

WELOVEPETS

OCTOBER 2026

SOUTH AFRICA

Bismark's story

THE LITTLE BLACK DOG WHO
WROTE HIS OWN STORY

DANDELION

NATURE'S SUNNY
SUPPORT FOR YOUR DOG

CANICROSS

*The dog sport
gaining ground
in South Africa*

DON'T WORRY, HE'S FRIENDLY!

The four words that
can cause a lot of stress
for pet owners.

Beyond Obedience

WHY LOOSE-LEAD WALKING MATTERS
FOR MORE THAN GOOD MANNERS

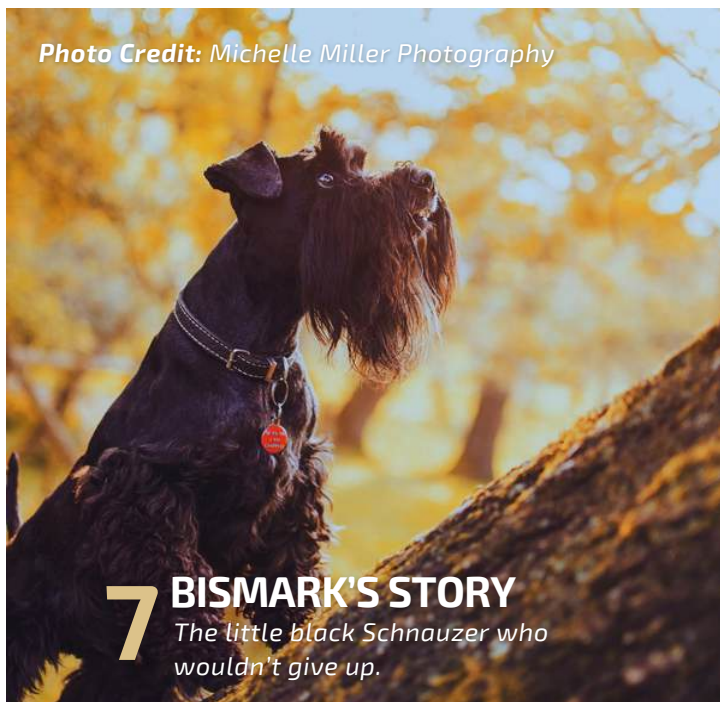
WHAT IF?

THE AFRICAN PET HEALTH
SUMMIT - LOOKING AT
PET HEALTH DIFFERENTLY

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Photo Credit: Michelle Miller Photography



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WOZAPAWS

Finding New Adventures, One Paw at a Time

Anyone with a dog knows the drill. You find a beautiful park, only to discover dogs aren't allowed. You hear about a great walking trail, but have no idea whether it's fenced. Or you arrive somewhere with an anxious or reactive dog and realise, very quickly, that this is absolutely not going to work.

For Zani Koen, these little frustrations sparked an idea: what if there was one place where South African dog owners could find places that genuinely suited them and their dogs? And so, with a little help from her dog Soda, WozaPaws was born.



written by Sasha Wein

WozaPaws is a South African website designed to help dog owners find dog-friendly places to walk, explore and spend time with their four-legged companions. But rather than simply telling you that a place is “pet-friendly”, it gets into the details dog owners actually care about.

Users can search for spots in a particular area and narrow down the options using filters for things like trail length and difficulty, private parks, fully fenced parks, places suitable for reactive dogs and even safety ratings.

BECAUSE, AS EVERY DOG OWNER KNOWS, “DOG-FRIENDLY” CAN MEAN VERY DIFFERENT THINGS DEPENDING ON THE DOG.

A busy open park might be heaven for one dog and a nightmare for another. Some owners need secure fencing. Others want a long trail where an energetic dog can burn off steam. And if you have a reactive dog, knowing what to expect before you arrive can make the difference between a lovely morning out and a very stressful one.

That practical thinking is what makes WozaPaws so useful.

Zani has also deliberately kept its main function open to everyone. You don’t have to create an account just to search for places.

Those who do sign up, however, get a few extra perks. You can mark places as “visited”, for example and then search specifically for somewhere you haven’t tried before. Perfect for those weekends when you and your dog are getting a little bored with the same old walk.

THE COMMUNITY BEHIND THE SITE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE LISTINGS THEMSELVES.

Reviews from real dog owners form the backbone of WozaPaws, with users encouraged to share what they found when they visited a spot. There are even badges to collect for contributing reviews, turning the search for the next dog adventure into a bit of a game.

For Zani, one of the loveliest surprises since launching has been how quickly other dog owners understood what she was trying to create.



“I LOVE GETTING MESSAGES FROM PEOPLE SAYING THEY FOUND A NEW FAVOURITE SPOT ON WOZAPAWS THAT THEY WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN ABOUT OTHERWISE,” SHE SAYS.

The response has been better than she expected and, importantly, has confirmed that there really was a gap waiting to be filled.

For now, the focus is on growing the WozaPaws community and continuing to improve the experience for dog owners. As more people use the platform, review places and share their discoveries, the more useful it becomes for the next person searching for somewhere to take their dog.

And WozaPaws is already spreading its paws a little wider.

Currently focused largely on Johannesburg and Gauteng, WozaPaws is beginning to spread its paws across the country, with plans to grow its listings in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. There is also an upcoming collaboration with a South African platform specialising in verified pet-friendly accommodation.

That could make planning a dog-friendly getaway a whole lot easier: somewhere to stay, somewhere to walk and, most importantly, fewer awkward discoveries involving a “NO DOGS ALLOWED” sign when you arrive.

OF COURSE, THERE IS
ONE MEMBER OF THE
WOZAPAWS TEAM WHO HAS
ARGUABLY BENEFITED
MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE.

SODA!

Being the dog of the woman behind a dog-friendly discovery platform comes with some fairly excellent employment benefits. As Zani checks and verifies new listings, Soda gets to come along for the ride, testing new walks, sniffing new smells and exploring places she might never otherwise have visited.

So, naturally, we had to ask the most important question of all. If Soda were writing the review, how many paws would she give WozaPaws out of five? **Seven.**

“I think Soda would give it seven out of five paws,” Zani laughs, “because she gets to visit lots of new places while I verify new listings for WozaPaws and it also means lots of her friends can find new adventures to go on.”

And really, that may be the best explanation of WozaPaws there is.

It's not about technology for technology's sake. It's about making life with our dogs a little easier and helping us get out of our usual routines and discover somewhere new together.

BECAUSE SOMETIMES ALL
A GOOD ADVENTURE NEEDS
IS A LEAD, A DOG AND
SOMEWHERE YOU HAVEN'T
SNIFFED BEFORE.



South Africa's dog-friendly adventure map

Find the best spots
for you & your dog

WOZAPAWS
.co.za



Parks, trails and dog-friendly businesses in South Africa
— reviewed by real dog owners, verified by local experts.

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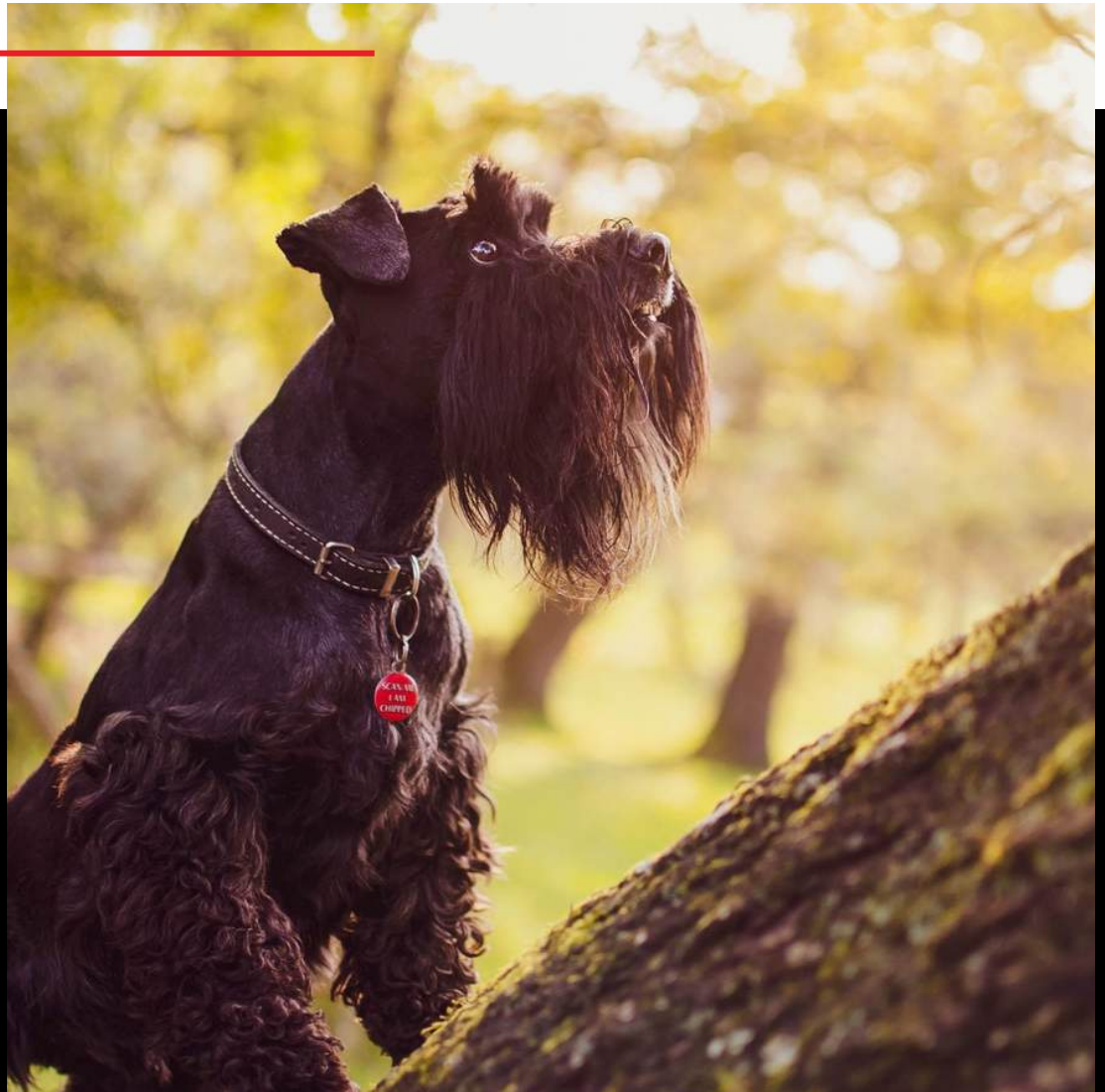
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Every time you buy a Rhodesian Ridgeback Coffee or Hot Chocolate a donation comes straight back to the Ridgies!

Bismark's Story

The Little Black Schnauzer
CEO who Rewrote His Story



How Fresh Food Gave
Bismark a Second
Chance at Life

Photo Credit: Michelle Miller Photography

At first glance, Bismark is a distinguished black Miniature Schnauzer with a proud stance and bright, knowing eyes. But behind that charming face is something far more extraordinary. Bismark is not just a beloved pet, he is the acting CEO of his own business, Bismark's Bistro in Cape Town and the living proof that food can be life-changing.

Bismark's journey has not been an easy one.

Diagnosed with pulmonic stenosis, chronic pancreatitis and showing symptoms of Cushing's syndrome, his early years were filled with uncertainty and near-death situations. For many dog owners, such a diagnosis would feel overwhelming. A path defined by medication, caution and fear of the unknown.

But Bismark had something powerful on his side: a deeply intuitive and devoted mom, Adele Mans.

Instead of accepting decline as inevitable, Adele chose to listen. Truly listen to what Bismark was showing her. She paid attention to every subtle shift, every symptom, every small signal that something wasn't right. And in that attentiveness, she discovered something that would change his life forever: the healing power of fresh, natural food.

A Turning Point: Food as Medicine

Ten years ago, Bismark's life began to transform through carefully prepared, freshly cooked meals made with real ingredients and supported by gentle, natural herbs.

Where processed, preserved foods once placed strain on his fragile system, fresh food began to support it.

Slowly but surely:

His digestive health stabilised from bloody messes. His energy returned, as he couldn't walk far without vomiting and sitting down in the park. His low oxygen levels became manageable and he was finally stable. His quality of life improved beyond expectations and he could hunt squirrels again and go for daily walks.

What once felt like a fragile existence became a story of resilience. Today, Bismark is thriving, not just surviving.

Bjorn: A Brother, A Nurse, A Best Friend

Recognising that healing is not only physical but emotional, Adele brought another special soul into Bismark's life. Bjorn, a white Miniature Schnauzer with a gentle spirit and a nurturing presence. Bjorn was more than a companion. He became Bismark's little "nurse."

Through oxygen sessions, daily walks and quiet moments of rest, Bjorn has been by Bismark's side, offering comfort, companionship and a steady emotional anchor. Their bond is unmistakable. Where one goes, the other follows. Where one rests, the other watches.

This August, the brothers celebrated together: Bismark turned 12. A milestone once uncertain. Bjorn turned 4. His loyal companion through the years.

Together, they are a reminder that healing is not just about treatment, it's about connection.



The Heart Behind the Business

From this journey, Bismark's Bistro was born. Not as a business idea, but as a mission. A mission to help other dogs thrive. A mission to show pet parents that:

- Dogs communicate if we are willing to notice.
- Symptoms are not random, they are messages.
- Food is not just fuel. It is foundational health.

Adele's dedication has been unwavering. Through every stage of Bismark's life, she has remained present, observant and responsive. She didn't just care for him, she partnered with him in his healing.

And Bismark, in turn, became the face and the heart of a movement toward better, more conscious pet nutrition.



Healthy Dog Food in Cape Town:

- Brackenfell
- Bellville
- Durbanville
- Kuils River
- Northern and Southern Suburbs
- Greater Cape Town suburbs
- Somerset, Paarl, Stellenbosch

Facebook | Instagram

A Message to Dog Parents Everywhere

Bismark's story carries a gentle but powerful message: Your dog is always communicating with you. A change in appetite. A shift in energy. A look in their eyes. These are not small things, they are signals.

And when it comes to food, the answer does not have to be complicated. Fresh, wholesome ingredients, prepared with care can make a profound difference.

Dog owners should not feel afraid to move toward healthier, natural feeding. In many cases, it may be the very thing that changes everything. Bismark's Bistro specialises in individually cooked and packaged meals for sick or healthy dogs and it gets delivered at home or hospital around Cape Town. For those who are elsewhere in the country, Bismark has written a very simple online cookbook to help with the scary transition from preserved food to fresh food.

Celebrating Life, Naturally

Today, Bismark stands as a symbol of hope. A once fragile dog now celebrating a full, vibrant life.

A CEO with a story worth telling. A survivor. A teacher.

And above all, a reminder that sometimes, the simplest choices, like choosing fresh food, can lead to the most extraordinary outcomes.

"This Christmas, Bismark is making his famous three-course **Christmas Lunch For Dogs**. The menu is lovingly prepared with fresh, wholesome ingredients and delivered throughout Cape Town and surrounding areas. Every main course is gently cooked, beautifully presented and comes with a starter and dessert item. Not in Cape Town? You can still spread the Christmas spirit by sponsoring a Christmas lunch for a shelter dog through **Animal Anti Cruelty League Cape Town**, giving a deserving pup a special festive meal and a little extra love on Christmas Day.

View the full Christmas Lunch Menu online at www.bismarksbistro.co.za and help make tails wag this Christmas."

Email: contact@bismarkbistro.co.za
WhatsApp Adele: 074 828 3695

PET

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HELP YOUR PETS FEEL SAFE, NATURALLY

Seasonal festivities are a time of joy, excitement and fun. However for pets, it can be a time of fear and even terror - crowds, fireworks, travelling - can all be overwhelming.

t.r.s.(trauma, rescue, shock) 200C

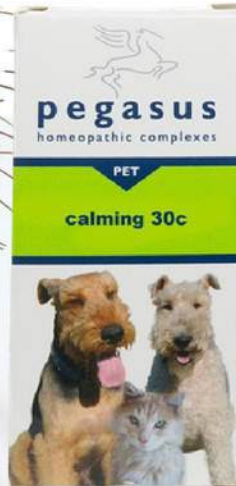
Helps to manage IN THE MOMENT stress, shock, grief and traumatic experiences.

Alleviates anxiety during thunder, lightning, heavy storms, loud noises and fireworks.

calming 30C

A general calmative remedy that helps reduce ANTICIPATORY anxiety such as a vet visit or impending storm.

Helps to cope with stressful situations whether your pet is travelling or for separation anxiety. Also useful for when your pet is 'hyper-active'.



24 HOMEOPATHIC COMPLEXES TO TREAT YOUR PETS WITH EASE
AVAILABLE AT PET AND VET SHOPS COUNTRY-WIDE



BEFORE THEY EVER SEARCH

HOW OBEDIENCE, MOTIVATION AND
CONFIDENCE PREPARE A DOG FOR THE
DAY IT WILL BE ASKED TO FIND SOMEONE.

A handler calls their dog away from something far more interesting than themselves. The dog turns, runs back and is rewarded with a favourite toy. A few minutes later, they might practise a stay while another dog works nearby, walk calmly on lead through a distracting environment, or simply settle and wait.

None of it looks much like search and rescue. There is no missing person, no search area and, at this stage, no searching at all. Yet this is where the foundations of a search dog are being laid.

Before a K9SAR dog can learn to search independently, it needs a reliable way of communicating with its handler, confidence in unfamiliar environments and, perhaps most importantly, a genuine enthusiasm for working. Developing those things takes time, repetition and a great deal of attention to the individual dog.

LEARNING A SHARED LANGUAGE

Sit. Down. Stay. Recall. Walking under control on a lead. To most dog owners, these are familiar parts of basic obedience, but for a working dog they eventually become much more than good manners.

A reliable recall, for example, gives a handler a way to bring a dog back when circumstances change. A stay allows the dog to remain safely in one place while something else is happening. Controlled lead walking makes it possible for dog and handler to move together without wasting energy or creating unnecessary tension before the work has even begun.

What matters is not producing a dog that performs a perfectly polished obedience routine. The purpose is communication. The dog needs to understand what the handler is asking and the handler needs to learn how the dog responds when it understands, when it is distracted and, just as importantly, when it is confused.

That makes training a two-way education. Handlers gradually become better at noticing the small things: whether they have increased the difficulty too quickly, whether a distraction is overwhelming the dog, whether the reward being offered is actually rewarding, or whether the dog simply needs the exercise broken down into smaller steps towards the end goal. Sometimes progress means making an exercise harder. Sometimes good training means recognising that today is not the day to do that.

FINDING WHAT MAKES A DOG WANT TO WORK

Anyone who has lived with more than one dog will know that what one considers irresistible can leave another completely unmoved. The same is true in training.

One dog might do almost anything for food. Another would abandon the finest treat available for the chance to grab a favourite toy. For some, a game or interaction with their handler is particularly valuable, while others eventually find the work itself deeply rewarding.

Finding that individual "currency" is an important part of the process.



Behind it is a straightforward learning principle called operant conditioning. Put simply, when a behaviour produces a consequence the dog values, that behaviour is more likely to happen again. A dog returns when called and discovers that coming back leads to a fantastic game. With repetition, returning to the handler becomes something the dog finds exciting.

The principle may be simple, but applying it well requires the handler to pay attention. A reward only works if the dog actually values it and that can vary not only between dogs but according to the environment and what else is competing for their attention.

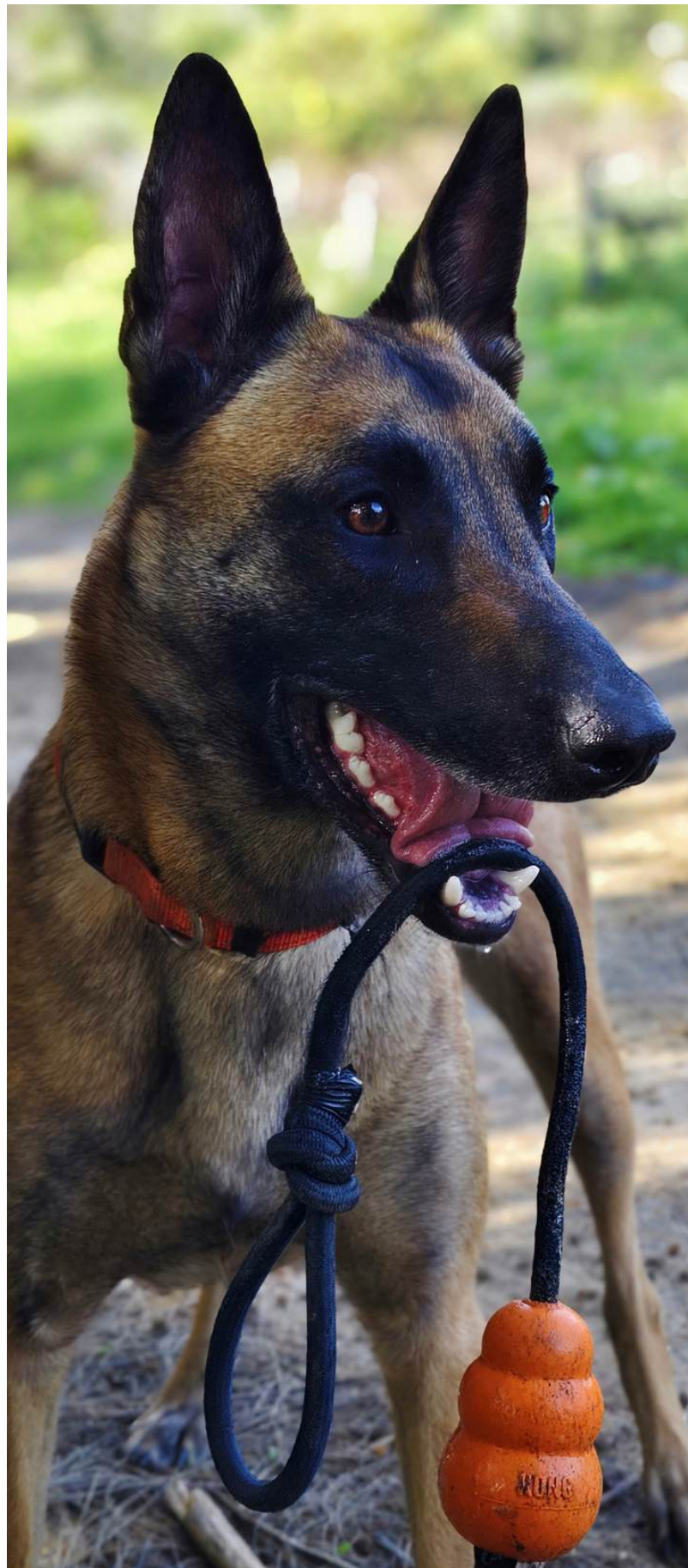
This is one reason training should be enjoyable. The aim is not simply to get through a list of exercises, but to build a dog that approaches learning enthusiastically and wants to engage with the problem in front of it. That enthusiasm to work becomes increasingly important as training progresses.

CONFIDENCE BEYOND THE TRAINING FIELD

A search dog cannot choose where it will eventually be needed, so part of its early education involves learning that unfamiliarity does not necessarily mean worrying.

That might mean encountering unusual surfaces underfoot, unfamiliar noises and smells, different people and animals, or environments that feel very different from home. Exposure is introduced positively and progressively, allowing the dog to investigate and learn without simply overwhelming it with as many new experiences as possible.

Socialisation plays an important role here too, although perhaps not in the way the word is sometimes understood. A well-socialised working dog does not need to greet every dog or person it sees. Often, the more valuable skill is neutrality: noticing what is happening around it without feeling that it has to become involved.



A dog that can remain comfortable and focused while people move nearby, another dog is working or an unfamiliar sound occurs has begun to develop something extremely useful. The world can carry on around it while it concentrates on the task at hand.

Confidence cannot be rushed, however. If a young or inexperienced dog struggles when the difficulty increases, the answer is not necessarily to push harder. A handler might simplify the exercise, reduce the distraction or return to something the dog already understands before trying again. Training is rarely a perfectly straight line from easy to difficult. Dogs have good days, distracted days and days when something that was simple last week suddenly seems surprisingly complicated. Protecting the dog's confidence and enthusiasm matters more than advancing according to an arbitrary timetable.

THE USEFUL CONTRADICTION

All of this creates an interesting challenge. Search dogs need excellent communication with their handlers, but ultimately they must also be prepared to work away from them.

Too little control would make working safely and effectively difficult. Too much dependence on the handler could create a different problem: a dog that constantly looks back for instructions when it should be using its own abilities to solve the search.

The early obedience work therefore has to achieve something more subtle than compliance. It establishes a shared language without removing initiative.

As training develops, the handler will increasingly need to trust the dog in front of them. That relationship begins with very ordinary exercises: returning when called, waiting when asked, navigating something unfamiliar, ignoring a distraction and discovering that working with this person is rewarding.

Then, eventually, something changes. Someone holds the dog. Its handler runs away.

The dog watches as the person it has spent all this time learning to work with disappears and hides. For a moment, all those familiar foundations are still there: the relationship, the motivation, the confidence and the desire to engage.

**Then the dog is released
to go and find them.**

**And their first
search begins.**



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SCAN TO LEARN MORE



WHAT EXACTLY IS CANICROSS?

written by

VICKI FOX, KAYLA CHILDS, MARION RAYNER

Imagine heading out onto a trail with your best friend beside you, except instead of simply walking or running next to your dog, you are connected as a team, moving together towards the same goal.

Canicross is the sport of cross-country or trail running with your dog, where the dog wears a purpose-designed pulling harness and is connected to the runner by a bungee line and a hands-free running belt.



But Canicross is about far more than simply putting a harness on your dog and going for a run. The dog runs out in front, using its natural ability and enthusiasm to pull, while the handler provides direction, communication and encouragement. Together, they become a team, learning commands, finding their rhythm and working with one another on the trail.

The specialised equipment is an important part of the sport. A correctly fitted Canicross harness allows the dog to pull without restricting its natural movement, while the bungee line helps absorb sudden changes in tension. The runner's belt keeps the connection hands-free and allows the runner to move naturally.

And you don't need to be an elite athlete or own a Husky to take part. Canicross South Africa welcomes all fitness levels and breeds, from people looking for a fun new way to exercise with their dog to runners who want to take their sport to a competitive level.

With South Africa's growing trail-running community and its incredible network of outdoor spaces, Canicross is perfectly suited to our country's active lifestyle. Canicross South Africa places animal welfare, safe training and responsible participation at the heart of the sport, because ultimately, the dog comes first.

CANICROSS ARRIVES IN THE WESTERN CAPE

For runners in the Western Cape, Canicross is opening up a whole new way to experience the trails with your dog running as your teammate, rather than simply alongside you.

The arrival of Canicross Winelands and Canicross Southern Suburbs means local runners and their four-legged companions can now become part of a growing Canicross community, with structured training, social runs and opportunities to explore some of the province's beautiful outdoor spaces together.

SO, WHAT CAN RUNNERS ACTUALLY EXPECT?

For newcomers, the first step isn't simply arriving at a run and being expected to know what to do. Canicross South Africa offers an Introduction to Canicross programme covering the foundations of the sport, safety, equipment fitting, commands, welfare, running technique, trail etiquette and Canicross biomechanics. The practical component then allows runners and their dogs to work on gear fitting, posture, leash tension, basic commands and building confidence together.

From there, runners can join their local club and start experiencing what makes Canicross so addictive: the social runs. Weekly Social runs range from 2.5 km for the not so fit to 5 km for the serious runners.



MEET THE CLUBS: CANICROSS WINELANDS

For Vicki Fox, running has always been about more than simply putting one foot in front of the other. It has been about adventure, the outdoors and, importantly, sharing those experiences with her dogs.

Vicki started running in 2016, initially taking on road running before discovering trail running. The transition happened almost naturally when she realised that her first trail-running companion, Bella, could join her on the trails.

What began with 10 km and 20 km races has evolved into a much bigger passion. Since 2020, Vicki has moved into the world of ultra running, taking on longer distances and more challenging terrain. Most recently, she completed an incredible 320 km journey along the Wild Coast over seven days. A true test of endurance, determination and a love for the outdoors.

Today, Vicki's trail companion is Cobalt, her Border Collie, who joins her on training runs

when conditions are suitable. Their typical training runs together cover around 15–20 km, giving Cobalt the opportunity to run, explore and work alongside his human teammate. But these days, Vicki and Cobalt's passion is about more than their own kilometres. Their biggest passion is helping others take their first step.

Through Canicross Winelands, Vicki wants to introduce newcomers to the incredible experience of running with their dogs, helping them understand the sport, learn how to use the right equipment, build confidence and, most importantly, discover the joy of becoming a team.

You don't have to be an ultra runner. You don't need to run 20 km. And you certainly don't need to be the fastest person on the trail. Everyone starts somewhere.

For some, that first step might be their first Canicross session. For others, it might be their first kilometre running alongside their dog. The aim is to meet people and dogs where they are, build gradually and celebrate every milestone along the way.

The Winelands provides the perfect playground for that journey, with its mountains, forests, vineyards and incredible network of trails.

CANICROSS: SOUTHERN SUBURBS

For Kayla and Marion, Canicross Southern Suburbs grew out of a friendship, a love for dogs and a shared appreciation for adventure. The two met while studying together in the equine industry and, hailing from Tokai and Noordhoek respectively, have remained best friends ever since.

Marion, now a dog trainer, shares her home with a pack of three dogs and has always loved a good trail adventure. Time spent in the mountains with her dogs is, in her words, some of the best therapy there is. Kayla, the more extroverted half of the duo, also has a pack of three dogs and naturally takes the lead when it comes to the social side and PR of the club, an area where her passion for people really shines.

Interestingly, neither Kayla nor Marion considered themselves runners before their dogs came along. It was seeing the benefits of Canicross on their own high-energy dogs, both mentally and physically, that convinced them to give running a try. What started as a way to help their dogs has grown into a shared passion for the sport and for the community that comes with it.



Together, Kayla and Marion host runs and training sessions throughout Cape Town's Southern Suburbs, with social runs taking place on the beautiful trails of the South Peninsula. Their approach is centred around the health and wellbeing of both dog and human and the partnership between them. Whether you have never set foot on a trail before or you're a seasoned ultra runner, the aim is to help you and your dog find your rhythm as a team.

Between them, Kayla and Marion are always on hand to offer support, whether you need help choosing or using your gear, advice on training, or guidance around nutrition and building fitness.

But more than anything, Southern Suburbs Canicross is about creating a welcoming space where people and dogs can enjoy the outdoors together.

You don't have to be a runner to start. You don't have to be fast and you certainly don't have to tackle big distances. You just need a dog, a willingness to give it a try and a desire to enjoy the trails together.

For Kayla and Marion, Canicross is ultimately about more than running.

It's about healthier, happier dogs, stronger human-dog partnerships, good people, beautiful trails and discovering just how much adventure you can share with your best friend.



CANICROSS EQUIPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Getting the right equipment is an important part of starting Canicross. Unlike ordinary walking or running, Canicross requires a purpose-designed pulling harness, a bungee line and a hands-free running belt.

The good news for South African runners is that specialist equipment is now readily available locally. Canicross South Africa offers a range of Canicross-specific gear, including South African-made options, as well as sizing and fitment advice. Their range includes harnesses, running belts and bungee lines.

For those looking for an international performance brand, Non-stop dogwear equipment is also available in South Africa through Alphapacks, including pulling harnesses, CaniX belts and bungee lines.

But choosing equipment isn't simply about buying a harness. Fit is critical. The harness needs to allow the dog to move naturally while comfortably distributing the pulling force and the belt and bungee system need

to create a secure connection between dog and runner.

For newcomers, getting advice from an experienced Canicross runner or attending an introductory session can make the process much easier. Canicross South Africa's introduction programme includes equipment fitting and practical guidance on using the gear correctly, so that both dog and human can run comfortably and safely as a team.

FROM WESTERN CAPE TRAILS TO THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

What makes the growth of Canicross in South Africa particularly exciting is that this is far more than a recreational activity. Canicross is an internationally recognised sport, with athletes and their canine partners competing at World Championship level.

In June 2026, Canicross South Africa was officially recognised as a full member of the International Canicross Federation (ICF), an important milestone for the sport locally. South Africa now forms part of an international Canicross community that spans countries around the world.

For Western Cape runners, this creates an exciting pathway. What might begin as a Saturday morning social run with your dog can develop into structured training, local events and, for those who want to take it further, competitive Canicross.

The 2026 ICF World Championships will take place in Poland from 5–8 November, bringing athletes and their dogs together from around the world.

But international competition isn't the only measure of success. For clubs like Canicross Winelands and Canicross Southern Suburbs, the real excitement is watching the sport grow from the ground up. Introducing new runners and their dogs, building confidence, developing responsible teams and creating a community around a sport that puts the dog first.

The destination may be different for every team but the journey starts with the same first step: learning to run together.



www.canicross.co.za



Other Clubs in South Africa

The national club network currently includes Canicross Fourways, Canicross West Rand, Canicross Pretoria, Canicross Meyerton and Canicross KZN Upper Highway, alongside the two Western Cape clubs, Canicross Winelands and Canicross Southern Suburbs.



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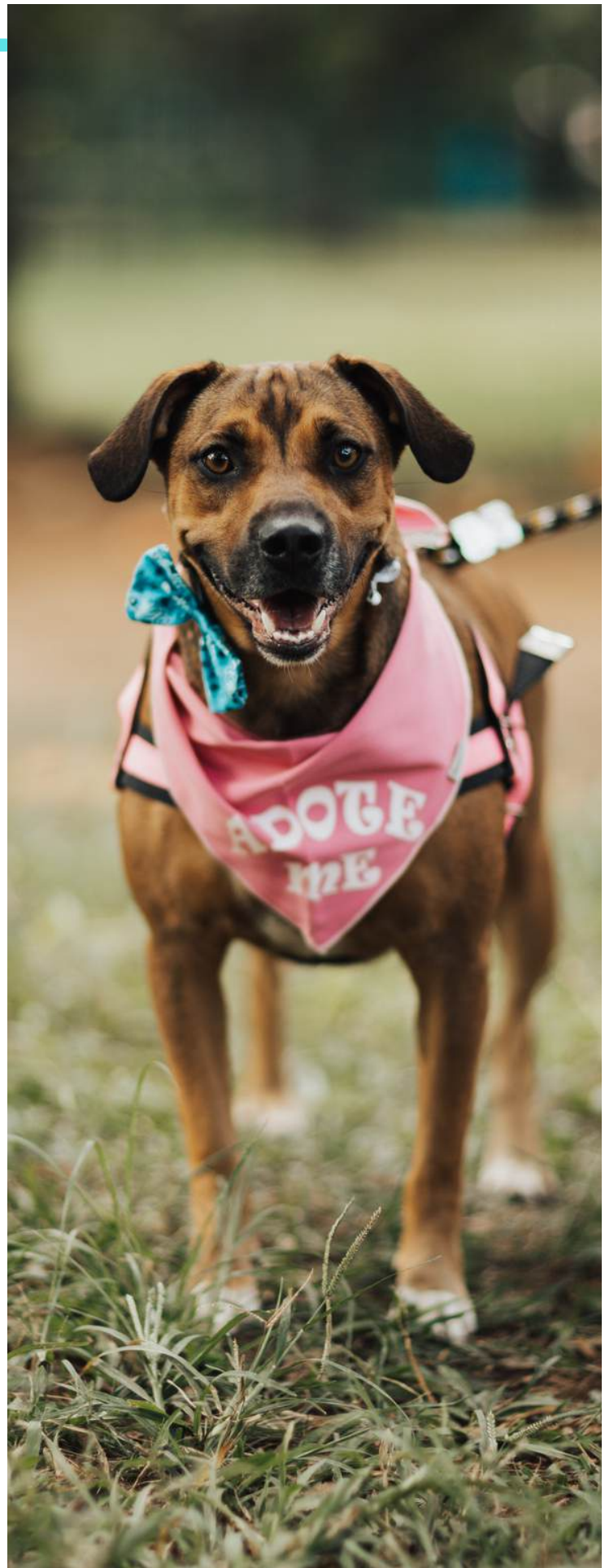
Beyond The 3-3-3 Rule

Why Rescue Dogs Need Time, Not a Timeline

BY SASCHA ODAYAR
COAPE QUALIFIED ANIMAL BEHAVIOURIST



You've probably all seen the 3-3-3 rule posts on social media regarding the settling-in period for a rescue dog. The posts describe how a new rescue dog may be feeling in the early days after they arrive home. This concept is thought to have started years ago within the rescue community, as a way of helping people understand their newly adopted dog and giving them time to settle into their new environment. Like many guidelines when it comes to dogs, this information has been passed from person to person, with little evidence to support these timelines.



There is no actual scientific research that supports the 3-day, 3-week and 3-month rule. Much of the evidence is anecdotal, coming from people who have worked with rescue dogs. While it may not be accurate, it is a helpful idea that shows people just how important it is to give a newly adopted dog time to settle. Three days to decompress, three weeks to learn your routine and three months to feel secure and bond with the family. For many of us who have welcomed a rescue into our homes, these infographics make sense. We welcomed an overwhelmed, unfamiliar dog into our home and, a few months later, they feel like a valued member of the family and we can't imagine life without them. However, for some, this is not their experience and before sharing these expectations, we should look at what research actually tells us is true and how much is anecdotal.

Decompression is stress recovery.

It is a period of time where we allow a dog to calm down after a stressful event, such as leaving the chaotic environment of a shelter. We create a calm environment and minimise stress as much as possible to allow them to recover, so things, such as cortisol levels that were elevated, have a chance to return to normal.

When a dog's cortisol levels are high, it is well researched that this can have an impact on their ability to learn. Allowing a dog to decompress when they arrive in our home reduces the expectation we put on them to fit in straight away. The three

days to decompress rule comes from an idea within the dog training community that it takes around 24–72 hours for a dog to decompress and that, after experiencing a stressful event, we should give them a 72-hour 'cortisol holiday'.

However, stress response and recovery are far more complex than this and, like with everything, the individual dog matters.

Genetics, environment, learned behaviour, health and past experiences can all contribute to how a dog responds to and recovers from a stressful event. There are some confident dogs where a stressful event may cause them to startle, but they recover quickly. Others may not have the tools to process sudden changes and may need a calm environment for much longer than three days.

This is where fixed timelines become difficult. According to the 3–3–3 posts, three weeks is when our newly adopted dog should have learned our routine, begun to trust us and started building confidence. Some infographics say this is when behavioural issues should disappear, while others say this is when behavioural problems may begin to surface. The three-month mark is then supposed to be when a dog feels completely comfortable and has a sense of security with their new family.



Again, this will be different for each dog. A dog that has had little or negative experience with people will likely take longer to feel secure in their new home, while a dog that has had positive experiences with people may bond much faster. A study by Bohland et al. in 2023 looked at changes in behaviour after adoption in shelter dogs and found that behavioural change was dynamic and could potentially continue for months. Some behaviours decreased while others increased, and these changes could also be influenced by new experiences.

In South Africa, many of our shelter dogs come from disadvantaged areas where there may have been neglect, a lack of veterinary care and limited access to basic resources.

Moving from a poverty-stricken area to a spacious home in the suburbs may, on paper, seem like an extremely positive change.

However, for the dog, it is still a completely different environment, with very little that resembles what they previously called home. Adapting to such a major change may take considerably longer than three weeks or even three months.

Published data from South African shelters is limited, but evidence from other parts of the world shows that early returns are a real issue for shelters.



A 2022 study looking at RSPCA Queensland found that, out of 6 212 dog adoptions, 865 dogs were returned to the shelter. Of those returns, 64% happened within the first 14 days, and 119 dogs were returned on the same day they were adopted.

Many returns happen because the dog that arrives home does not match what the adopter expected.

This is where a revised 3-3-3 rule may still have value. Even if the timeframes themselves are not scientifically accurate, the message behind them reminds people that a newly adopted dog may need time to adjust and that what they see in the first few days may not be what that dog is like once they have settled.

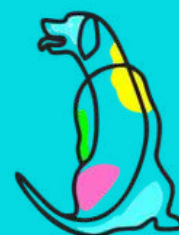
Rather than suggesting that every dog needs three days of decompression, three weeks of learning a routine and three months to bond, pet parents can learn about topics such as canine body language and how to recognise whether their particular dog is feeling relaxed or stressed. Also, what decompression looks like in the home and how best to prepare your home in preparation for the new arrival. This allows them to move at that dog's pace and plan introductions and new experiences accordingly. Allowing a period of decompression, determined by that particular dog, where expectations are low, there is little pressure and the dog has plenty of choice, is important. What is important is recognising that not all dogs fit the same mould.

Veterinary Ophthalmologist & Animal Behaviourist in Centurion



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Een van die belangrikste
vaardighede wat jy jou hond kan leer.

Terugroep

**Vir ons
Afrikaanse Lesers**

Een van die belangrikste vaardighede wat jy jou hond kan leer, is 'n betroubare "recall", oftewel terugroep. Terugroep verwys na Vlekkie se vermoë om vinnig en effektief na 'n familielid te gaan wanneer hy geroep word. 'n Goeie kom-bevel kan letterlik jou hond se lewe in 'n nood situasie red.

Een van die grootste redes waarom 'n terugroepbevel soms faal is omdat dit nie konsekwent geoefen en sinvol beloon word wanneer 'n hondjie nog jonk is nie. Wanneer 'n jong hondjie wel aanvanklik 'n goeie terugroep het, raak mense gemaklik en hou hulle dan dikwels op om dit te oefen. Hulle reken Vlekkie het reeds die vaardigheid bemeester. In realiteit is dit juis soos 'n spier wat altyd moet aanhou oefen om sterk te bly.

Skielik tref adolessensie en dan lyk dit asof alles wat Vlekkie geleer het inelkgeval vergete is! Waarom raak terugroep dikwels moeiliker tydens adolessensie?

Adolessensie is 'n belangrike maar soms moeilike emosionele ontwikkelingsfase waartydens 'n hond se onafhanklikheid, verkenningsdrang en belangstelling in die omgewing dikwels toeneem. Daar is skielik soveel interessante dinge om te

ondersoek; reuke, ander honde, mense, beweging en nuwe omgewings. Dit beteken nie dat jou hond "hardkoppig" geword het nie. Dit beteken dikwels bloot dat die omgewing op daardie oomblik vir hom meer lonend is as om na jou toe te kom en dit is ook normaal.

JUIS HIEROOR MOET DIE TERUGROEP-OPLEIDING GEDURENDE ADOLESSENSIE VOORTGAAN.

HOE MAAK ONS DIE "KOM"-BEVEL PER ONGELUK SWAKKER?

Dit gebeur dikwels só:

1. Jy is nie seker of jou hond gaan kom nie.
2. Jy roep hom in elk geval.
3. Hy kom nie.
4. Jy roep weer... en weer.
5. Jou frustrasie begin opbou.
6. Wanneer hy uiteindelik kom, is jy kwaad en kry hy dalk raas.

Vanuit jou hond se perspektief kan die boodskap dan wees: "Wanneer ek geroep word, gebeur daar nie noodwendig iets goed nie."

Nog 'n algemene fout is om altyd terugroep te gebruik wanneer al die pret verby is. Vlekkie hardloop, speel en snuffel. Jy roep hom. Hy kom. Julle sit hom onmiddellik in die kar en ry huis toe. As dit **die patroon word, leer Vlekkie: "As ek na my mens toe gaan, eindig die lekker dinge."** Dit is dus te verstane as hy later huiwer, stadiger kom of jou eerder ignoreer.

HOE OEFEN JY DAN 'N STERKER TERUGROEP?

1. Gebruik 'n aparte of unieke terugroepsein. Jou hond se naam hoef nie noodwendig sy 'bevel' te wees nie.

Ons gebruik 'n hond se naam voortdurend: om sy aandag te kry, met hom te praat of bloot na hom te verwys en dan verwag ons nie dat Vlekkie na ons toe kom nie. Kies eerder 'n aparte, kort woord wat spesifiek met terugroep geassosieer word. Gebruik dit konsekwent en met 'n positiewe, uitnodigende stemtoon.

2. Maak dit voortdurend die moeite werd om na jou toe te kom. Honde reageer sterk op beweging en sosiale interaksie.

Wanneer jy terugroep oefen, kan jy:

- 'n vrolike stemtoon gebruik
- 'n paar treë agteruit beweeg
- Jou lyftaal uitnodigend maak
- Afbuk
- Jou hond se belangstelling in jou verhoog deur beweging, speel of 'n gepaste belonging te bied

Jy wil hê jou hond moet leer: "Daar gebeur altyd iets lekker by my mense!"

3. Moenie jou hond straf omdat hy uiteindelik gekom het nie. Selfs al het Vlekkie jou voorheen geïgnoreer.

As jy Vlekkie straf wanneer hy wel na jou toe kom, kan jy die gedrag wat jy eintlik wil versterk, verswak. Selfs 'n intimiderende postuur kan vir sensitiewe honde baie oorweldigend wees.



4. Stel Vlekkie op vir sukses.

Moenie van 'n hond verwag om van 'n groep hondevriende af weg te hardloop as hy nog nooit daardie vaardigheid onder sulke omstandighede geoefen het nie. Bou die vaardigheid geleidelik op en oefen eers: in die huis, in die tuin, dan in 'n stil buite-area.

Begin met klein afleidings, dan moeiliker en uiteindelik in meer uitdagende omgewings. Wanneer jou hond sukkel en nie sukses behaal nie moet jy dit makliker maak sodat Vlekkie nie aanhou om die verkeerde gedrag te versterk nie. Mens maak dit makliker deur die afstand te verkort, verminder die afleiding of beweeg na 'n meer bekende omgewing.

5. Gebruik 'n lang leiband as bestuursinstrument.

'n Lang leiband, saam met 'n goedpassende harnas, kan baie nuttig wees wanneer jy terugroep buite oefen. Dit gee jou hond meer vryheid om te beweeg, terwyl jy steeds 'n veiligheidsnet het en kan voorkom dat hy

herhaaldelik leer dat hy die hiersein kan ignoreer. Die doel is om soveel moontlik suksesvolle herhalings te skep.

6. Gebruik 'n beloning wat vir jou hond waardevol is.

Nie elke hond word deur dieselfde dinge gemotiveer nie. Kos kan 'n uitstekende beloning wees, maar die waarde daarvan hang onder andere af van jou hond se voorkeure, of sy maag reeds vol is en wat hy as belonings ag. Vir sommige honde is 'n speelding, sosiale interaksie of selfs toegang tot die omgewing 'n fantastiese beloning, byvoorbeeld:

"Kom!" → Vlekkie kom → beloning
→ "Gaan snuffel!" Jy het dus nie noodwendig die pret beëindig deur hom terug te roep nie. Jy het hom geleer: "Om na my mense toe te kom, kan toegang tot nog lekker dinge beteken."

**DIE BELANGRIKSTE
BEGINSELS SLUIT IN:**

Oefen "recall" buite konteks wanneer daar geen druk is nie, dit maak dinge vir jul albei makliker. Maak dit positief. Beloon jou hond goed en bou die vaardigheid geleidelik op. Voorkom dat jou hond herhaaldelik die geleentheid kry om die hier-bevel te ignoreer. As jou hond nie sukses behaal nie, maak dit makliker! Ons wil hê Vlekkie moet leer dat dit die moeite werd is om na jou toe te kom. 'n Hond wat graag na jou toe wil kom, is baie meer geneig om dit te doen wanneer dit werklik saak maak. Terugroep is 'n vaardigheid wat jy deur herhaling, goeie assosiasies en konsekwente versterking bou en verkieslik moet aanhou bou gedurende jou hond se verskeie lewensstadiums.

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“Don’t Worry, He’s Friendly!”

What to Do When an Off-Leash Dog Approaches Yours

There are few phrases more frustrating to hear when you’re holding onto your dog’s lead and watching an unfamiliar dog charge towards you: “Don’t worry! He’s friendly!” Perhaps he is. But that isn’t really the point. Your dog may not be friendly. Your dog may be frightened. She may be recovering from surgery. He may be elderly, sore or partially blind. She may be a rescue dog learning that the world is safe. He may be in training. She may simply dislike strange dogs rushing into her personal space.

Or perhaps you, the human holding the lead, simply don’t want your dog interacting with another dog. That should be enough. Responsible dog ownership isn’t only about knowing your own dog. It’s also about respecting everybody else’s.

written by Sasha Wein

Why the lead matters

There are dozens of reasons someone might choose to walk a dog on-lead. The dog could be reactive, nervous or easily overwhelmed. It could have a high prey drive. It could be undergoing behavioural rehabilitation. It could be injured or recovering from an operation. It could be a working or sporting dog whose owner is training. A puppy might be learning how to ignore other dogs rather than greeting every animal it sees.

And sometimes there is absolutely nothing “wrong” with the dog at all. Its owner simply doesn’t want it greeting unfamiliar dogs.

A lead therefore doesn’t mean: “My dog would desperately like to meet your dog but unfortunately I am restraining it.” Sometimes it means exactly the opposite. Please give us space.

The problem with “Mine is friendly”

Imagine being strapped into a seat while a stranger runs towards you shouting, hugging and getting into your face. Someone standing twenty metres away calls: “IT’S FINE! HE LOVES PEOPLE!”

You might reasonably think: That’s lovely. I still don’t want him on top of me. Dogs are entitled to space too.

There is another problem.

An off-leash dog has freedom of movement. A leashed dog doesn't. The loose dog can approach, retreat, circle, sniff, run away and change direction. The leashed dog has a limited radius around its handler.

That imbalance can make an already uncomfortable interaction much more difficult. And if the person with the leashed dog tries to move away while the loose dog keeps following, the situation can escalate very quickly.

This is why "friendly" isn't the standard we should be aiming for. Under control is. A truly well-managed off-leash dog shouldn't need every other dog it sees to be friendly, because it shouldn't be running up to them without permission in the first place.

What does the law say?

Dog-control rules differ between South African municipalities, so owners should check the by-laws where they live. But

many municipalities require dogs to be leashed in public spaces unless they are in an area specifically designated for off-leash or free-running dogs.

The principle behind these rules is simple: public spaces are shared spaces. Dog lovers share them with people who are frightened of dogs, children, runners, cyclists, wildlife, elderly people and other dog owners.

And even in a designated off-leash area, "off-leash" shouldn't mean "out of control". If your dog cannot reliably be recalled from another dog, person or distraction, you need to seriously consider whether it should be loose in that environment.

So what do you actually do when a loose dog approaches?

We can talk about responsible ownership until we're blue in the face, but we also live in the real world. At some point, most dog owners are going to encounter an off-leash dog whose owner is fifty metres away enthusiastically shouting a name the dog is completely ignoring.



So have a plan.

1. Try not to panic

This is easier said than done, particularly if your dog has previously been attacked. But immediately screaming, running or wildly pulling your dog away can increase excitement and tension.

Assess what you're looking at. Is the approaching dog loose and wiggly? Stiff and staring? Charging directly towards you? Curving around? Barking? Hackles raised? You don't need to diagnose the dog's intentions. You simply need enough information to decide whether you can calmly create distance or whether you need to act quickly.

2. Create distance early

Don't wait until the strange dog is nose-to-nose with yours. If you spot it early enough, change direction. Cross the road. Move behind a gate, fence, parked vehicle or other physical barrier. Distance is one of the simplest tools you have. And there is absolutely no prize for standing your ground because your dog "should be able to cope". If you can avoid the interaction, avoid it.

3. Put yourself between the dogs

If the dog continues approaching, position your body between the unfamiliar dog and yours. Keep your own dog behind you as much as possible. You are effectively telling your dog: I've got this. You don't have to deal with it.

You can extend an arm towards the approaching dog with your palm facing it and use a firm voice: "NO." "STOP." "GO HOME." You don't need to scream hysterically. Think firm, confident and boring. Some dogs will hesitate simply because a human has clearly blocked their approach.

4. Tell the owner exactly what you need

This isn't the moment for a lengthy discussion about canine behaviour. Keep it simple. "Please call your dog." If you hear the inevitable: "But he's friendly!" You can answer: "Mine needs space. Please call your dog." If they continue: "I don't want them to meet. Please get your dog."

Notice that none of these statements requires you to explain yourself. You don't owe a stranger your dog's medical or behavioural history before they respect your request. "My dog needs space" is enough.

5. Don't automatically tighten the lead as far as possible

Your instinct may be to haul your dog tightly against your legs. Sometimes you will have no choice, particularly when you're trying to move away. But where circumstances allow, avoid creating unnecessary constant tension on the lead. A very tight lead can restrict your dog's movement and add frustration or pressure to an already uncomfortable situation. The goal is control without turning the lead into a tow rope.

6. Use barriers

Your body is one barrier, but use your surroundings too. A bench, tree, bin, car, fence or gate can give you precious space. Even moving around a parked vehicle can interrupt a dog's direct approach long enough for its owner to catch up.

7. Consider carrying a non-contact deterrent

Some walkers carry an umbrella that can be opened to create a visual barrier, while others carry pet-safe deterrent products or make use of a loud noise to interrupt an approaching dog. The goal should be to stop the approach without injuring the animal.

Some people carry electronic self-defence devices because the crackling sound can startle an approaching dog. But you may

not deliberately shock an animal, it's only for the noise to de-escalate an encounter. A barrier or humane, non-contact deterrent is preferable whenever possible.

Whatever you carry, learn how to use it before you need it. An emergency is a terrible time to discover you can't open your umbrella.

8. Treats can sometimes buy you time

If the approaching dog appears non-aggressive and is simply overenthusiastic, throwing a handful of treats away from you can occasionally interrupt its approach while you move your dog in the opposite direction.

There are situations where this isn't appropriate, particularly where food could increase conflict. So it isn't a universal solution. Think of it as one possible tool rather than the solution.

9. Don't pick your dog up automatically

If you have a small dog, your instinct may be to scoop it into your arms. Sometimes that may be necessary for immediate safety. But be careful. An excited dog may jump up after it and you could end up putting yourself in the middle of the encounter. Where possible, prioritise creating distance and putting a barrier between the dogs.

What if your dog is reactive?

This is where loose dogs can be particularly unfair. A reactive dog and its owner may have spent months working carefully on increasing distance, rewarding calm behaviour and teaching the dog that seeing another dog doesn't mean disaster.

One uncontrolled encounter can be an enormous setback. And here's the important part: A reactive dog isn't a bad dog. Reactivity can come from fear, frustration, previous experiences, over-arousal or many other causes. If you see someone deliberately moving away from you with their dog, don't follow them because your dog "just wants to say hello".

They're communicating with you. Listen.

But my dog genuinely IS friendly. Fantastic. Then teach it to leave other dogs alone. One of the most useful skills a sociable dog can learn is that it doesn't get to greet everyone.



Your dog should ideally be able to see another dog, remain with you and move on.

If you're somewhere that legally permits off-leash exercise, practise recall around gradually increasing distractions. Reward heavily for coming away from interesting things. A long line can also be an excellent middle ground while you're building those skills. Your dog gets more freedom to sniff and explore without you gambling on a recall that isn't ready yet.

And if another dog appears? Call yours back. Clip the lead on. Ask the other owner whether their dog wants to greet. If the answer is yes, wonderful. If the answer is no, also wonderful. Carry on with your walk. It really can be that simple.

"But dogs need to socialise!" They do. But socialisation doesn't mean interacting with every dog they encounter. In fact, teaching a dog to calmly exist around other dogs without needing to greet them can be an extremely valuable skill.

Good socialisation is about helping a dog navigate the world confidently and appropriately. Sometimes the socially appropriate behaviour is saying hello. Sometimes it's walking straight past.

If your dog has poor recall, use a long line. There is no shame in using management. Quite the opposite. A five-, ten- or fifteen-metre long line, where appropriate and safely used, can give a dog enormous freedom while its recall is being developed.

A lead doesn't mean you've failed at dog training. It means you're taking responsibility for the dog you have today, rather than the perfectly trained dog you hope to have six months from now.

And recall isn't demonstrated when nothing interesting is happening. Your dog returning from ten metres away while staring at you and waiting for a treat is a good training exercise. Your dog turning away from another dog, squirrel, cyclist or exciting smell when called? That's recall.

Until you have it reliably enough for the environment you're in, manage the risk. And if your dog runs up to someone anyway? Because dogs are dogs. Even very well-trained dogs make mistakes. Don't stand in the distance repeatedly shouting its name while assuring the increasingly stressed stranger that it's friendly.

Go and get your dog.

Apologise.

Clip the lead on.

Give the other person space.

And then think about why your recall failed and what you need to work on before giving your dog that level of freedom again. No drama required.

The golden rule

People have wildly different ideas about dog ownership. Some people allow dogs on beds. Others don't. Some feed raw food. Some feed kibble. Some train competitively. Others just want a dog that doesn't steal the Sunday roast.

We don't have to agree about everything. But there is a fairly simple gold standard for sharing public spaces: Your freedom with your dog shouldn't come at the expense of somebody else's ability to safely enjoy the same space with theirs.

So when you see a dog on a lead, don't assume it wants to meet yours. Call your dog back. Give them room. And if the other owner says, "Please don't let your dog come over," don't be offended. You don't know their story. You don't know their dog's story. And you don't need to.

Sometimes being a good dog owner is less about what your dog can do and more about having enough consideration to recognise what it shouldn't do.

Because "he's friendly" isn't a recall command. And it certainly isn't consent.



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What if

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Three days. One shared purpose. Vets, veterinary professionals, researchers, nutritionists, breeders, pet parents and pet-health businesses came together in Stellenbosch for the African Pet Health Summit and one message kept resurfacing: nothing in our pets' health happens in isolation.

From 18–20 September, the African Pet Health Summit brought an unusually diverse group of people together to talk about animal health.

Friday was dedicated to veterinary professionals, with sessions spanning nutrition, hormones, the microbiome, chronic disease, longevity, mobility and feline digestive health. On Saturday and Sunday, the conversation opened to the broader Summit audience, alongside the All-Natural Pet Health Expo featuring more than 25 South African exhibitors.

But looking back, the biggest takeaway wasn't any single presentation.

It was connectedness.



Nothing happens in isolation

An itchy ear is not necessarily just an itchy ear.

Dr Peter Dobias's Sunday session, *Beyond the Ear Drops: Allergies & Chronic Ear Infections*, explored recurring ear problems as possible signs of something deeper, looking at gut health, diet and immune balance rather than only repeated topical treatment.

That thinking echoed throughout the Summit.

The gut, hormones, nervous system, nutrition, movement, environment and emotional wellbeing do not exist in separate boxes. Even the human at the other end of the lead, our routines, environment and stress, can form part of the bigger picture.

It raises an important challenge: **what does truly holistic healthcare require of us?**

A conventional 15-minute consultation has obvious limitations when the conversation potentially encompasses diet, lifestyle, behaviour, environment, medical history and the whole animal. Perhaps we need to become better at asking not only "How do we stop this symptom?" but also "Why is this happening?"

When we change one thing, what else changes?

One of the thought-provoking Friday sessions came from Dr Brendan Clarke, who explored what he described as "The Surgical Menopause."

His presentation examined the wider hormonal consequences associated with spaying and neutering and discussed hormone-sparing alternatives. The importance of conversations like these is not that every pet parent should suddenly arrive at the same conclusion. It is that we should be willing to ask what else may be affected when we alter one part of a complex biological system.

That requires education rather than simply instruction. Dr Nick Thompson challenged delegates to consider the difference between being trained to do something and being educated to explore, question and think.

And sometimes that means being prepared for uncomfortable conversations.

Not everyone agreed with everything said over the weekend. Some comments around processed foods, for example, prompted disagreement. Yet that, too, has value. Progress does not require

everyone in a room to hold identical views. It requires enough openness to examine evidence, challenge assumptions and continue the conversation.

The golden thread: nutrition

If connectedness was the overarching message of the Summit, nutrition was its golden thread.

Dr Dobias used the analogy of tending a garden: if we want healthy crops, we need to care for the environment in which they grow.

Holly Ganz, PhD, took delegates deep into another ecosystem, the microbiome. Her Friday clinical presentation covered dysbiosis and interventions including faecal microbiota transplantation, while Sunday's pet-parent session explored the gut microbiome and practical ways of supporting it.

Across very different presentations, good nutrition repeatedly emerged as a foundation on which other aspects of health depend. But importantly, this was not a weekend where you needed to pass a purity test to belong.

You could feed raw, cooked or kibble. You could already embrace holistic healthcare



or still be sitting firmly on the fence.

The bigger question was: *how do we work together to give our animals the opportunity for longer lives with better quality of health?*

More tools in the toolbox

That inclusivity matters. The purpose of the African Pet Health Summit was not to replace veterinarians with Google, nor to set pet parents and veterinary professionals against one another.

It was to make credible information more accessible to South Africans, empower pet parents to have deeper and more meaningful conversations with their veterinary teams and give veterinary professionals additional tools to consider for the animals and people they support.

Dr Barbara Royal closed Friday with perhaps one of the weekend's most important challenges:

What if we were wrong?

Are we proactive enough? Are we willing to question what we have always done? Could we make small choices now that improve our animals' health over a lifetime?

Or, as Dr Peter Dobias put it: *"Health is our natural state."*

From conversations to connections

Those conversations continued outside the conference room.

At the adjoining All-Natural Pet Health Expo, more than 25 South African exhibitors showcased natural and holistic pet-health products and services. Summit delegates supported the stands, but something else happened too: people connected.

Exhibitors reported valuable networking, conversations and potential new distribution opportunities. The Expo became more than somewhere to shop. It became another place for ideas and relationships to meet.

And perhaps that is where the real impact of a summit begins.

We walked away from Stellenbosch reminded of why this event mattered in the first place.

Our purpose was to bring knowledge to a South African audience. Not to exclude, dictate or tell everyone what they must believe, but to empower veterinary professionals and pet parents alike to ask deeper questions with confidence.

The vets, veterinary nurses, veterinary physiotherapists, researchers, nutritionists, food formulators, breeders and pet parents who attended in Stellenbosch, and those who joined virtually, were not simply delegates.

They are Change Makers.

Because changing pet health does not begin with everyone agreeing. It begins with being curious enough to ask better questions.





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BEYOND OBEDIENCE

Why we consider loose-leash walking
a vital skill for preventative healthcare

written by Pets in Balance
ANIMAL PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE

When we think about leash training, it's usually framed around convenience or good manners. We want a dog who doesn't drag us down the sidewalk, react to passing distractions or pop our shoulder out of its socket.

From a veterinary physiotherapy perspective, loose-leash walking isn't just a behavioural goal. **It is a foundational healthcare skill!**

A common misconception among dog owners is that changing equipment (moving from a flat collar to a harness or switching to a front-clip setup) instantly fixes the physical strain of pulling. While the right gear can improve safety and redistribute pressure, no piece of equipment eliminates the physical toll of continuous tension.

If a dog leans into a leash consistently day after day, that force travels directly into their muscles, joints and spine. Let's look at what chronic pulling does to your dog's body over time.

The Kinetic Domino Effect: Gear, Posture & Physical Stress

Dogs are naturally built to carry roughly 60% of their body weight on their front limbs and 40% on their hind limbs. In a normal, fluid gait, power is generated in the hindquarters, travels through the spine and is absorbed smoothly by the front legs.

When a dog pulls continuously on a leash, this natural balance breaks down. To fight against leash tension, the dog must throw their center of gravity drastically forward. This forces the front legs to act as heavy traction anchors rather than shock absorbers, while the hind legs disengage; leading to unbalanced muscle development and abnormal biomechanics.



PETS IN BALANCE
ANIMAL PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE

How this compensatory posture damages the body depends directly on where the leash tension is anchored:

FLAT COLLARS

When a dog pulls on a collar, high focal force is concentrated directly onto the soft tissue around the front of the throat and delicate cervical vertebrae. To brace against this pressure, the dog must alter the position of the neck, keep muscles of the neck engaged abnormally and alter their breathing. Over time, this constant trauma increases the risk of tracheal compression, thyroid damage, joint stress and elevated pressure in the eyes.

RESTRICTIVE STEP IN AND "NO-PULL" HARNESSSES

Harnesses with a horizontal strap across the chest create a physical barrier over the shoulder joints. To pull forward, the dog is forced into a short, choppy stride. This restricts normal shoulder blade

rotation, strains surrounding tendons and alters forelimb mechanics across the entire front assembly. Some harnesses in this style may also place a focal pressure point onto the front point of the sternum (the manubrium) or even the trachea, in which case there would be added stress similar to the flat collar.

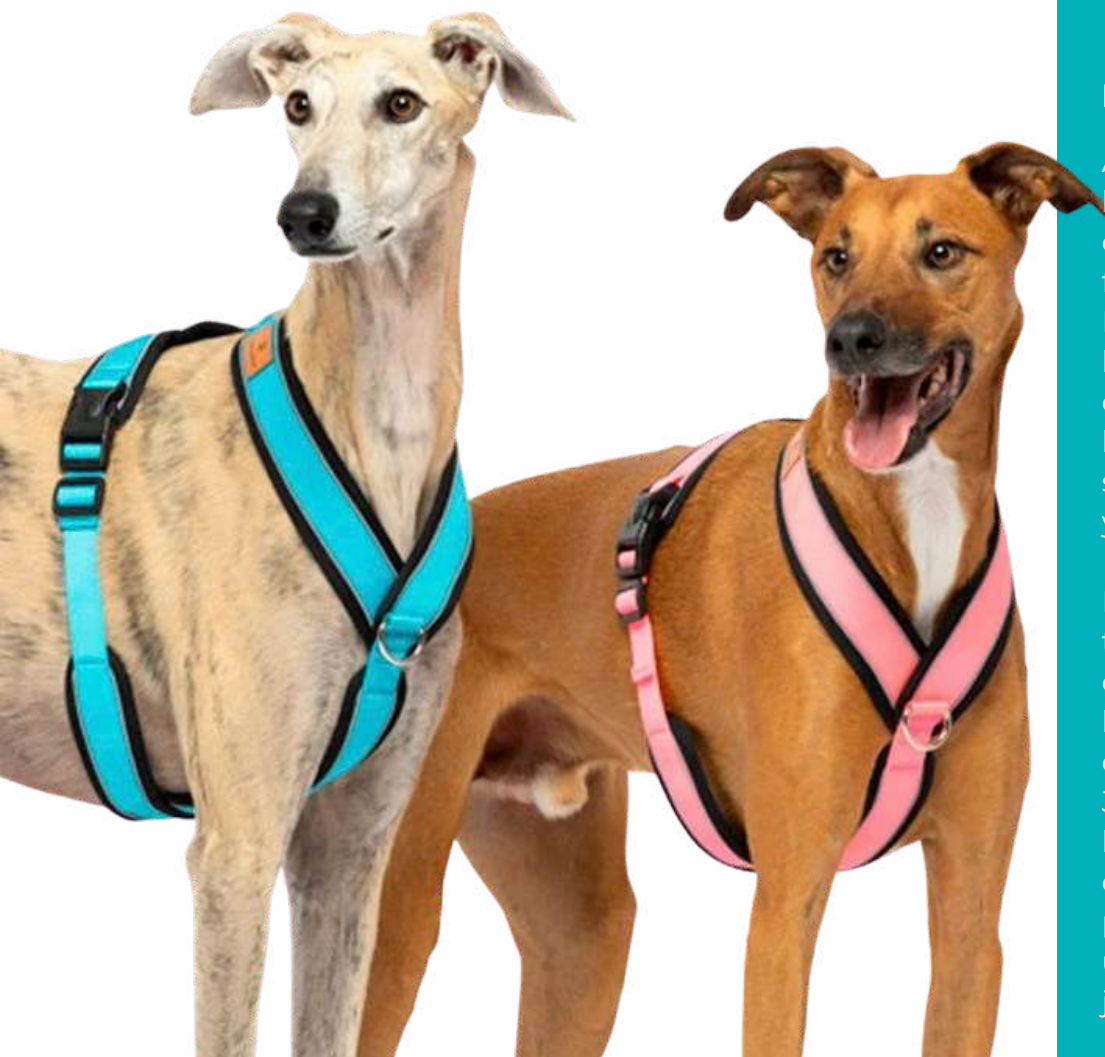
Harnesses with a clip in the front tend to produce an asymmetrical gait as the leash pulls to one side. These harnesses also tend to move or rotate on the dog's body.

Harnesses which tighten around the forelimb or chest when the dog pulls create movement and tension behind the front limb in the 'armpit' region; they restrict shoulder and scapular mobility and often encourage the elbows to be turned out. These harnesses can also cause discomfort through rashes, chaffing or pinching.

ILL-FITTING BACK-CLIP OR Y-SHAPED HARNESSSES

If a harness neck opening sits too low, it smothers normal shoulder extension. If the girth strap sits too close behind the front legs, it continuously rubs sensitive armpit tissue, encouraging the dog to walk with their elbows turned outward. This creates abnormal rotational stress through the shoulders, elbows and wrists.





PHYSIO NOTE:

A well-fitted, Y-shaped harness is the safest option for preserving full joint range of motion. However, it is a tool for body protection; not a cure for pulling. If the leash is tight, kinetic stress is still entering your dog's body.

Regardless of the restraint type, daily posture compensations eventually become your dog's default way of moving. Just like a human hunched over a desk develops chronic back pain, a pulling dog builds uneven muscle tone and joint stress.

Y-SHAPED HARNESSSES

While a well-fitted Y-harness is the **ergonomic gold standard for free joint movement**, hard pulling still carries physical consequences. The continuous backward force presses heavily against the chest bone and pulls the mid-back into rigid extension or flexion depending on the dog. This is especially true when using a 'normal length leash', which would produce a greater angle of force, or an upward direction of force. To brace against this, the deep stabilizing muscles along the spine contract continuously, which could lead to chronic back stiffness and soft-tissue soreness. Depending on the fit of the harness, this type of harness can cause discomfort in the joints of the last 2-3 ribs, or localised joint pain at the junction between the thoracic and lumbar spine.

The Exception to the Rule: What About Pulling Sports?

You might be wondering: "If pulling is so bad for a dog, what about canicross runners, bikejoring teams, or sled dogs?"

It's a fair question!

These working dogs pull with immense force, yet they maintain incredible athletic condition without developing the chronic injuries seen in everyday pet dogs. The difference comes down to harness design, force angle and physical preparation.

www.petsinbalance.co.za
FACEBOOK **INSTAGRAM**

ERGONOMIC SPORT HARNESSSES

Everyday walking harnesses are built for control from above the dog. Specialized pulling harnesses are engineered specifically for draft work:

- **Force Distribution:** Force is carried along longer continuous lines, allowing for dispersed forces rather than focal points. Resistance is routed straight into the dog's powerful hindquarters; their natural engine.
- **Full Shoulder Clearance:** The neck opening rests securely on the chest bone, leaving the shoulders completely free to extend through their full range of motion.
- **Low Pull Angle:** The tow line stays low behind the dog, allowing the spine to stay in a neutral, natural line rather than being pulled upward or twisted sideways and allowing the dog to continue to recruit their entire body into the force rather than localised areas taking all the stress.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING & BALANCED TENSION

Unlike a pet dog who may jerk into the leash, stop suddenly, pull skew to sniff, or pull at odd angles, sport dogs pull with predictable, straight-line tension. Their muscles build balanced strength rather than awkward compensations.

Furthermore, their tendons, ligaments and core muscles are conditioned gradually over months to handle heavy loads safely.

THE TAKEAWAY

In pulling sports, a conditioned dog uses their back legs to drive forward in a harness built to distribute force across the whole skeleton. On an everyday walk, an unconditioned pulling dog strains from their front legs, twists against a high leash and puts abnormal stress through their joints.

Reframing Loose-Leash Walking as Preventative Care

When we view leash training strictly as an obedience exercise, it's easy to let consistency slide on days when we're tired or rushed. But when we look at it through the lens of long-term physical health, the priority becomes clear.

Teaching your dog to walk on a slack line:

- Protects delicate neck structures and spinal alignment.
- Preserves natural, symmetrical shoulder movement.
- Keeps body weight evenly balanced across all four limbs.
- Prevents chronic muscle tightness and abnormal stress and wear on joints.



Investing the time to build a solid loose-leash walk is about giving your dog the gift of pain-free movement for years to come!

MAST

CELL TUMOURS IN DOGS

When a Lump is More
Than Just a Lump



BY DR FALON OLFSSEN
WWW.VALUEVETS.CO.ZA

Why every lump deserves a closer look

Finding a lump on your dog can be worrying. Often, a lump turns out to be something harmless, such as a fatty tumour or cyst. But some lumps can be cancerous and one of the most common skin cancers we see in dogs is the mast cell tumour (MCT).

The challenge with mast cell tumours is that they can look remarkably ordinary. A small, soft lump that looks just like a harmless growth can sometimes be a significant tumour. This is why the simple rule of "let's just watch it" isn't always the safest approach.

What exactly is a mast cell tumour?

Mast cells are normal immune cells found throughout the body. They play an important role in inflammation and allergic reactions.

A mast cell tumour develops when these cells multiply abnormally and form a tumour. Most MCTs occur in the skin or just beneath the skin, although they can also develop in other parts of the body.

Some mast cell tumours behave relatively quietly, while others can be much more aggressive and can spread to nearby lymph nodes or internal organs.

Importantly, you cannot determine how dangerous an MCT is simply by looking at it.

What does a mast cell tumour look like?

This is one of the reasons MCTs can be so difficult for pet owners to recognise.

They may appear as:

- A small or large lump.
- A soft or firm swelling.
- A hairless or haired growth.
- A red, pink or normal-coloured lump.
- A lump that appears suddenly.
- A lump that changes size from day to day.

Some mast cell tumours can become swollen, red or irritated after being touched. This happens because mast cells contain substances such as histamine that can trigger inflammation.

A lump that suddenly becomes larger does not necessarily mean that the tumour has suddenly grown. However, any change in a lump should be investigated rather than ignored.

Which dogs are at greater risk?

Mast cell tumours can occur in any dog, but some breeds appear to have a higher predisposition.

These include breeds such as:

- Boxers
- Boston Terriers
- Pugs
- Bulldogs
- Staffordshire Bull Terriers
- Labrador Retrievers
- Golden Retrievers

This does not mean that a dog of another breed is not at risk. Any new lump should be assessed, regardless of breed, age or size.

Cats can also develop mast cell tumours, although their disease can behave differently from MCTs in dogs.



How are mast cell tumours diagnosed?

The good news is that investigating a lump does not always mean immediately going to surgery.

One of the first diagnostic tests your veterinarian may recommend is a Fine Needle Aspirate (FNA).

During an FNA, a small needle is inserted into the lump to collect cells. These cells can then be examined under a microscope, either by the veterinarian or by a veterinary pathologist.

An FNA is generally:

- Quick
- Minimally invasive
- Relatively inexpensive compared with surgery
- Often possible without sedation

For many mast cell tumours, an FNA can provide a very useful initial diagnosis. If a mast cell tumour is identified, further testing may be recommended to determine how aggressive it is and whether it has spread.

What happens if it is a mast cell tumour?

Treatment depends on several factors, including the tumour's location, size, biological behaviour, histological grade and whether there is evidence of spread.

Surgery is often the main treatment for a localised mast cell tumour. Because MCT cells can extend beyond what can be seen or felt externally, your veterinarian may need to remove a margin of apparently normal tissue around the tumour.

The removed tissue is then sent for histopathology. This is an important part of treatment because it allows the pathologist to determine whether the tumour has been completely removed and provides information about its biological behaviour.

Depending on the individual case, additional investigations or treatments may include:

- Lymph node assessment
- Diagnostic imaging
- Blood tests
- Additional surgery
- Chemotherapy or other medical therapies
- Regular monitoring

There is no single treatment plan that is appropriate for every MCT. Your veterinary team will tailor the approach to your individual pet.

Does every lump need to be removed?

No. But every new lump should be assessed.

This is an important distinction.

Many lumps are benign and may not require removal at all. The safest way to decide whether a lump needs treatment is to establish what the lump actually is.

A small diagnostic sample can sometimes save a pet from unnecessary surgery or, equally importantly, identify a tumour that should be treated promptly.

Check your pet regularly

One of the best things you can do as a pet owner is become familiar with what is normal for your dog's body.

When you are cuddling or grooming your pet, occasionally run your hands over their body and look for anything new or different.

Pay particular attention to:

- New lumps or bumps
- Changes in existing lumps
- Swelling
- Skin changes
- Unusual sores or areas that don't heal

If you find something new, make a note of its location and size and arrange a veterinary examination.

Taking a photograph can also be helpful for monitoring changes over time.

Don't fall into the “it's probably just a fatty lump” trap

This is perhaps the most important message for pet owners. A lump may feel soft and harmless. It may even look exactly like other fatty lumps your dog has had before.

But appearance and feel alone cannot reliably distinguish a benign lump from a mast cell tumour.

Instead of guessing, have it checked. A simple FNA may provide the answers you need and allow your veterinarian to recommend the appropriate next step.

The Take-Home Message

Most lumps are not emergencies but every new lump deserves attention.

Mast cell tumours are common in dogs and can look like many other, less serious skin growths. Early investigation allows your veterinary team to identify potentially serious tumours sooner and develop an appropriate treatment plan.

So, the next time you find a new lump on your pet, don't panic but don't ignore it either. Check it. Test it. Know what you're dealing with.

When it comes to your pet's health, knowing is always better than guessing.

This article is intended for general pet-owner education and does not replace an examination by a veterinarian. If you have found a new or changing lump on your pet, please arrange a veterinary consultation.



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SMART BREEDING



Making Smarter, Healthier Pairings



Modern breeders now have access to more information than ever before. They can screen for inherited diseases and use DNA testing to identify specific genetic variants. This information is valuable, but knowing a dog's genetic status is only the first step.

Health testing is an essential part of any responsible breeding programme. Depending on the breed, it may include orthopaedic, cardiac, ophthalmic and hearing examinations, as well as DNA tests for known inherited conditions.



www.zoomics.co.za

It is important to note that a single health test should not be interpreted on its own, breeders should not simply be asking, "Is this dog clear?" but rather:

"What does this result mean and how should it affect which mate I pair with?"

Different genetic conditions are inherited in different ways, meaning that a particular result would make breeding inappropriate in one situation, but may be safely managed in another. Understanding the mode of inheritance is therefore just as important as the test result itself.

One of the clearest examples is a recessive genetic condition. A dog carrying one copy of a disease-associated variant may be completely healthy and show no signs of the condition. This is referred to as a carrier. In many recessive conditions, a dog generally needs to inherit two copies (one from each parent) to be affected.

A carrier therefore does not necessarily need to be removed from a breeding programme. For example, if a healthy carrier is bred to a dog that has tested clear for that recessive condition, the pairing can be planned to avoid producing affected puppies. The resulting puppies may include carriers, but the disease itself can be managed through testing and responsible breeding choices in subsequent generations.

Removing every carrier from a breed may seem like the safest approach, but it

can also mean removing otherwise healthy, valuable genetic material from the population. This is important in breeds with relatively small gene pools.

What is a gene pool? And why do I need to worry about it?

Every breed has a gene pool. The total genetic variation available within that population. When breeders repeatedly select from a smaller group of dogs, genetic diversity can decrease and inbreeding can increase. This creates an important balancing act, in which a breeder wants to reduce the risk of known inherited diseases, but also needs to avoid narrowing the gene pool unnecessarily, to maintain genetic diversity.

There Is No Such Thing as a Genetically "Perfect" Dog

DNA testing has transformed breeding, but it is important to understand its limitations.

A dog that tests clear for a particular genetic condition does not have that condition; however, it does not mean that the dog is free from every inherited disease or every genetic variant that could potentially affect its offspring. Many inherited diseases also have complex modes of inheritance. Family history can therefore provide valuable information, particularly for conditions that cannot be identified through a simple genetic test.

A breeding decision should never be based on a single laboratory result. Factors such as overall health, temperament, structure and breed purpose all matter when choosing pairings. A dog may have an excellent genetic profile for the conditions tested but still be unsuitable for breeding because of other physical concerns. Conversely, a dog with one known genetic variant may still have many valuable qualities that could benefit the breed.

This is why breeders should consider the dog's overall health, the mode of inheritance for the conditions it may have, as well as the health of its family and its proposed mate. These questions turn genetic testing into what it should be: a tool for making better breeding decisions.

Genetic diversity can also be affected by how frequently individual dogs are used. A highly successful male may have outstanding health, temperament and conformation, making him an attractive choice for breeders. However, if he is used excessively, his genes can become disproportionately represented in the breed. Responsible breeding therefore involves looking beyond the quality of an individual dog and considering how much genetic influence that dog is already having on the wider population.

Breeding Smarter, Not Simply "Clearer"

Genetic testing has given breeders an opportunity that previous generations did not have: the ability to identify specific genetic risks before making a mating. However, testing should not turn breeding decisions into a simple game of clear versus affected. A responsible breeder must use all the available information to ask what combination of dogs offers the healthiest and most sustainable outcome. Sometimes, that means excluding a dog from a breeding programme or even selecting a different mate. Sometimes, particularly with a recessive condition, it may mean retaining a healthy carrier and pairing it with an appropriate clear dog. Ultimately, responsible breeding is about managing risk, not pretending that risk can be eliminated completely.

The smartest mating is not necessarily the one between two dogs with the most "clear" results. It is the one where the breeder understands the risks, considers the whole picture and deliberately chooses a pairing that gives the next generation the best opportunity for a healthy future.

Where can I get genetic health tests done?

At ZooOmic 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.

For inquiries about sample collection, shipping, processing, and services, please contact us at info@ZooOmic.co.za. Alternatively, visit our website at www.zooomic.co.za to download our sample submission form.





GENETIC HEALTH AND COLOUR LOCI TESTS

Certain canine breeds are **predisposed to genetic mutations** that lead to **health problems**.

Genetic testing can aid breeders and pet owners alike to better **understand their canine companion's health**.

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AI & PETS

Generative AI & Pets

Creativity, Care and Responsibility

A South African perspective

From a favourite pet photo to a short film, generative AI is opening new creative possibilities. The opportunity is exciting. What matters is how we use it and whether our pets remain at the centre of the story.

By Runveer Singh
FOUNDER, PET CONNEX

THE POSSIBILITIES

When an Idea Becomes Something You Can See

What happens when a few words can become a picture, a story or a video?

A Guardian might want to celebrate a pet's birthday. A rescue organisation might need an adoption-awareness campaign. A groomer might have an idea for a promotion but no photographs that fit.

These are different needs, but they share a starting point: someone has something to communicate.

AI can create the story. We remain responsible for the pet behind it.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) produces content in response to instructions, often called prompts. Depending on the tool, that content can include text, images, audio or video. It is not simply finding an existing picture or webpage. It is generating a response.

Not all AI is generative: recognising something in a photograph and creating a new photograph-like image are different tasks.

For the pet community, this creates opportunities that are practical, personal and sometimes simply enjoyable.

More Than a Pretty Picture

An everyday pet photo can become an illustrated portrait, a celebration card or the starting point for a visual story. Image-generation and editing tools can also help explore different backgrounds, compositions and artistic treatments.

Imagine your cat as the host of a tiny café, or your dog taking centre stage in an illustrated adventure. These are creative interpretations, not records of something that happened.

For Guardians, that can be a way to celebrate a companion. For pet businesses, it can provide a starting point for a campaign, an educational graphic or a seasonal message.

Video adds another dimension. Tools that work from written descriptions or reference images can generate short moving scenes, giving an idea motion and a sequence rather than a single frame.

A fictional pet adventure or a playful community greeting does not need to be filmed with a real animal performing every scene.

But creativity should still have a purpose.

A rescue campaign should help people understand the cause. A business promotion should communicate something genuine. A pet celebration should remain a celebration, not pressure to make a real animal imitate what a computer can create.

The value is not simply that we can create more. It is that we can communicate something meaningful.

ONE COMPANION. DIFFERENT CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS.



PORTRAIT CONCEPT



ILLUSTRATION STUDY



AI VIDEO CONCEPT

USEFUL TOOLS. REAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

AI Is Helpful, Not Perfect

Generative AI is not only about visual content. It can also help turn information into something easier to work with.

A Guardian could use AI to organise notes before a vet appointment or prepare questions they want to ask. A pet-care professional could also use it to help explain information more clearly before sharing it with clients. But AI can still make mistakes, so important information should always be checked.

That distinction matters.

An answer can sound confident and still be incomplete or wrong. A response that mentions your pet's breed is not automatically an assessment of your individual pet.

Use AI to prepare questions for your vet or a qualified behaviour professional, not to replace their advice. It should not become the reason to change medication, dismiss a worrying symptom or delay seeking care.

The useful question is not, "Can AI give me an answer?" It is, "What can I safely use this answer for?"

Use imagination to tell a story. Keep real information at the centre of a pet's care and identity.

Creativity Still Needs Boundaries

The same care belongs in the images and videos we share. A fictional scene can be entertaining when it is presented as fiction. It becomes a different matter when it is presented as a real rescue, a real treatment result or evidence that a product works.

My view is straightforward: Use creative images to help tell the story, not to make something look true when it isn't.

For adoption profiles, lost-pet notices and identification records, use clear, recent photographs that accurately represent the animal. A more attractive image is not a better image when it changes the details someone needs to recognise a pet.

Before sharing generated content, review the result rather than assuming the prompt was followed. Check the animal's appearance, the behaviour being shown, any wording and the claims being made. Obtain permission for other people's photographs and avoid putting unnecessary personal information into creative tools.

Safety filters can help flag harmful content, but they do not check everything. A result that passes a filter still needs to be checked for accuracy and suitability.

For South African pet businesses and rescue organisations, I see an opportunity to combine local knowledge with these creative tools. Let technology assist with the presentation. Keep the facts, professional judgement and responsibility with people.



01 CREATE

Bring an idea to life. Be clear about the message you want to share.



02 CHECK

Are the facts correct? Does the content represent the animal appropriately?



03 SHARE RESPONSIBLY

Be transparent. Could someone mistake your creative scene for a real event?

THE PET CONNEX PERSPECTIVE

Create with Purpose

Image generation. Video generation. Pet-focused content.

Bringing Creativity into Pet ConneX

At Pet ConneX, our creative offering brings together image generation, video generation and pet-focused visual content through the Pet ConneX Library.

Image generation helps turn an idea into a visual starting point, whether that is a pet-themed illustration, a campaign concept or a piece of social content. Video generation brings movement and storytelling into that process.

The Library also provides a place for pet businesses to work with ready-to-use images and videos organised around relevant categories and audiences. The purpose is practical: help people communicate without having to begin every piece of content from a blank page.

These creative tools sit alongside our wider focus on Digital Pet Identity, connected services and everyday support through Furry Friend AI. They serve different purposes, but the intention remains the same: make technology useful to the people who care for pets.

Creativity with Safeguards

We have also implemented safeguards around our creative tools to support responsible use. Those safeguards are part of the process, not a reason to stop checking the result. Generated images and videos still need careful human review before they are shared, particularly where a message concerns animal welfare, professional advice or a real pet's story.

For me, responsible innovation means paying attention to both sides: what the technology makes possible and what we should not allow convenience to replace.

More Possibilities. The Same Responsibility.

Generative AI gives us another way to celebrate pets, support communication and bring ideas to life. The goal is not to replace real care. It is to make technology more useful to the people who provide it.

The content may be generated. Our responsibility to the animals behind it is real.

Helping you, help your pet.

Runveer Singh
Founder, Pet ConneX

PET CONNEX



Create with purpose.

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hours



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helps reduce
tartar build-up



Daily care
supports long-
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Because They Can't Tell You What's Wrong

It's early on a Saturday morning. Your dog is usually waiting at the kitchen door before you've even finished making coffee. Tail going, ready for the day to begin. But this morning, they're still curled up in their bed.

Nothing dramatic. Nothing that immediately tells you something's wrong. Just... different.

Or perhaps it's your cat. They're normally stretched out in their favourite patch of sunlight, but today they've tucked themselves away somewhere else. Maybe they're grooming differently, shaking their head or simply not coming when you call.

These are the moments pet owners recognise.

When you live with an animal, you learn their little routines without even realising it. You know how they greet you, where they sleep, what gets them excited and the particular way they let you know it's dinner time. So when something changes, even slightly, you notice.

That familiarity is one of the most valuable parts of everyday pet care. Before you can recognise that something is different, you need to know what normal looks like for them.



THE LITTLE THINGS ADD UP

Caring for a pet isn't only about the obvious moments. Much of it happens almost without thinking, woven into the rhythm of everyday life.

Running your hands over your dog's coat after a walk. Taking a closer look while you're brushing them. Noticing whether their eyes look as they normally do, or whether they're paying more attention to an ear than usual. With cats, it may be a change in grooming, appetite, movement or where they choose to spend their time.

These small observations don't need to turn pet ownership into a daily health inspection. They simply help you build a clearer picture of your animal over time.

The fundamentals matter too: appropriate nutrition, fresh water, exercise, stimulation, a comfortable environment and plenty of interaction. The details will look different from one animal to another. A dog at home, a horse in the paddock, birds in an aviary or fish in an aquarium all have their own routines and needs. Together, those everyday considerations create the foundation of good care.

And because every animal is an individual, there's no universal version of "normal". A lively young dog may be constantly on the move, while an older cat may consider a sunny windowsill a perfectly productive afternoon. What matters is knowing your pet's normal.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR EVERYDAY PET CARE

There are also times when having practical care products within easy reach simply makes sense. A product that fits naturally into an established routine is far more useful than one that makes everyday care feel complicated.

Quantum.Silver® Animal Care is built around that idea: practical, science-informed products designed to support structured animal-care, hygiene and general wellness routines.

For general wellness, **Quantum.Silver®** Animal Solution is a liquid Vitamin B1 supplement formulated to support normal animal health, wellbeing and performance as part of a structured animal-care programme.

For routine external care, **Quantum.Silver®** Animal Gel provides a targeted topical format, while **Quantum.Silver®** Animal Spray offers a convenient option for application. Both are designed to support routine skin care, hygiene and general animal wellbeing.

Quantum.Silver® Animal Eye/Ear Drops provide a practical drop format for use around the eye and ear areas as part of a structured animal-care and hygiene programme.

Different formats give pet owners practical options for different situations, without losing sight of the bigger picture: good care starts with knowing your animal, maintaining sensible routines and responding appropriately when something changes.

BECAUSE EVERY PET IS DIFFERENT

That last part matters, because animals don't follow a script.

One dog may let the whole household know the second something bothers them. Another may carry on almost as usual. Some cats make their opinions very clear; others become quieter and more withdrawn. The signs that catch your attention will depend on the animal in front of you.

Being observant doesn't mean worrying about every scratch, sleepy afternoon or skipped game of fetch. It means having enough familiarity with your pet to recognise when a change feels out of character and enough judgement to decide what comes next.

Sometimes that may simply mean paying closer attention or supporting their normal care and hygiene routine. When a change is persistent, unusual or concerning, veterinary guidance remains an important part of responsible pet care.

Quantum.Silver® Animal Care is designed to sit within that wider approach: practical products, informed by science, developed with real-world animal care in mind and made to fit naturally into everyday routines.

Because the best care often starts long before there's an obvious problem. It starts in the ordinary moments. The morning greetings, the grooming, the walks, the dinner-time rituals and all the tiny behaviours you come to know by heart.

They may not be able to tell you what's wrong. But when you know them well, you're already listening.



Because They Can't Tell You What's Wrong.

You know their little routines, their quirks, and all the things that make them who they are. That's what helps you notice when something feels different.



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2



Nature-inspired, effective and unique botanical supplements and grooming products designed to support the wellness, vitality and resilience of pets.

[START SHOPPING HERE](#)

Editor's Pick

The month's Editor's Pick showcases practical products and thoughtful solutions designed to support healthier, happier pets. From enrichment and mobility aids to natural wellness products, recovery support and everyday health essentials, each featured item offers something useful for pet parents looking to make informed choices.

Healthy Cooked Food for Dogs

BISMARK'S BISTRO

Every meal hand crafted with love and care. Food that is wholesome, clean and nutritious.

[SHOP REAL FOOD FOR DOGS](#)



Wellness Products for the Furkids

OZONE VITALITY



Providing pets quality of life with preservative and chemical free products.

[SHOP FURKID PRODUCTS](#)

4

Innovative Natural Supplements

THE HERBAL PET

Carefully researched blends of herbs, amino acids, vitamins and minerals for dogs and cats.

[BROWSE THE PET RANGE](#)



Better Pet Health for Dogs & Cats

NUTRIFLEX

Pet wellness with
certified human-grade,
clinically effective
formulas.

SHOP SUPPLEMENTS



6



Healing Power of Red & Infrared Light

PHOTIZO LIGHT THERAPY

Photizo Vetcare allows increased
blood flow into the area being
treated to ensure that any waste is
quickly removed from the area.

SHOP HERE

7

8

Soft Recovery Cones

LOVE THE DOG

Providing high-quality
soft recovery cones,
promoting the health &
wellbeing of pets.

GET YOURS HERE



Ice, Heat & Magnetic Products for Dogs

RES-Q-TACK

Res-Q-Tack Ice, Heat & Magnetic Therapy
Equipment is a unique product designed
by a Veterinary Physiotherapist. The range
is easy to apply and aids in healing areas
that are affected by strains, injuries and
pain in horses & dogs.

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9



10

XL Folding Dog Ramps

DOG MOM

Designed for SUVs, bakkies and higher
vehicles to provide a gentler incline to reduce
the impact of jumping and protect your dog's
joints. One of the longest ramps handmade
in South Africa.

SHOP HERE



11

Every Dog Deserves Enrichment

INJARA

Every dog deserves more than just toys. They deserve products that stimulate their minds, encourage natural behaviours and help them live healthier, happier lives.

SHOP NOW

Ready to Support Your Pet Naturally?

ANIMAL AROMATHERAPY

13



Animal Aromatherapy is a gentle, natural approach to wellbeing, using therapeutic-grade essential oils to support your pet's physical and emotional wellbeing.

SHOP THE RANGE



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Phone: 065 708 9382

12

A Well-fitted Harness is Part of the Puzzle

PERFECT FIT

The unique modular design allows them to fit almost any shape and size of dog ... cats too!

15

Understand What Lies Underneath the Behaviour

NEUROPET

Your dog is not misbehaving, their brain is overwhelmed. When they become dysregulated, their nervous system shifts out of balance, making it difficult for them to think, listen or stay calm.

LEARN MORE



Healthier Pets. Happier Humans.

PETSLY APP

Most pet health problems are caught too late. Petsly gives you the records, reminders and AI insights to stay ahead of them.

GET STARTED

14



Supporting Pet Health Through Science & Vet Care

VETSBRANDS

Supporting South African veterinarians and pet owners with scientifically formulated, high-quality veterinary products.

CLICK TO ORDER HERE

16



A FIRST FOR SOUTH AFRICA - DRIVING
MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN ANIMAL WELFARE



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WARNING: Consult with your veterinarian if your pet has a chronic illness or is on any medication before using supplements. Inform your vet that your pet is receiving this supplement before any anticipated surgery.

Dandelion

NATURE'S SUNNY SUPPORT FOR DIGESTION, LIVER FUNCTION AND FLUID BALANCE.

Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) is the cheerful yellow "weed" that pops up everywhere in spring, but it has a long history of use in herbal wellness too. In dogs, dandelion is best thought of as a supportive herb. The leaf and root are traditionally used to support digestion, normal liver and bile function and healthy fluid balance. It is not a miracle cure, but when used carefully and appropriately, dandelion can be a simple natural addition to a dog's wellness toolkit.

How it helps

Digestive Support

Dandelion's naturally bitter compounds may help stimulate digestive secretions and gently support appetite and digestion.

The root also contains inulin, a type of prebiotic fibre that can support the gut microbiome.

Liver & Bile Support

Dandelion root is traditionally used to support normal liver function and healthy bile flow. That makes it popular in natural wellness circles as a gentle herb for dogs needing general digestive and liver support.

Gentle Diuretic & Nutrient Boost

Dandelion leaf is often described as a gentle natural diuretic, meaning it may help support normal fluid balance. It also contains nutrients such as potassium and antioxidant plant compounds, making it more than just a roadside weed.

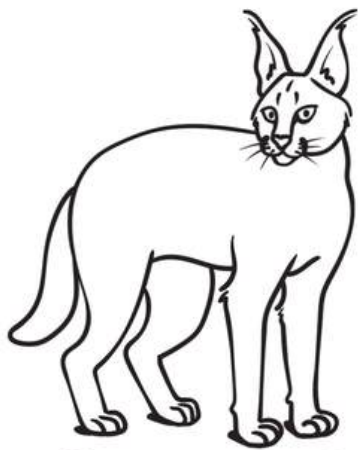
Safety & dosage guidance

- Use only correctly identified dandelion from a safe, clean source.
- Never pick dandelion from lawns, pavements, roadsides, parks or public spaces where herbicides, pesticides, fertilisers or other contaminants may be present.
- If using fresh plant material, wash it thoroughly and offer only a very small amount at first.
- Dandelion is best used as an occasional topper or supportive herb, not something added in large amounts.
- If using a dried or formulated supplement, choose a reputable pet-safe product and follow label directions.
- Avoid DIY use in dogs with kidney disease, gallbladder or bile duct issues, or in dogs already on medication, unless your veterinarian advises it.
- Stop use if your dog develops vomiting, diarrhoea or tummy upset.

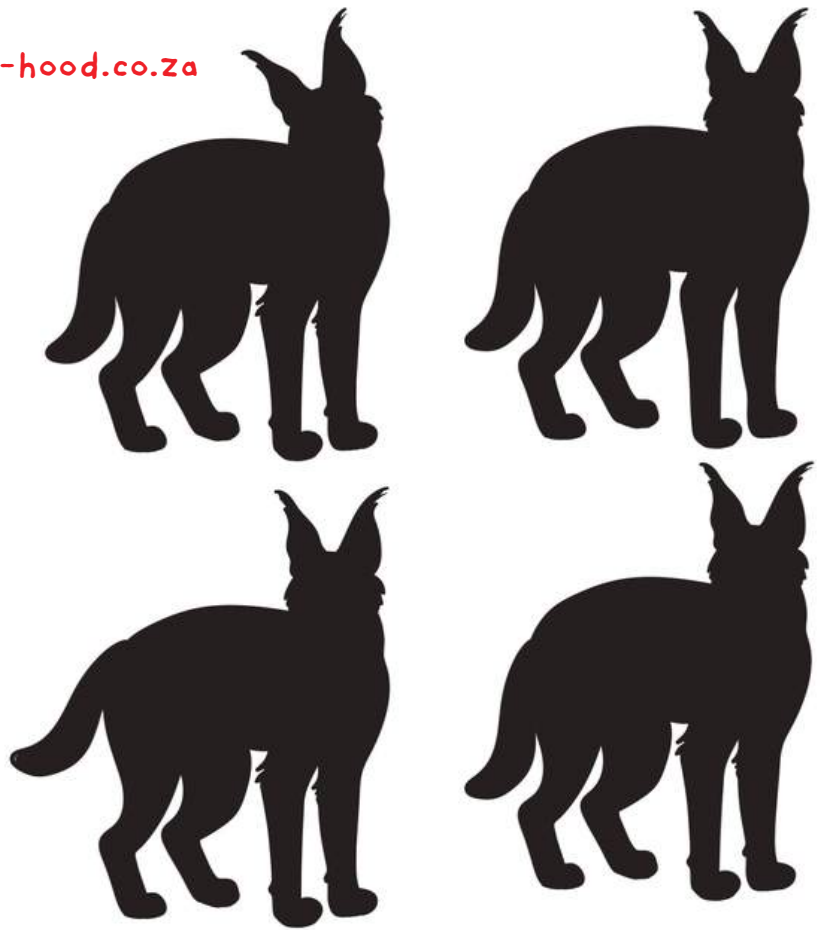
One important reminder:

where the dandelion comes from matters just as much as the plant itself. A clean, correctly identified dandelion is very different from one collected from a sprayed lawn, roadside verge or public park.

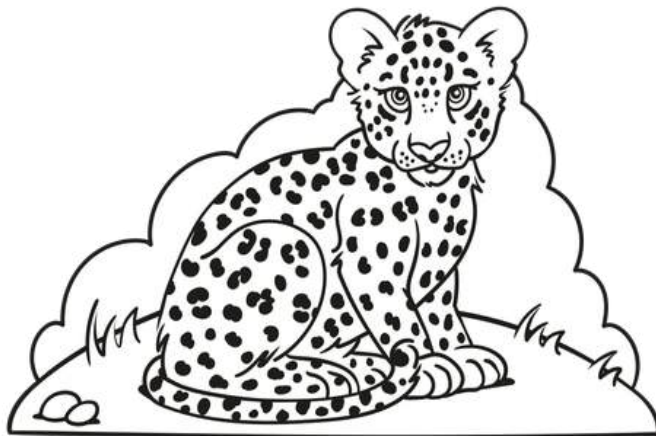
Dandelion can be a useful supportive herb, but it is not a substitute for veterinary care. A dog with ongoing vomiting, poor appetite, abdominal pain, yellowing of the eyes or gums, urinary changes or unexplained lethargy needs prompt veterinary attention.



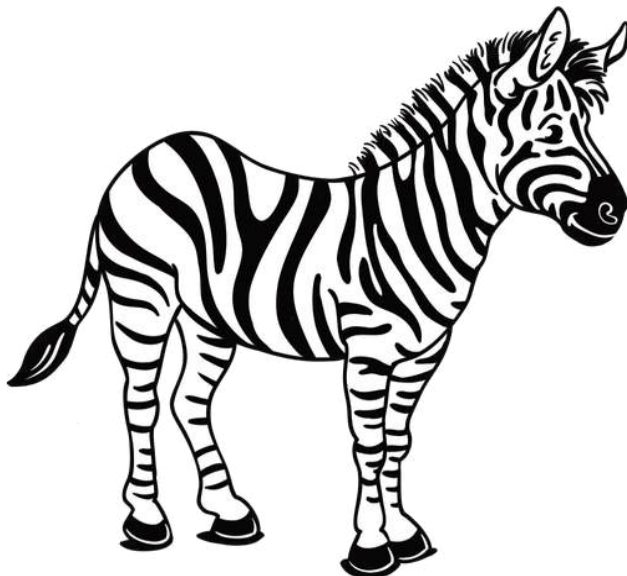
Caracal



FIND THE CORRECT SHADOW



Can you spot 5 differences?



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



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