility, people started contacting me.**



Where Dogs & Handlers become a Team... "If we're not having fun, we're doing something wrong!"



My parents helped me to buy agility equipment and opening up a space in Strand to train. The idea behind Strand Agility was to offer other people with the same struggles as me the opportunity to rent the equipment and train.





# The Italian Spinone

A Gentle Giant  
with a Noble Nose



*by Dr Annemari Groenewald*



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*In the heart of the Italian countryside, where mist rises over vineyards and forests in the early morning, a distinctive hunting dog has quietly held its place in the hearts of sportsmen and families alike for centuries: the Italian Spinone.*

## A Storied Origin

The Spinone Italiano - often simply called the Italian Spinone - is one of the oldest gundog breeds in Europe, with roots tracing back to ancient Roman times. Named after the Italian word spino, referring to the thorny brush in which it would work, the Spinone was developed in the Piedmont region of Italy. Its thick, wiry coat and rugged build made it ideal for navigating rough terrain and water in pursuit of game.

Artworks from as early as the 15th century depict dogs resembling today's Spinone, confirming its longstanding role in Italian hunting traditions. Unlike many other sporting breeds, the Spinone has changed little over time, thanks to a strong emphasis on function over fashion.

## Breed Characteristics

What immediately sets the Italian Spinone apart is its rustic, endearing appearance, shaggy coat, expressive eyes, and bushy eyebrows, lending it a soulful, almost comical face. But beneath the beard and wiry fur, lies an athlete built for endurance and versatility. Spinoni are medium-to-large dogs, typically weighing between 30 - 40 kg, with a sturdy frame, webbed feet for swimming, and a deep chest.

They're bred to hunt, point and retrieve (HPR breed) birds, making them excellent multipurpose hunting dogs. But their true gift is not just in the field - it's in their hearts.



**Photo Credit:** Belle Lumière Foto





**Photo Credit:** Belle Lumière Foto

## Nature at Work and at Home

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Spinoni are not high-speed chasers like pointers or spaniels. Instead, they work with methodical determination, using their excellent scenting ability to track birds. Their slower, steadier hunting style makes them ideal for those who prefer a calm and controlled approach in the field.

At home, the Spinone transforms from a diligent worker to a gentle and affectionate companion. Known for their docile and patient nature, these dogs are fantastic with children and other pets. They're highly social, deeply loyal, and crave close companionship. Spinoni do not do well when left alone for long periods. They are sensitive souls that thrive on interaction.



Training a Spinone requires a soft touch. They are intelligent and eager to please, but their independent streak means they respond best to positive reinforcement and gentle consistency. Harsh methods will only break their spirit.

## A Breed Unlike any Other

What makes the Italian Spinone truly unique is the combination of its versatility, temperament, and low-maintenance grooming needs. Their wiry coat sheds minimally and only requires hand-stripping or occasional brushing. They're robust and generally healthy dogs, especially when bred responsibly from health-tested lines.

For South African families and hunters seeking a rare breed with old-world charm, gentle temperament, and field-ready instincts, the Italian Spinone may be the perfect fit. And thanks to ethical preservation breeders, this once-hidden gem of a breed is steadily gaining the recognition and appreciation it deserves.

*Whether you're looking for a dependable gundog or a laid-back family pet, the Italian Spinone offers the best of both worlds. With their loving nature, noble heritage, and striking looks, Spinoni continue to quietly win hearts wherever they go. If you're lucky enough to meet one, you'll quickly understand why this gentle giant is such a treasured companion.*

## Get A FREE CONSULTATION

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1

2



**During  
Consultation Hours**

**If it's your FIRST  
Consultation**

1st

3

4

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**YAY!**

**Contact: 068 098 8149**

follow Mr. Miyagee on Instagram

## The Tiny Dog with a Giant Heart Who Inspired a Nation

# Mr. Miyagee

---

People may remember Mr. Miyagee from his numerous on-screen performances, dazzling event appearances, in-studio features, glossy magazine spreads, and international commercials. He's captured hearts in movies, and most recently, he became part of the South African movie scene in the Netflix hit *Semi Soeter*, where he starred as "Rolex".



Even after his accident, Mr. Miyagee has already shown that he has not lost his sparkle, making special appearances back on set with the same charm and professionalism that first made him a star. And now, as if his story couldn't be more inspiring, he will soon make his first event appearance since the accident at the much-loved Dancers Love Dogs show at the Artscape Theatre on 22 October.

But behind the bright lights and red carpets lies a story far more powerful than any role he has ever played. It is the story of a tiny chocolate pup who thought he could outsmart Tom Cruise, attempted his own stunt, and in the process, ruptured his cruciate ligament.

When the injury struck, surgery was carefully considered. Yet, given Mr. Miyagee's delicate frame, arthritis, and medical history, the risks were far too high. For many, this could have been the end of a promising journey. But not for Mr. Miyagee.

**Because true stars don't vanish when the spotlight dims, they shine brighter in the darkness.**

With the loving guidance of his human companion, Mr. Miyagee set off on a new chapter, one that began with visits to specialists and the fitting of custom-made knee braces. These weren't just medical devices; they were symbols of hope, designed to give him a chance not just to walk again, but to live his fullest life.

Since March, his healing journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. Supported by medical professionals and brands who rallied to his side, Mr. Miyagee alternates weekly between:

- Chiropractic and electro-shockwave sessions with Dr. Lance Raggiens.
- Rehabilitation physiotherapy at Pets In Balance with Bianca.

**Their dedication and his unstoppable spirit have been the heartbeat of his recovery.**



But as with every great comeback story, there have been setbacks, tough days, and great days. The road is long, and his journey is taken one day at a time, at his own pace. This book has many chapters and we are only just beginning.

When his "good" leg gave in with a second cruciate rupture, the challenge doubled. Most would give up. Mr. Miyagee dug deeper. With braces on both legs, he fought through every session, determined to walk again, even if it meant learning from scratch.

The amazing team of Animotion, led by Werner, created custom carbon fibre knee braces, lightweight yet strong enough to stabilize his tiny knees. With these “iron legs,” Mr. Miyagee was ready for his superhero moment. Perhaps not in The Avengers, but surely in a Marvel spin-off of his own!

And as if that wasn't enough, he even received a custom wheelchair thanks to the unwavering support of Dotsure Pet Insurance, who stood by him from the very first vet visit, and Hogpro Scooters, who added lightweight mag wheels for extra flair. Nothing ordinary for this extraordinary dog. These wheels might just land him a role in Fast & The Furry!

Today, 6months later, Mr. Miyagee continues to grow stronger. He struts proudly in the underwater treadmill, his little head held high, a beacon of hope for anyone facing their own struggles. Every brace adjustment, every physio session, every wobbly but determined step tells a story bigger than fame.

**He may not be perfect,  
and his body carries scars  
but those very scars are  
the ink of inspiration.  
They tell the story of  
resilience, courage, and  
the sheer will to keep  
moving forward.**

Mr. Miyagee is no longer just South Africa's smallest celebrity dog. He is a teacher, an inspiration, and a reminder that our struggles do not define us. What defines us is how we rise from them. Every small step Mr. Miyagee takes in his brace and every wheel turn in his custom chair is a powerful symbol. He's not just a dog on the road to recovery; he's a beacon of perseverance for anyone facing their own challenges. He reminds us that even when life throws us a plot twist, we can write a beautiful new chapter. His story is a message of hope, especially for pet lovers and families who have followed his journey from the very beginning.

With his dog mom, Lindi Pieterse, by his side, Mr. Miyagee is ready for his next act. His comeback is a tribute to the human-animal bond and the incredible spirit of a little dog who refused to let his story end. He is more than a celebrity; he is an inspiration, a reminder that with heart, humor, and a little help from friends, anything is possible.

Every time his braces click into place, Mr. Miyagee shows us that a setback can become a stage, and that the greatest performances are not on screen but in the courage to keep going.

Miyagee is the nation's inspiration. His journey from fame to fragility and back to strength reminds us that our stories are not defined by our struggles, but by how we choose to overcome them. And for this little dog with the big heart, every step he takes in his knee braces is a celebration of life, a beautiful testament to the power of a second chance.





Norway

8.28 AM

**RIDGEBACK LOVE**

*from*  
**CAPE TOWN**  
*to*  
**NORWAY**

by Rainer the Ridgeback

Cape Town

8.28 AM

I want to tell you a beautiful story. A story filled with dogs, food, friendship, kindness, love and adventure. The type of adventure that takes us from the southernmost tip of Africa to Scandinavia in a village called Tjøme in Norway, where Rhodesian Ridgebacks Cesar (9) and Leo (4) live. This is how it began...



Cesar (9) & Leo (4)



Bjørnar and Jannicke



My mom started my Instagram account in 2021, while working from home. She used my account to get advice on how to raise me from the Instagram dog community. In doing so, we made so many friends from across the world, and two of them were Bjørnar and Jannicke from Norway, who lived in a town called Tjøme just south of Oslo. They invited my pawrents to visit them and shared stories about their cozy island known for its beautiful landscapes, their way of life (ensconced in nature) and of course their Ridgies, Cesar and Leo. Mom really wanted to visit them and our dream finally came true in August 2025.

Mom hiked the eastern part of Tour du Mont Blanc first, then she flew to Oslo and caught a train to Asker, where Bjørnar and Jannicke fetched her. Lots of hugs to go around because the whole trip was unbelievable. Cesar and Leo came along for the car ride where they listened to mom's voice and got used to her scent. Bjørnar and Jannicke told mom interesting stories of the various towns they passed.

When they arrived home, there was a celebratory drink of bubbles and then the opening of presents. I was so lucky, Bjørnar and Jannicke gifted me with a Dogs of Norway (by Marius of Norway) knitted wool jersey in Norwegian colours and patterns. Mom loved it so much that she put it on me the moment she got home.



*my Dogs of Norway Jersey*



Next up were the most interesting gifts for mom and dad. Freia chocolates made in Norway, two reindeer-print, wool sitting mats (to be taken on hikes and come in handy on cold and rainy days). Then there were two sets of woollen mittens designed with unique patterns to keep hands warm and cozy. Finally, wooden drinking mugs just like the ones the Vikings drank from. Mom was so overwhelmed with emotion from such special and sentimental gifts.

**Everyone went outside to see the Milky Way (mom even saw some shooting stars). At night, Mom got kisses from Cesar and Leo before bed.**

Mom was taken on a gastronomic Norwegian experience: For dinner, she ate Norwegian salmon, new potatoes and a summer watermelon and feta salad. Absolutely delicious!

She was spoilt with the most mouth-watering breakfasts: Brunost (brown cheese, which is a Norwegian favourite and also my pawrents favourite), eaten on bread with Nora raspberry jam. Bjørnar cooked scrambled eggs with herbs from the garden and Jannicke put out a spread of smoked Norwegian salmon and cured meats. The dairy and milk were the best mom has tasted. One night, Bjørnar made a Norwegian delicacy for dinner – reindeer stew served with buttery mash and even more brunost. Mom gobbled it all up like a Ridgeback.

On day 2, Leo, Bjørnar, Jannicke and Mom went for a walk along the stunning coastline, dotted with beautiful and distinct Norwegian-style summer houses with sheds, private saunas and piers leading to the water. The weather was very good and people were out swimming, boating and walking. There were no other Rhodesian Ridgebacks on the walk and Leo was definitely very exotic looking. Lots of people asked about him and were very impressed by the “lion-dog”.

**Mom met Bjørnar’s beautiful daughters and their children.**





Cesar and Leo love playing with the kids. They all sat outside on the porch basking in the sun and later walked to the pier to catch and release crabs from the fjord. This was an old family tradition that the grandchildren are now learning. A very special family-activity that mom was so grateful to be part of.

## ON DAY 3 ...

Mom went for a tour around Tønsberg (the oldest town in Norway), dating back to c871. This also happens to be the town that Bjørnar grew up in, so he was the local tour guide, taking mom up to see the Viking castle on top of the highest hill, pointing out the church, cannons, various other lookout points and the typical Norwegian style houses making kilns. This was such an amazing experience to see and understand how the Vikings lived.

The walk continued along the pier and into the main square, where they saw the old police station (where Bjørnar's dad had worked) and the old fire station. It was a very beautiful town with lots of flowers in bloom.

Mom was so grateful and happy that she got to fly across the globe to spend time with this special family and the dogs. It just shows how people from the complete opposite sides of the world can come together and have so much in common, all because of Ridgebacks and dogs in general.

**Thank you again to Bjørnar, Jannicke, Cesar and Leo for this amazing experience, opening their gorgeous home to mom and sharing their life, stories and experiences. I love you!!**

*Lots of Kisses*

Rainer the Ridgeback  
Cape Town  
South Africa







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# FLOWERS

## WAGGING TAILS & WEST COAST CHARM

by Vicki Fox K9-Adventures



*"The petrol tank is full  
and so is my bucket list."*

*- Unknown*

[www.k-9adventures.net](http://www.k-9adventures.net)





Every spring, the West Coast bursts into a kaleidoscope of wildflowers. For years we'd been meaning to go. This September, we finally packed our four-legged companions into the bakkie and headed out for a dog-friendly day trip to Darling.

## A MISTY SCENIC START

The drive from Stellenbosch to Philadelphia is usually a feast for the eyes - golden canola fields, a hot-air balloon drifting past, and endless open skies. But on this particular morning, we were met with an unexpected blanket of mist. It wrapped the hills in mystery and gave the start of our adventure a soft, storybook feel.

## QUICK PITSTOP AT THE WERF

Our first stop was The Werf in Philadelphia. This weekend market and café welcomes dogs indoors and out. After a leg stretch on the back lawn, we grabbed coffee under the tented patio while our dogs enjoyed pats from friendly shoppers. Michael even managed a quick gift hunt at the stalls; coming back to tell me about the amazing selection of stalls ranging from food, handmade merchandise and a surprising range of pet products, it was almost as if they knew there would be a couple of dog lovers visiting.

While enjoying our coffee we noticed how well families were catered for with the large kiddies play area with an assortment of jumping domes, slides and jungle gyms to keep the kids occupied while the adults shop or relax.



## PET FRIENDLY TIP

The Werf has a large lawn for quick potty breaks. Bring a travel water bowl and your dog's leash.

## BLOOMS AT WAYLANDS WILD FLOWER RESERVE

About 15 minutes before Darling lies Waylands Wild Flower Reserve, a vast, uncrowded space where dogs on lead can join you among the blooms. Walking through quilts of colour felt magical and unhurried, with enough room to stop for photos or water breaks without crowding.



**PET FRIENDLY TIP**

Dogs must be leashed, and the drive-through layout means you can easily return to your car for water or shade.

## QUIRKY CULTURE: EVITA SE PERRON

No trip to Darling is complete without a visit to Evita se Perron. We made a spontaneous U-turn and were delighted to find another pet friendly stop. While the theatre show “Evita Talks Kaktus” wasn’t dog-friendly, we sampled a rusk-and-biscuit tasting with coffee instead. Our dog Cobalt, eyed the yellow rubber ducks in the garden suspiciously. Comic relief for everyone. Although we were not in too much of a rush, I think we could have spent an hour browsing through all the posters and memorabilia; I am sure we will make a stop here again on our next trip to the West Coast.



## CRAFT BEERS & SHADY PATIOS: DARLING BREWERY

Five minutes down the road, Darling Brewery became our final stop. Their spacious outdoor seating offers plenty of shade and water bowls for canine guests. We shared a few starters while the dogs snoozed happily under the table. Taking a browse through the menu, I was planning our next visit's meal and deep-down wishing I had room for some of the amazing meals I saw passing our table; that said, the generous size of the starters we had hit the spot.

## HOME AGAIN

We took the same scenic route back to Stellenbosch, now under blue skies, already planning our next outing. This easy loop combines wildflowers, good food and genuinely dog-friendly stops. A West Coast road trip worth repeating.



## IF YOU GO

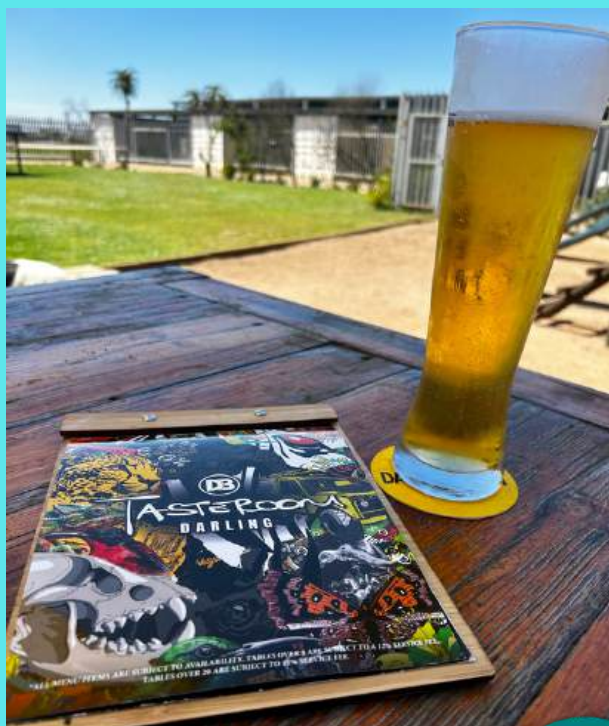
- **The Werf, Philadelphia** – Pet friendly market & café on weekends (With a large amazing kiddies play area).
- **Waylands Wild Flower Reserve** – Leashed dogs welcome among the blooms.
- **Evita se Perron, Darling** – Pet friendly garden & café (theatre shows not dog-friendly).
- **Darling Brewery** – Large shaded beer garden with water bowls for dogs, amazing food and a great selection of beers and ciders.

A FIRST FOR SOUTH AFRICA  
DIGITAL MAGAZINE



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# Langkloof *Game Farm*

If you are looking for that perfect mix of comfort and wild beauty, Berghuis at Langkloof Game Farm hits the mark.



We spent a few nights there, and honestly, it's the kind of place that makes you forget your phone even exists (in the best way).

The house itself is spacious, quiet, and well-designed. It accommodates six, featuring three comfortable bedrooms and two bathrooms. Each room has an air conditioner, and the kitchen is fully kitted out for self-catering. There's a big lounge with a fireplace, two covered verandas (with a gas braai), and a private lapa that was perfect for evenings under the stars.

Berghuis is securely fenced, giving us peace of mind, especially with pets, who are welcome by prior arrangement. It's not always easy to find a pet friendly place that still feels this wild and remote, so this was a big plus.



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@luna\_harli\_pixi\_lily



## Now for the best part, the setting...

Berghuis sits tucked into a beautiful, private corner of the reserve, and it feels like your own little piece of the bush. From the moment we arrived, we were surrounded by bird calls and fresh air, and even if you're not a serious birder, it's hard not to be drawn in by the variety: kingfishers, hornbills, raptors, sunbirds... they're everywhere, especially around the dams. Just grab your coffee and sit on the stoep. The birds will come to you.

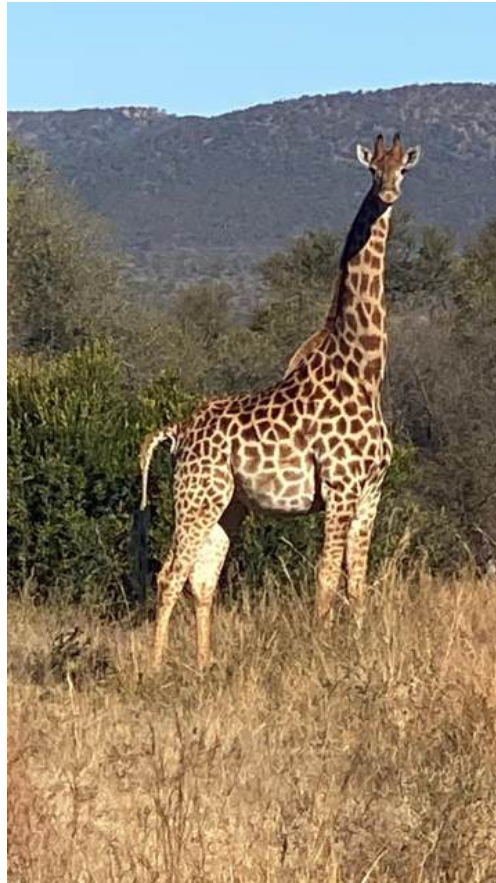
Game drives are available and done in open safari vehicles with an experienced guide. You may get to see giraffe, kudu, wildebeest, sable, buffalo, and even a klipspringer.

Langkloof doesn't feel commercial or crowded. It's peaceful, spacious, and clearly run by people who care about conservation and the land. Whether you're there for the animals, the birds, or just a proper break in nature, Berghuis offers an easy, beautiful base to do it from.

**Highly recommend Berghuis if you're after something quiet, wild and real, but still want a good bed, hot shower and somewhere to chill while the jackals start calling at dusk.**

 **check them out on IG**

 **Langkloof**  
GAME FARM





The surprising truth about one of the most misunderstood accessories in the dog world.

# WHY IS YOUR DOG WEARING A MUZZLE?

written by Sasha Wein

Why is your dog wearing a muzzle?" If you've ever walked a muzzled dog in public, you've probably heard that question, sometimes muttered with suspicion, sometimes asked with genuine curiosity... and occasionally yelled from across the street by someone holding a sausage roll.

But here's the thing: behind nearly every dog in a muzzle is not a story of danger or failure, but one of preparation, protection, and deep, unwavering love.

## MEET BROOKE: A SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG WITH A MUZZLE (AND A MISSION)

Mariann Wilson (Crewe-Brown) is a seasoned Search and Rescue (SAR) handler who's been training dogs for over 30 years, and search dogs specifically for the last 16. She's currently raising and training her fourth-generation SAR dog. So when she talks about training, she speaks with both experience and heart.

One of her current SAR stars is Brooke, a high-drive, big-hearted German Shorthaired Pointer. And while Brooke doesn't wear a muzzle to look tough or because she's aggressive, she is trained to wear one. Why? Because sometimes life throws you curveballs.

Like the first time they got deployed and the helicopter pilot said:

"Uh, could you muzzle your dog? Some of the crew are a bit nervous..."

Boom! Protocol updated.

"Brooke's super human-friendly," Mariann says. "But we want everyone to feel safe, and you never know when a dog might be in pain or scared. That's when things can go sideways."

Now, all the SAR dogs on Mariann's team are muzzle-trained. They don't work in muzzles, but if they're injured on a mission, stressed during a vet visit, or in a situation where someone else feels uneasy around dogs, the muzzle comes out to keep everyone safe.

And yes, the training involves peanut butter. Lots of it. And liver spread. (Because nothing says "trust me" like a snack you can smell from the next room.)

"We start with a chin rest in the hand, then progress to putting their nose in a cone, which transfers nicely to a basket muzzle," she explains. "I teach nose-in-cone and the chin rest from puppyhood, so putting a nose in a muzzle is just the next natural step. Then it's just about gradually building up wear time with confidence and calm."





## MUZZLE = SMART, NOT SCARY

Let's bust some myths. Muzzles aren't about "bad dogs." They're about smart humans and responsible dog guardianship. Here's why your dog might need one (and why that's totally okay):

- Crowded places are hard. Even the friendliest dog can feel overwhelmed in a packed park or market.
- Pain is unpredictable. An injury, grooming session, or vet visit can trigger a snap, even from the sweetest soul.
- Past trauma. A reactive dog can heal, but safety helps them get there.
- Scavenger hunting. Some dogs will eat anything - bones, meds, garbage tacos - you name it. A muzzle can literally save their life.
- Because we plan ahead. In an emergency, a muzzle-trained dog is safer to help and handle for vets, handlers, and family members alike.

"Muzzles can prevent bites during stressful situations," Mariann adds. "But to work, muzzle training has to be done correctly, with patience, positive associations, and lots of praise."

## HOW TO MUZZLE LIKE A PRO

Here's what you need to know if you're thinking of muzzle training your pup:

- **Fit matters.** The right muzzle lets your dog pant, drink, and take treats. Basket muzzles are your friend.
- **Training is everything.** Don't just slap it on. Introduce it slowly, let the dog sniff and explore it, and pair every step with food and praise.
- **Confidence is key.** Training should build your dog's comfort and trust, not anxiety. It should feel like a game, not a punishment.
- **It's not a quick fix.** Muzzles manage behaviour, they don't fix the root cause. Keep working with your dog, building trust, and addressing triggers.



## WHEN MUZZLES GO WRONG

Yep, muzzles can be misused. Here's what not to do:

- **Punishment tool.** Never use a muzzle as a time-out or "naughty dog" device. It'll just freak your dog out.
- **Avoiding real issues.** If your dog is biting from fear or stress, that needs to be addressed, not just covered with a muzzle.
- **Bad fit or unsafe type.** Fabric muzzles that clamp shut should only be used for short moments (like a quick vet exam). Don't use them for walks, play, or in warm weather. They restrict panting and can be dangerous.
- **Skipping training.** Forcing a muzzle onto a scared dog breaks trust. Start slow. Let it be sniffed. Let it be rewarded. Let it be safe.

## TIME TO FLIP THE SCRIPT

Every muzzled dog you see is a chance to change the question from "What's wrong with that dog?" to "Wow, that person really loves and understands their dog."

We normalize collars, leads, harnesses, even bowties.

### Let's normalize muzzles too.

Because behind that wire basket or soft cage is a dog trying to navigate a big, messy, noisy world... and a human doing everything they can to help.

So next time you see a muzzled dog, know this:

- That dog is not a threat.
- That's a protected dog.
- A trained dog.
- A dog with a team that gets them.

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Handler: Vicki Fox



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# A Temporary Home **A LIFELONG** *Impact*

**BY SASCHA ODAYAR**

COAPE QUALIFIED ANIMAL BEHAVIOURIST



In Part 1 of ***Between Shelter and Forever: The Vital Role of Dog Foster Homes***, we explored why fostering is so essential in easing the burden on South African shelters, the positive impact it has on dogs, and whether fostering might be the right fit for you. In this follow-up, we'll take a closer look at what you can expect as a foster carer, what shelters should provide, how to prepare your home, and how to navigate those all-important first days with a new foster dog.

Becoming a dog foster parent is one of the most rewarding ways to support shelters and dogs in need. But before opening your home, it's important to know what to expect, what you'll need, and how to prepare for your first foster.



## Why Shelters Need Foster Homes

Every shelter has different needs, and foster care can fill critical gaps:

- **Emergency placements** – Sometimes dogs are rescued in urgent situations and need a temporary place to land before a long-term foster is arranged.
- **Medical or behavioural cases** – Sick, recovering, or stressed dogs may need more attention than a shelter can provide. A home environment gives them a better chance to heal and adjust.
- **Seasonal support** – Senior dogs often struggle in cold winter kennels and thrive in the warmth of a foster home.
- **Pregnant dogs** – Expectant mums and their puppies benefit from the calm and safety of a home environment, rather than the stress of a busy shelter.

Think carefully about what you're comfortable with. Not ready to handle a reactive dog or manage medications? That's okay. Being honest about your limitations helps ensure a successful placement for both you and the dog.

## What to Expect From a Shelter

A good shelter will support you throughout your foster journey. Just as with adoption, they'll likely require a home check to ensure your environment is secure and suitable. They should also ask about your household members and other pets.

### Questions to ask the shelter:

- Do they provide a point of contact if you need help?
- Are dogs up to date with vaccines, flea, and worm treatments?
- What vet should you use in case of emergencies?
- Will they supply food, bedding, bowls, or toys?
- Can they share the dog's behavioural notes (e.g., good with men, reactive to other dogs)?

Some fosters are happy to cover food or medical costs, while others rely on the shelter for support. Discuss expectations upfront to avoid confusion later, especially in emergencies.



## Getting Your Home Foster-Ready

Before your first placement, it helps to have a few essentials on hand:

- Bedding
- Food and water bowls
- Leash
- Toys and treats (great for bonding and training)
- Pee pads (for puppies)
- Grooming brush
- Ability to separate areas of your home for slow introductions to pets.
- Whelping box, heat pads, and puppy formula (if fostering a pregnant dog).

Preparation helps create a smooth transition for both you and your foster dog.

## The First Day With Your Foster Dog

Transitioning from a shelter to a home is overwhelming for most dogs. Start small, be patient, and set a predictable routine.

- Create a safe, dog-proofed area with food, water, and easy outdoor access.
- Expect a wide range of behaviour. Some dogs may shut down, while others bounce around with excitement.
- Go at their pace. Many shelter dogs have been let down by humans; earning their trust takes time.
- Ask for shelter support when introducing your foster dog to children or resident pets.
- Avoid overwhelming them with visitors in the first few days.
- Keep a routine. Predictability helps dogs settle faster.
- Take photos and videos! These stories help shelters promote adoptability and connect with potential forever families.

## When it Doesn't Work Out

Sometimes fostering doesn't go as planned and that's okay. Life changes, or certain dogs may not be the right fit for your home. Any time outside of the shelter is still beneficial. If needed, return the dog honestly and responsibly. Being prepared lowers the risk of returns, but flexibility and communication with the shelter are key.

## A Note to Shelters That Don't Allow Fostering

Some shelters hesitate to run foster programmes due to time, resources, or past bad experiences. But despite the challenges, foster networks significantly increase adoption chances.

Consider:

- Recruiting volunteers to support foster carers (communication, admin, guidance).
- Creating a Facebook or WhatsApp group to share updates and connect carers.
- Building a supportive community around fostering to ease the burden on staff.

The benefits far outweigh the obstacles. Dogs get a chance to shine in a home environment, and shelters gain valuable allies in animal welfare.

The goal of fostering is simple: to give dogs a nurturing environment where their personalities can shine, making them more adoptable.

**As Karen Davidson wisely said:**  
**"Saving one dog will not change the world, but surely for that one dog, the world will change forever."**



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- deur Monique de Jager

# VAN BLAF TOT BESKERM

Verstaan jou hond  
se waakgedrag

A close-up photograph of a brown dog with floppy ears, wearing a pink and black collar, eating from a white ceramic bowl. The dog is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its head lowered into the bowl. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Vir ons  
Afrikaanse Lesers



# Wat is waakgedrag dan nou eintlik? Dit is wanneer 'n hond 'n item, area, persoon of ander dier van so 'n hoë waarde ag, dat hulle dit wil oppas en beskerm.

Sommige honde word geteel spesifiek vir hul waaksaamheid. Dit sluit in rasse soos, Duitse Herdershonde, Rottweilers, Doberman Pinschers, Bullmastiffs, Boerboele, Bokse en die reuse Schnauzer, net om 'n paar te noem. Omdat hulle geteel is vir hierdie gedrag, is dit meer waarskynlik dat hulle hierdie gedrag gaan toon, eerder as byvoorbeeld 'n skoothondjie soos 'n Chihuahua.

## KONTEKS IS BELANGRIK

Die konteks waarin hierdie gedrag gewys word is natuurlik ook belangrik. Dit sal eerder wees wanneer die hond 'n familielid teenoor 'n vreemdeling wat gevaarlike lyftaal wys, wil beskerm, as wat Wagter vir Ma teenoor Pa of sussa wil beskerm. Dit gebeur soms dat die lyn tussen aanvaarbaar en onaanvaarbaar soms verwronge raak en dit is dan wanneer 'n dieregedragkundige ingeroep word om te help met die gedrag, veral as dit gevaarlik raak vir vriende en familie.

Sommige mense vind dit natuurlik ook vermaaklik om honde op hierdie manier te tart en speels die persoon wat opgepas word te piets of te maak of hulle die persoon iets fisies aandoen om 'n reaksie uit te lok by Wagter. Sulke gedrag veroorsaak geweldige stress vir Wagter en kan veroorsaak dat iemand per ongeluk raakgebyt word. Dit sal beslis nie Wagter se skuld wees as so iets gebeur nie.

## SPEEL OUDERDOM 'N ROL?

Volwasse honde en ouer honde is meer geneig om waakgedrag te wys as jong hondjies. Buiten gene, wat 'n bydrae kan lewer tot waaksaamheid, kan dit ook aangeleerde gedrag word.

Wanneer klein hondjies gedurende hul eerste weke van vaste kos eet om een bak moet veg en wroeg vir hul kos en die ander hondjies in die werpsel moet wegdruk of oorrompel om by die kos uit te kom, sal hierdie hondjies heel waarskynlik later kos wil oppas weens die trauma.

Wanneer die gedrag nie geneties is nie, maar eerder aangeleer, sal mens makliker kan regkom om dit teen te kant.

Honde kan ook besitlik raak oor bedjies, of die area waar kosbakke byvoorbeeld neergesit word. Speelgoed is ook 'n gunsteling om soms op te pas, want die honde kan dit sien as prettige hoë waarde items. Honde kan selfs ander honde oppas of kinders. Ek het 'n vriendin met 'n blinde hond wat graag sy eie braaksel oppas sodat niemand anders naby dit mag kom nie. Raar maar waar!

In kort, 'n hond wat iets oppas is nie besig om vir jou te wys wie is die baas nie en dit is nie 'n doelbewuste poging tot 'n magsposisie in die huishouding nie. Dit is bloot gene, of aangeleerde gedrag om iets wat vir daardie spesifieke hond van hoë waarde is, te beskerm. Sommige honde sal items ook gaan begrawe as deel van die proses om dit op te pas.

## VOORKOMING VAN WAAKGEDRAG

Dit is een van die lesse wat mens in 'n ordentlike hondeskool klas vir jong hondjies behoort te leer. Meeste mense is van opinie dat jy aan jou hondjie moet vat terwyl hy/sy eet om hom "gewoond" te maak. Dit is die verkeerde raad! Jy is net besig om jou hond te irriteer. Stel jouself voor jy is besig om 'n lekker stuk pizza te eet en iemand kom karring met hul pinkie in jou oor. Jy gaan beslis vir daardie persoon vertel wat jy van hul aksies dink.

### Oefening



Gooi iets van lae waarde in jou hond se kosbak terwyl hy eet. Gooi dan iets van hoër waarde vanaf 'n afstand waarmee jou hondjie gemaklik is, by. Jou hond begin assosieer die hand wat nader kom, nie as 'n bedreiging wat sy kos gaan vat nie, maar eerder dat dit beter dinge bring.

Kos is gewoonlik een van die mees algemene dinge wat opgepas word.

'n Ander metode is om verskillende bakke te gebruik, sodat die hond nie besitlik raak oor 'n spesifieke bak nie.

## WAT VAN INTERAKTIEWE SPEELGOED?

"Honde Puzzles" en interaktiewe speelgoed, waar die hond moet dink hoe om die kos te kry, aktiveer die frontale korteks (dis die meer gevorderde deel in die brein wat ook verantwoordelik is vir denke).

'n Basiese behoefte soos eet word wel deur die primatiewe deel van die brein gereguleer. Om iets op te pas word ook deur daardie primatiewe deel van die brein beheer. As ons dus die brein doelbewus kan manipuleer om denke te bevorder, verminder ons die geneigdheid om kos op te pas tot 'n mate.

## WAAKGEDRAG TEENOR MENSE

Wanneer die hond 'n persoon oppas, is daar 'n paar faktore wat altyd in ag geneem moet word. Die veiligheid van almal betrokke is natuurlik heel eerste. 'n Mens wil op 'n stelselmatige wyse vir die hond wys dat ander mense naby die eienaar, goeie goed beteken. Die hond word beloon met items wat hy sal geniet, byvoorbeeld 'n gunsteling speelding of hoë waarde snoepgoed.

Die afstand wat gehandhaaf word, sowel nie-intimiderende lyftaal is belangrik. 'n Lyf wat direk na die hond gedraai is saam met direkte oogkontak, word nie aanbeveel nie.

**Dit is belangrik om hier te noem dat jy nooit 'n hond wat grom straf of stil maak nie.**

## MY HOND PAS SPEELGOED OP!

Wanneer ons speelgoed by die hond wil neem, is dit 'n goeie idee om dit te ruil vir iets van dieselfde of hoër waarde. In hierdie geval leer hulle weereens dat items nie net gevat word nie.

## WAT IS DIE "JIPPEE-REAKSIE"?

In bewakingsopleiding is die "jippee-reaksie" veral waardevol. Dit help om die hond se emosionele toestand rondom die bewaakte item te verander.

Wanneer ons aan bewakingsgedrag werk, wil ons hê die hond moet voel: "Wow, dit is fantasties wanneer my mense naderkom!" in plaas van "O nee, hulle gaan my goed vat."

Die "jippee-reaksie" beteken dat die versterking op 'n manier gegee word wat die gevoel van vreugde, verligting en die verwagting van iets beter bring.



**Ten slotte, honde wat iets oppas, hetsy kos, 'n speelding, ander diere of mense, is nie verkeerd of stout nie. Die situasies kan en moet liefste bestuur word ten einde veiligheid vir almal te virseker. Die nodige opleiding gaan vanselfsprekend hand-aan-hand met die bestuur van jou hond se omgewing.**



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# CHANGING MINDS

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*Justin & Edwina Pillay is on a mission to change the narrative for power breeds.*



In a warm Kempton Park home, two muscular yet gentle souls, Coco and Lilo, rule the roost. Coco, a four-year-old pitbull with national working dog titles under her belt, and Lilo, a two-year-old American Bully with a fondness for hot water bottles, are not just pets; they're family. For Justin and Edwina Pillay, these dogs are also powerful ambassadors for breeds so often misunderstood.

Coco came into Justin's life as a surprise Valentine's Day gift in 2021. Having just moved to Kempton Park, he'd been searching for the right companion and stumbled across a litter in Westonaria. A last-minute cancellation left one pup waiting. "She had this energy about her, the other pups were cute, but Coco was biting my shoelaces," Justin remembers with a smile. "I just knew she was the one."

---

*Written by Sasha Wein*

For Edwina, Lilo arrived after heartbreak. "I lost my German Shepherd puppy suddenly, and it broke me," she says. When a family friend's dog had puppies, they offered her one. "She was the runt of the litter, the only blue Bully. She looked just like her mom. From day one, I felt she was meant for me."

Justin's love for pitbulls began in KwaZulu-Natal, where they were a common sight, though sadly not always in positive circumstances. "I saw people use them for the wrong reasons. But I always believed they're meant for so much more. I wanted to show the world a pitbull can be a family dog, not just a chained guard dog," he says. Edwina, who grew up with German Shepherds thanks to her father, Peter September (senior dog trainer and coordinator for the JMPD K9 Unit), never imagined owning a Bully breed. But meeting Justin's older pitbull, Chaos, changed everything.



*"He was so sweet and gentle. It showed me it's all about how they're raised."*

Now both Justin and Edwina are active members of the South African Working Trials Dog Association (SAWTDA), a national body dedicated to advancing working dog sports like detection, obedience, and protection. Together with Coco and Lilo, they train hard to challenge stereotypes about power breeds and to prove that, with love and discipline, these dogs can thrive as both family companions and canine athletes.

Coco's rise in the world of working dog sports has been nothing short of inspiring. She started club training at just 12 weeks old and entered her first

competition in 2022. "It was a disaster," Justin admits, "but we kept pushing." Later that year, Coco earned her first gold in narcotics detection at a provincial event in Centurion, plus two bronze medals in other disciplines. At her first SAWTDA Nationals, she narrowly missed gold, placing second. She repeated the silver finish in 2023 before finally taking the top spot in 2024, winning her coveted green blazer and solidifying her place as one of South Africa's top working dogs.

Edwina and Justin's approach to training focuses on socialization and obedience. They believe consistency and exposure to different environments - children, other dogs, strangers - are key to raising confident, well-adjusted bullies. "It's about making sure your dog never feels uncomfortable or threatened," Edwina says. "If they're relaxed, they don't need





to defend themselves.” Justin adds, “With a power breed, obedience is everything. You have to push their limits safely.”

At home, their dogs’ personalities couldn’t be more different. Coco is independent and mischievous, often raiding cupboards and searching guests’ bags for her beloved ball. Lilo, on the other hand, is a self-confessed drama queen who loves to be pampered, even insisting on her own hot water bottle for cold nights. Together, they bring endless laughter and warmth into the Pillay home.

Evenings are a favourite time for the family. After dinner, the dogs curl up in front of the heater for cuddle sessions and TV time. “They’re big babies at heart,” Edwina smiles.

This October 3rd and 4th, the couple will take Coco and Lilo to Nationals once

again, ready to showcase not only their training but also their mission: to prove that pitbulls and American Bullies, when raised with love and respect, aren’t dangerous - they’re exceptional.

For anyone considering a Bully breed, Justin and Edwina’s advice is simple. “Do your homework,” Justin says. “They’re amazing, but you need to commit to training and responsibility.” Edwina agrees. “They’re strong-willed, so obedience is vital. But the bond you get back is unlike anything else. They’ll steal your heart.”

In a world where stereotypes still overshadow these breeds, the Pillays and their dogs are a living, wagging reminder of what’s possible with patience, discipline, and love.

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## INGREDIENTS

### Rim

Greek yogurt  
Beetroot powder  
Chia seeds  
(preferably black for effect)

### Ice cube

Pumpkin  
Beetroot powder

### Puptail

80ml pumpkin juice

(300g of pumpkin is required for this recipe)

## METHOD

- Cook the pumpkin. Once cooled, blitz it to a purée.
- Lightly dust the silicon mould with beetroot powder. Try to avoid coating the edges.
- Carefully place some of the purée into the mould and place into the freezer for several hours.
- Strain the remaining pumpkin through a cloth and place it into the fridge prior to assembly.
- Put some beetroot powder and Greek yogurt onto a plate that will fit the rim of your glass.
- Mix a little more Greek yogurt and beetroot powder, until you have a nice consistency and vibrant red colour.
- Put some chia seeds onto a second plate.
- Dip the rim of your glass into the beetroot, Greek yogurt mix and then into the chia seeds.
- Carefully place the pumpkin ice cube into the centre of the glass.
- Pour your pumpkin juice around the ice cube and serve!



## BLOOD THIRSTY HOUND

## INGREDIENTS

### Rim:

Greek yogurt  
Beetroot powder  
Chia seeds (preferably black for effect)

### Icecube:

75g Blueberries

### Puptail:

45ml blackberries  
20ml filtered water

(100g blackberries required for this recipe)

## METHOD

- Blitz the blueberries and strain through a cloth.
- Place the blueberry juice into your skull silicon mould and pop it into the freezer for a few hours.
- Blitz your blackberries and also strain them through a cloth.
- Dilute by adding filtered water.
- Place into the fridge until you are ready to serve.
- Place some beetroot powder and Greek yogurt on a plate that will fit the rim of your glass.
- Mix, adding a little more Greek yogurt and beetroot powder, until you have a nice consistency and vibrant red.
- Put some chia seeds onto a second plate.
- Dip the rim of your glass into the beetroot, Greek yogurt mix and then into the chia seeds.
- Carefully place the skull ice cube into the center of the glass.
- Pour your diluted blackberry juice into the glass and sip!







**Rim**  
Greek yogurt

**Ice cube**  
Greek yogurt

**Puptail**  
45ml blueberry juice  
20ml filtered water

(100g of blueberries required for this recipe)

## METHOD

- Add the Greek yogurt into your ghostly silicon mould.
- Pop this into the freezer for several hours.
- Blitz your blueberries and strain them through a cloth.
- Dilute by adding filtered water.
- Place into the fridge until you are ready to serve.
- Add the Greek yogurt to a plate that fits the rim of your glass.
- If the Greek yogurt is thick, add 1/2 -1 teaspoon of filtered water to loosen it. This allows the yogurt to slide down your glass.
- Dip the rim of your glass into the yogurt.
- Tap the base of the glass onto a chopping board to create the drips.
- Carefully place the ghostly ice cube into the centre of the glass.
- Pour your diluted blueberry juice into the glass and enjoy!



## INGREDIENTS

**Rim:**  
Greek yogurt  
Beetroot powder

**Icecube:**  
75g Blueberries  
Filtered water

**Puptail:**  
1 Cucumber

## METHOD

- Place the blueberries into a sphere mould and add water.
- Pop into the freezer for a few hours.
- Peel and grate the cucumber.
- Strain the cucumber through a cloth.
- Place the juice into the fridge until you are ready to serve.
- Add some Greek yogurt and beetroot powder to a plate that fits the rim of your glass.
- Mix until you have a good blood like colour.
- Add a little filtered water to loosen the consistency, allowing it to look like blood pouring down the glass.
- Dip the rim of your glass into the yogurt mixture.
- Tap the base of the glass onto a chopping board to create the dripping blood effect.
- Add your eyeball ice cubes to the glass.
- Pour some of the cucumber juice over the ice cubes and enjoy!

## BEAGLE JUICE



## NOTES

Halloween and sphere moulds are available on Takealot.

Although the Beagle Juice Puptail contains ice cubes, Jock did not eat these! They were purely for decoration. It is not recommended that dogs ever eat ice, as it can damage their teeth. They can be placed into a water bowl for a Howloween bobbing blueberry game. Add some beetroot for a blood effect!

The other recipes contain ice cubes made from fruit or yogurt. This means they are softer and safer for dogs to eat.

Water is added to some recipes to reduce the natural sweetness of the fruits.

Moderation is key. These cocktails contain dog friendly ingredients however, they should only be served as an occasional treat. Half quantities may be better for smaller dogs.

Plastic glasses are safest.



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# Ask the Nutritionist

**Retha van der Walt,**  
Certified Raw Pet Nutrition Specialist  
& Founder of Pawsome Raw



**Retha is a passionate animal advocate and one of South Africa's leading voices in natural pet nutrition. She holds diplomas in Pet Food Nutrition, Raw Dog Food Nutrition, and is certified as an Advanced Canine Nutrition Specialist, where she gained in-depth understanding of how food impacts your dog's body on a cellular level, from digestion to disease prevention.**

**Currently, she is furthering her expertise with a Level 3 IPET Diploma in Canine Nutrition and a CIVT Certification in Small Animal Natural Nutrition.**

**With a deep-rooted belief that food can be medicine, Retha works daily with pet parents and veterinary professionals to build healthier, happier pets through species-appropriate nutrition. She is the founder and nutritional force behind Pawsome Raw, a company committed to providing complete and balanced raw meals formulated for lifelong vitality.**



# Question

**I'd love some advice on how to engage with my vet about feeding raw, especially as a layperson. So many vets seem opposed to raw diets and bring up the "dangers" of raw feeding, often right after complimenting how healthy my dog looks! It's really frustrating.**

## Answer

Thank you for such a thoughtful question. It's one I hear often, and I completely understand your frustration.

Veterinary professionals are trained with a strong emphasis on disease management, usually guided by conventional protocols and commercial pet food education. Because of this, raw feeding can feel like it challenges their training, even when a thriving, healthy dog is standing right in front of them.

Here are a few ways to approach the conversation with your vet:

- Stay respectful and curious. Acknowledge their clinical expertise while sharing your experience as a committed pet parent.
- Use your pet as the "case study." Improvements in coat, energy, digestion, or allergies speak louder than theory.
- Invite collaboration. Instead of seeking approval, try: "I've seen great results with this diet and would love to work together to keep things balanced and safe. Would you be open to monitoring this with me?"

Many concerns around raw feeding are based on outdated data or generalised risks. When done correctly, with proper hygiene, balance, and sourcing, raw feeding can be safe and beneficial. At Pawsome Raw, we prioritise these factors, from ingredient quality to independent nutritional analysis, while supporting pet owners in making educated decisions for their dogs.

If you ever need science-based material to share with your vet, I'd be happy to help. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing - a happy, healthy pet.

# Question

**My dog is overweight, and I'd like to know what food is best for helping him lose weight and how much he should eat per day.**

**He's a medium mixed breed with some power breed in him, 4.5 years old, generally healthy with no chronic medications. He's not very active (more of a couch potato), and I can only take him for walks on weekends. At the moment, I feed him Canine Cuisine Joint Health or Canine Cuisine Weight Management, depending on what's available in the store.**

## Answer

Recognising that your dog's weight needs attention is already a wonderful first step towards improving his long-term health.

Many "weight management" or "joint health" kibble formulas sound promising, but the reality is that they're often high in carbohydrates, low in moisture, and less biologically suited to a carnivore's needs. Even the "light" versions can make it difficult for less active or power-breed dogs to lose weight, as excess starch converts to sugar, slows metabolism, and increases hunger cravings.

A raw diet is a more effective option for safe, steady weight loss. Here's why:

- Lean, bioavailable protein supports fat burning while maintaining muscle.
- Moisture-rich meals aid digestion and reduce strain on kidneys and joints.
- Nutrient-dense ingredients mean smaller meals are more satisfying.
- Improved gut health helps regulate weight and reduce inflammation.



In simple terms: your dog can eat less, feel full, and metabolise food more effectively.

For dogs like yours, our Farmstyle Select range is a great place to start. It's complete, balanced, and made with lean, natural proteins, ideal for "couch potato" dogs transitioning to raw and needing to shed some extra weight.

The best way forward is with a free nutritional consult. Based on his current weight, activity level, and body condition, we'll help you:

- Calculate the exact daily feeding amount.
- Choose the right products for slow, safe weight loss.
- Support you step-by-step through the switch from kibble to raw.

With the right plan, your boy can slim down, gain more energy, and enjoy a longer, healthier life. We'll be here to guide you every step of the way.

# Question

**Is it OK to mix raw food and dry food in the same meal?**

## Answer

This is one of the most common questions I hear from pet parents. The good news is, yes, it can be done. But there are a few important points to keep in mind.

Raw food is moisture-rich and digests more quickly, while kibble is dry, starch-heavy, and breaks down at a slower pace. When the two are combined in the same meal, some dogs may experience tummy upsets such as gas, soft stools, or discomfort. That's why many owners choose to separate them, offering raw in the morning and kibble in the evening, or vice versa - to give the digestive system time to handle each food type on its own.

That said, while I always advocate for a complete raw diet, even adding some raw is better than none at all. Fresh food

naturally boosts hydration, enhances nutrient absorption, and often brings noticeable improvements in coat condition, digestion, and overall vitality. Many dogs cope well with mixed meals, while others thrive best when raw and kibble are served separately.

**Hybrid feeding tip:** If you choose to keep kibble as part of your dog's diet, I strongly recommend adding bone broth to all kibble meals. This simple step restores much-needed moisture, supports digestion, and provides valuable nutrients for gut and joint health.

**When not to mix:** There are times when hybrid feeding isn't the best choice:

- *Puppies still growing:* their nutritional needs are precise, and mixing makes it harder to guarantee proper balance.
- *Dogs with sensitive digestion:* if your pet struggles with diarrhoea, IBS, or a sensitive stomach, the different digestion rates of raw and kibble can worsen symptoms.
- *Pets on medical diets:* for conditions like pancreatitis, kidney, or liver disease, strict consistency is key. Mixing complicates monitoring and may delay progress.
- *Allergy or elimination trials:* mixing can mask reactions and make it harder to pinpoint triggers.
- *Very fussy eaters:* sometimes they pick out the raw or leave the kibble.

The bottom line: Mixing isn't "wrong". It depends on your dog's individual tolerance and needs. For many pets, it can be a helpful stepping stone, but for others, a consistent single feeding style is the healthier choice. If you're unsure, seek guidance from a nutritionist or vet familiar with raw feeding to find the safest path forward.





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*Photo Credit: Jenna Harris*

**A fast-paced, thrilling sport  
showcasing the incredible bond  
between dogs and their handlers.**

# Dog Agility

*written by Jenny Mitchell*

Dog agility is a fast-paced, thrilling sport that showcases the incredible bond between dogs and their handlers. In this competitive activity, dogs navigate a timed obstacle course, off-leash, all directed by their handler's voice and body cues. What makes dog agility so captivating is the combination of speed, precision, and teamwork, as each run is a test of both the dog's athletic ability and the handler's communication skills. Whether you're a seasoned competitor or a curious spectator, dog agility offers a unique glimpse into the world of canine performance and partnership.



An agility course consists of a set of standard obstacles laid out by a Judge in a design of their own creation, in an area of a specified size. Agility courses are made up of a variety of obstacles, including jumps, long jump, tunnels, tyres, and weave poles. They also feature contact equipment such as the A-frame, seesaw, and dog walk, where dogs must touch the designated contact zones, typically marked in a contrasting colour, to complete the obstacle correctly.

The surface in South Africa is mainly outdoors on grass, but it can also be held on sand, indoor horse arenas, or special matting. The obstacles are marked with numbers indicating the order in which they must be completed.

Courses are complicated enough that a dog could not complete them correctly without human direction. In competition, the handler must assess the course, decide on handling strategies, and direct the dog through it, with precision and speed being equally important. Many strategies exist to compensate for the inherent difference in human and dog speeds and the strengths and weaknesses of the various dogs and handlers. A handler is not allowed to touch their dog.

As each course is different, handlers are allowed a short walk-through (typically 10 minutes) before the competition starts. During this time, all handlers competing in a particular class can



walk around the course, without their dogs, determining how they can best position themselves and guide their dogs to get the most accurate and rapid path around the numbered obstacles. The handler tends to run a path much different from the dog's path, so the handler does spend quite a bit of time planning for what they hope is a quick run.

The walk-through is critical for success, because the course's path takes various turns, even U-turns or 270° turns, can cross back on itself, can use the same obstacle more than once, can have two obstacles so close to each other that the dog and handler must be able to clearly discriminate which to take, and can be arranged so that the handler must work with obstacles between themselves and the dog, called layering, or at a great distance from the dog.

**Dogs compete in one of four height categories, which are determined by their size to ensure a fair and safe competition. This system allows dogs of all breeds to participate on an even playing field.**



Photo Credit: Annaret Meintjes

Each dog and handler team gets one opportunity together to attempt to complete the course successfully. The dog begins behind a starting line and, when instructed by their handler, proceeds around the course. The handler typically runs near the dog, directing the dog with spoken commands and with body language (the position of arms, shoulders, and feet). But some handlers have the impressive skills to direct their dogs from a distance.

Because speed counts as much as accuracy, especially at higher levels of competition, this all takes place at a full-out run on the dog's part and, in places, on the handler's part as well.

Scoring of runs is based on how many *faults* are incurred. Penalties can include not only course *faults*, such as knocking down a bar in a jump, but also time faults, which are the number of seconds

over the calculated standard course time, which in turn is determined based on the competition level, the complexity of the course, and the Judge.

Like any sport, agility can be trained and competed at different levels. It can be a nice shared hobby for you and your dog in your free time, or you can compete more seriously at top-level international competitions, still not forgetting to have fun!

Dog agility is more than just a sport; it's a celebration of trust, teamwork, and the incredible capabilities of our canine companions. Whether you're looking to compete, stay active with your dog, or simply enjoy watching the action, agility offers something for everyone. As more people discover the joy and connection it brings, the sport continues to grow in popularity.



Photo Credit: Shannen Jacoby

**Curious? Come and watch some of South Africa's top handlers and their dogs compete at the KUSA Classic weekend.**

**The venue is Theo Marais Sports ground, Milnerton, from 31<sup>st</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025. Whilst watching, remember: behind every jump and tunnel is a story of dedication, training, and the unbreakable bond between a dog and their handler.**





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## K9 Search and Rescue Dogs in South Africa

In the vast and varied landscapes of South Africa, from dense bushveld to rugged mountains and urban disaster zones, a dedicated group of volunteers and their canine partners stand ready to save lives. The K9 Search and Rescue Association of South Africa (K9SARA), a non-profit volunteer organization, has been at the forefront of these efforts since its founding in December 1998.

Established by members of the Mountain Club's Wilderness Search and Rescue team who recognized the invaluable role dogs could play in locating missing persons, K9SARA has grown into a national force with units in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The organization adheres to rigorous international standards, including those from the American Rescue Dog Association (ARDA) and the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Their teams are evaluated every two years to ensure peak operational readiness, and they collaborate with entities like Metro EMS, the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC), and Wilderness Search and Rescue (WSAR).

K9SARA's mission is clear: to train and deploy dog-handler teams for 24/7 response to missing persons cases, natural disasters, and other emergencies, both nationally and potentially internationally through partnerships like Rescue SA. These furry heroes aren't just pets; they're highly skilled professionals whose keen senses can cover ground faster and more efficiently than human searchers alone. A single dog-handler team, often supported by a "flanker" (a secondary searcher), can accomplish the work of up to 10 on-foot rescuers in the same timeframe, dramatically reducing search times and increasing the chances of survival.

---

## UNDERSTANDING THE TYPES OF SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS

Search and rescue (SAR) dogs are categorized by their specialized skills, tailored to different environments and scenarios. In South Africa, K9SARA focuses primarily on live-find operations, but their training encompasses a range of disciplines to handle the country's diverse challenges:

- **Air Scent Dogs:** These dogs detect human scent carried on the wind, making them ideal for large wilderness areas, mountainous terrain, or dense bush. They don't follow a specific trail but alert to any human presence in the vicinity.
- **Trailing/Tracking Dogs:** Using ground scents from footprints or disturbed vegetation, these dogs follow the exact path of a missing person. They're often used in urban or recent disappearance cases.

- **Disaster/Urban Search Dogs:** Trained for rubble piles and collapsed structures, they locate trapped survivors after earthquakes, building collapses, or other disasters.
- **Recovery or Cadaver Dogs:** We do have qualified recovery dogs for detecting deceased people.

K9SARA starts with wilderness training before advancing to disaster and water qualifications. All dogs are motivated by their innate drive, with training emphasizing positive reinforcement through play rather than force. After all, you can't make a dog want to search; it has to be fun!

[www.k9sara.co.za](http://www.k9sara.co.za)

## THE SELECTION PROCESS: FINDING THE PERFECT CANINE PARTNER

Not every dog is cut out for SAR work. K9SARA's selection process is rigorous, prioritizing temperament, drive, and physical suitability to ensure success in high-stakes environments. Prospective handlers often start without a dog, allowing the organization to match them with a suitable pup. If you already have a dog, it must meet these criteria when you first contact K9SARA:

- **Age:** No older than one year to allow ample time for training.
- **Size and Fitness:** Medium-sized, agile, and in excellent physical condition to navigate rough terrain.
- **Temperament:** High energy, confident problem-solvers with an unwavering "will to work." They must be non-aggressive toward humans or other dogs, as teamwork is essential. A "toy-obsessed" personality is key, as training revolves around play rewards (stronger than food motivation for most SAR dogs).
- **Background:** No prior training in protection, attack, or "manwork" (bite training), which could interfere with search focus.
- **Bond and Drive:** A strong bond with the handler is crucial, along with intelligence and intensity from working-line pedigrees.

Common breeds include German Shepherds, Labrador Retrievers, Border Collies, Golden Retrievers, and English Springer Spaniels. Purebreds are preferred for predictable traits, though mixed breeds can excel if they meet the standards. Handlers, aged 18-55, must be physically fit, available around the clock, and passionate about the outdoors. The first six months of training focuses on handlers alone to gauge commitment before integrating dogs.

## TRAINING: FROM PUPPY TO LIFESAVER

Training a K9SARA team is a commitment - typically two years for certification, though dogs can learn basics in just six weeks. The real challenge? Handlers often take up to six years to master their role, with 90% of global evaluation failures attributed to human error rather than the dog.

Sessions occur weekly on Sunday mornings at varied sites to simulate real conditions. Dogs learn through play-based positive reinforcement, building on their natural scenting abilities (dogs have over 100 million nasal receptors compared to humans' 6 million). Key elements include:

- **Scent Work:** Understanding how scents behave in wind, weather, and terrain.
- **Search Patterns:** Flanking, grid searches, and alerting behaviors (barking or returning to the handler).
- **Handler Skills:** Map/compass reading, radio procedures, victim psychology, and handling deceased finds.
- **Advanced Drills:** Obedience, agility (handler's responsibility), helicopter acclimation (recent chopper training prepares dogs for aerial deployments), and multi-agency exercises.
- **Simulations:** Volunteers act as "hiders" to vary scents, preventing dogs from fixating on familiar ones. Annual camps test teams in realistic scenarios.

Once certified, teams remain on call, balancing SAR duties with everyday life. Many handlers have full-time jobs, yet respond at a moment's notice.

## Meet two of the Stars: Scout & Harriet



Scout, a 2-year-old English Springer Spaniel, embodies joy and determination. She loves frolicking in long grass and blowing bubbles underwater, but her true passion is air scenting for missing people in wilderness and disaster settings. Training with K9SARA for nearly 20 months, Scout is on track to qualify as an air scent dog. Her handlers, Cath and Mike, chose her for her bubbly personality, love of work, and confident problem-solving.

Scout

Harriet, a compact 2-year-old German Shepherd nicknamed "The Pocket Rocket," is a force of nature. From a working-line pedigree known for focus, intelligence, and intensity, she hums with anticipation the moment her harness clicks on. Whether navigating urban rubble or dense wilderness, Harriet launches into action with fluid grace, her soul seemingly tethered to the scent. She's a joy-bringer at home, teaching her handler to trust through their unbreakable bond. Fierce, fast, and full of love, Harriet proves that size doesn't limit impact.



Harriet





# What is?

## Exercise-Induced Collapse in Canines



*As dog owners, I think we can all relate to sharing a favourite pastime: taking an afternoon stroll with our dogs, and I believe our furry friends would agree! The unfortunate reality for some dogs, however, is that this seemingly harmless activity can suddenly take an alarming turn. Their back legs may suddenly weaken, they stumble, and within moments, they collapse. While such episodes can be frightening, understanding your dog's genetic background can help you make informed decisions about their health and well-being.*

## What is Exercise-Induced Collapse?

The condition causing this issue is known as Exercise-induced collapse (EIC) - a genetic neuromuscular disorder which is described as an intolerance of strenuous activity. EIC is characterised by a wobbly gait and a lack of coordination, muscle weakness, and a loss of control in the hind legs. It usually goes unnoticed until a dog pushes themselves past their limit. For some dogs, the collapsing episode is brief, and they recover within a few minutes, but for others, EIC can be life-threatening.

EIC is an autosomal recessive disorder, which means that two copies of the mutation are required for a dog to be affected. The disorder is caused by a mutation at the c.767 region in the *dynamin 1* gene, which plays an important role in the transmission of nerve signals. In a healthy dog, nerve cells will continuously send signals to muscles, which results in coordinated movement. However, in dogs with EIC, this process is interrupted during extreme activity and leads to loss of motor control. Dogs with one copy of the normal gene and one copy of the mutation (carriers) do not show any signs of the disorder.

## What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of EIC can first appear in puppies as young as five months of age. Dogs affected by EIC may seem completely normal when resting and during mild to moderate activity. This will change, however, as after 5 to 20 minutes of strenuous exercise, their hind legs may get weaker, which in turn will cause them to drag their feet, or even collapse entirely. Other symptoms may include panting before collapsing; dizziness (which may present as disorientation or confusion); seizures (during or after the collapse); muscle tremors, and a loss of coordination (stumbling or falling over).

Breeds that are more susceptible to the disorder include the sporting breeds, especially Labrador Retrievers, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, Curly-Coated Retrievers, German Wirehaired Pointers, Spaniels and Pembroke Welsh Corgis.

## What are the treatment options?

While there is currently no cure, understanding the condition and managing your dog's activity can go a long way in preventing dangerous episodes.



Exercise-induced collapse in Dogs is a manageable condition, and with the right approach, including proper exercise management, genetic testing, nutritional support, and physical therapy, affected dogs can maintain proper muscle function and overall health. By staying informed and proactive, pet owners can help their furry companions live healthy, active lives despite having EIC. Remember to consult with a veterinarian for personalized guidance and support in managing this condition in your dog.

### Where can I get genetic health tests done?

At ZooOmics we provide both health and colour testing as well as DNA profiles for both canine and feline. We utilise innovative technology for our mutation testing and provide you with certificates for all testing done, which can be submitted to registrars and breed societies.

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Alternatively, visit our website at [www.zooomics.co.za](http://www.zooomics.co.za) to download our sample submission form.







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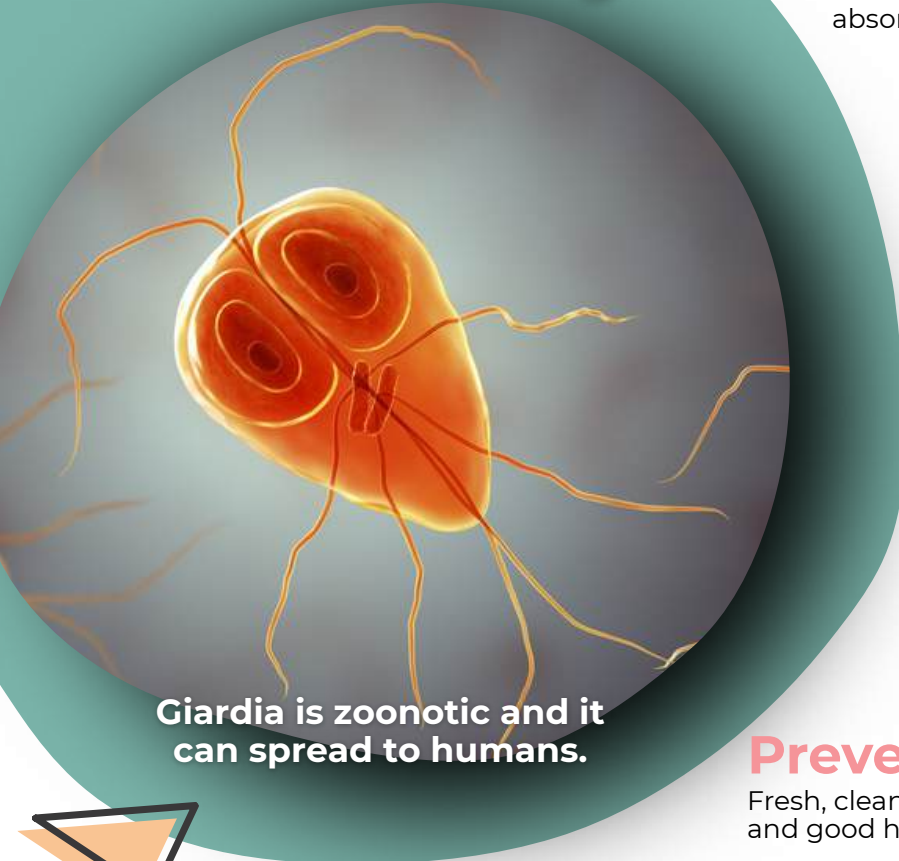
BY DR FALON OLDFSEN

# CREEPY CRAWLERS

## Giardia, Coccidia, Hookworms & Roundworms The Hidden Parasites Affecting Your Pets

We all know about fleas and ticks, but did you know some of the most dangerous parasites can live inside your pet? They can't be seen with the naked eye, yet they cause serious illness if left untreated. At Value Vets, we often diagnose and treat four important internal parasites in pets: Giardia, Coccidia, Hookworms and Roundworms. Here's what every pet parent should know.

### Giardia The Water Bug



**Giardia is zoonotic and it can spread to humans.**

### What is it?

A microscopic intestinal parasite that attaches to the lining of the small intestine, interfering with digestion and nutrient absorption.

### How pets get it

Drinking and/or coming into contact with contaminated water (especially in parks or on hikes), or contact with infected poop.

### Signs to watch for:

- ✓ Smelly, greasy diarrhea (often on and off), sometimes green in colour or streaked with blood.
- ✓ Gradual weight loss despite eating normally
- ✓ Dehydration and lethargy

### Diagnosis

Faecal analysis with a Giardia SNAP test, then retested 2–4 weeks after completing treatment to ensure it's cleared.

### Prevention

Fresh, clean water only, daily bowl washing, and good hygiene after handling pets.

# Coccidia Trouble in the Tummy

Highly contagious in multi-pet homes, kennels and catteries.

## What is it?

A single-celled protozoan parasite that multiplies inside the intestines, damaging the gut lining and leading to digestive upsets.

## How pets get it

Ingesting contaminated soil, faeces (often bird poop), or eating an infected rodent.

## Signs to watch for:

- ✓ Watery or bloody diarrhea.
- ✓ Abdominal discomfort.
- ✓ Stunted growth or weight loss in young pets.

## Diagnosis

Microscopic examination of a stool sample.

## Prevention

Clean up poop quickly, prevent Coprophagy (poop eating) and regularly disinfect litter trays and bedding, and stick to deworming schedules.



# Hookworms The Bloodsuckers

## What is it?

Small intestinal worms that attach to the gut lining and feed on blood.

## How pets get it

Ingesting contaminated soil, larvae penetrating the skin (especially through paw pads), or nursing from an infected mother.

## Signs to watch for:

- ✓ Pale gums (anaemia).
- ✓ Weakness, lethargy.
- ✓ Bloody or tarry diarrhea.
- ✓ Poor growth in puppies/kittens.

## Diagnosis

Microscopic examination of a stool sample for hookworm eggs.

## Prevention

Regular deworming, cleaning up faeces, and avoiding areas contaminated with dog or cat stool.

Severe infestations can be fatal in young animals due to blood loss. Hookworms are also zoonotic – they can cause skin lesions in humans (“creeping eruptions”).



# Roundworms The Common Culprit

Roundworms are the most common intestinal parasite in pets worldwide. They are also zoonotic, posing a risk of serious disease in humans (affecting eyes or organs).

## Prevention

Routine deworming, proper hygiene, and prompt stool disposal.

## What is it?

Large intestinal worms (sometimes visible in poop/vomit) that interfere with digestion and nutrient absorption.

## How pets get it

Ingesting worm eggs from soil, grooming contaminated fur, or nursing from an infected mother.

## Signs to watch for:

- ✓ Pot-bellied appearance (especially in puppies/kittens).
- ✓ Vomiting or diarrhea.
- ✓ Dull coat, poor growth.
- ✓ Worms visible in stool or vomit.

## Diagnosis

Microscopic stool examination for roundworm eggs.

## Protect your pet

- ✓ Stick to your vet's recommended deworming schedule with registered deworming products.
- ✓ Clean food and water bowls daily.
- ✓ Pick up poop promptly.
- ✓ Book a vet check for ongoing diarrhea, vomiting, pale gums, or weight loss.

**Internal parasites may be invisible, but their impact on your pet's health is not. By knowing the signs and keeping up with prevention, you can stop Giardia, Coccidia, Hookworms and Roundworms in their tracks. Your vet is your best partner in parasite protection. Don't hesitate to reach out for advice on testing, treatment, and prevention.**

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- ✓ Skin flare-ups - spray / dab rooibos on itchy spots
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- ✓ Shiny coat - rooibos baths

**Make sure the tea is cooled to room temperature before using.**

### Fridge tip

Keep a spray bottle of cooled rooibos in the fridge for quick pet care anytime!

### Rooibos products

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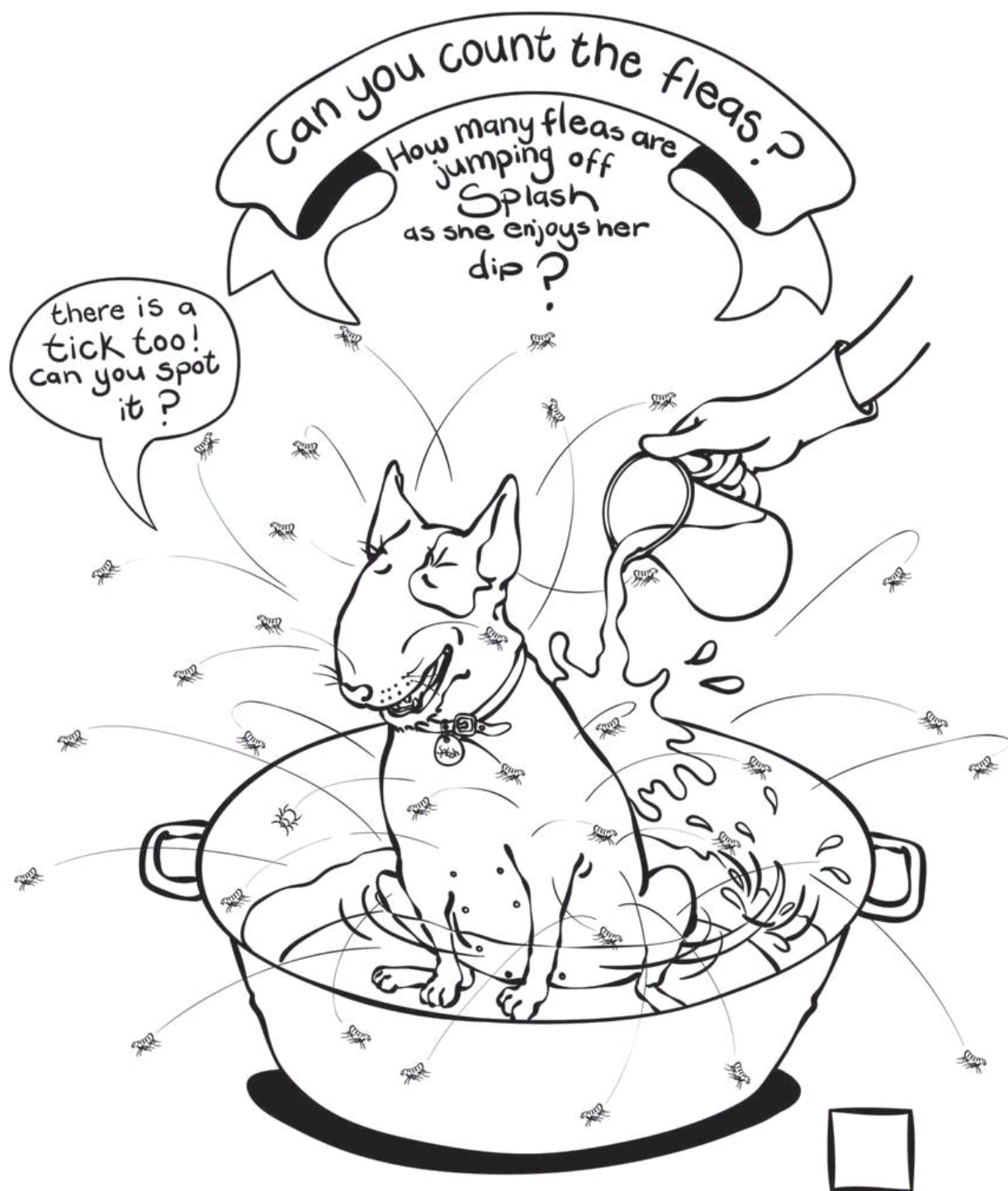
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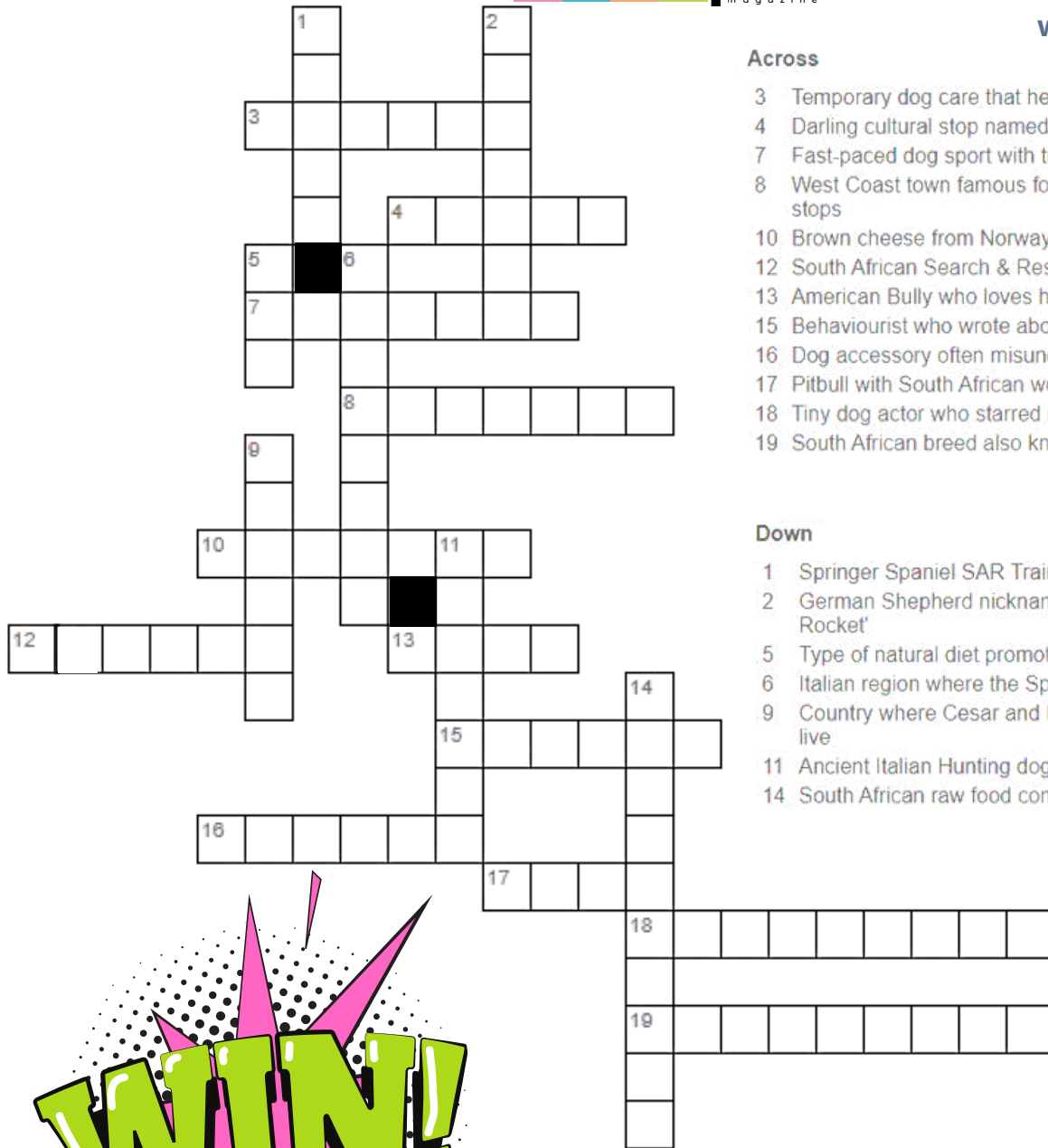


# OCTOBER CROSSWORD

pet lifestyle  
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## Across

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