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COUNTRY MAGAZINE

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...from boisterous bully  
into little angel

**GAME FAIR PREVIEW ISSUE**



# War on terrier

Stan Rawlinson is back and this time he's got a fundamental "terrierist" to deal with. **Jessica Gittins** wonders if even ST's Doglistener can help her horse-fixated canine

**G**eorge is a typical 18-month-old terrier — playful, assertive, highly intelligent, social, soppy, bossy and, most of all, naughty. He is at his most content when in the company of humans and even more delighted when we have visitors, which means more people to play with. His days are spent helping muck-out the horses' stables (with his mouth), helping sweep the kitchen floor (clamping the broom in a jaw-lock), lying in the garden, playing football, hunting for rats or rabbits and bossing the other dogs around — it's a dog's life, eh?

The perfect companion and a loving and amusing pet, the only problem with George is that he has always been impossible to train. More worryingly, his naughtiness has escalated, developing into the dangerous and destructive habit of chasing horses, which recently ended in disaster. George chased and barked at one of our horses while we were loading it into the horsebox; it fell off the ramp, catching its leg on the side of the lorry, requiring stitches and a considerable amount of recovery time.

We had tried everything within our means to control George's behaviour. We live in a small village and our house faces directly on to a main road, so all our dogs — George, a lurcher and a dachshund — wear electric collars to stop them straying. I know a great deal of people disapprove of electric collars and I agree with their reservations to some extent. When it comes to reining-in dogs hot-wired with a strong hunting instinct, however, such as lurchers and terriers, I think it is one sure-fire way of preventing them from causing trouble in a neighbour's garden, ending up stuck down a rabbit hole or, most importantly, stopping them from careering

◀ **Guilty until proven innocent: the top dog waits to be taken down a peg by Doglistener**



When terriers attack: George chases a horse

out into the road to be run over or the cause of a more serious car accident.

Our lack of knowledge of dog training meant we weren't familiar with how to respond to or deal with the way George reacted to horses. Our attempts at changing his behaviour included shouting at him and using another remote-controlled electric collar, to which he soon became immune. As a last resort, any time we took horses out of the stable or loaded one into the horsebox, George would be scooped up and locked in somewhere. This was time-consuming, however, and only meant George was being prevented from causing damage, not cured of his behavioural problem.

## Doglistener to the rescue

Because of our problems with George, it was with great interest that I read dog behaviourist Stan Rawlinson's recent *Doglistener* series in *ST*. It was fascinating to discover what lay behind so many common dog behavioural problems, as well as the preventions and cures Stan suggested. What he had to say made sense, was logical and more concerned with looking at the source of the problems, looking at dogs as a species, rather than



## STAN ON: CHASE OR PREDATORY AGGRESSION

This can be directed at many things, anything that stimulates a chase response. Squirrels are a favourite, as their quick jerky movements seem to stimulate even the most placid of dogs. I see a lot of predatory chase aggression in response to stimuli such as bikes, skateboards, joggers and cars.

One of the key factors that distinguishes predatory aggression from other forms of aggression is that movement is often the trigger — recalling perhaps the movement a small animal makes as it attempts to run or escape in the wild. Predatory behaviour can be seen in dogs of any sex and age.

Counter-conditioning to change the dog's perception of the falsely identified prey is one form of treatment, as many also believe that punishment works, using noise aversion, for example. Throwing water from a car window or sounding an alarm or air horn at the exact time the dog takes off, or throwing down a plastic bottle of stones from a passing bike or car can sometimes alter this behaviour. To be effective, however, punishment must be aversive and its timing exact, so that the dog associates the punishment with the behaviour.

Dogs that show intense interest and become aroused or anxious by the movement or noise of other pets or children should be closely monitored at all times. Prognosis is not good for this type of aggression. Reward-based obedience training can help, but is only of any use if the owner or trainer is able constantly to monitor the dog.

with a simple, quick-fix solution.

Even though I believed what Stan had said in his articles, I admit to being slightly dubious as to what a "dog listener" could do for George. I thought it all very well for Stan to be writing about such behavioural problems and how to

PANEL 1



◀ tackle them, but that applying them to a real-life situation was going to be another matter.

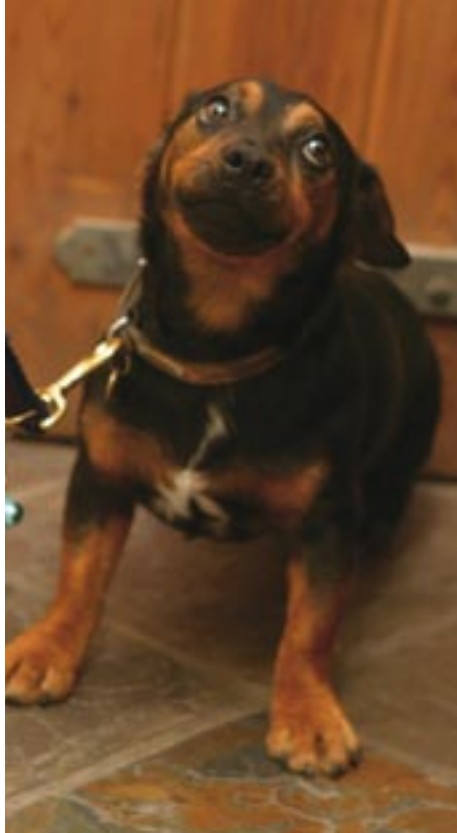
I spoke to Stan to arrange for him to come and have a session with George a week later. He asked me several in-depth questions about George's general behaviour, the problems we were facing and how he intended to deal with them. From our 15-minute conversation, Stan appeared to have diagnosed the problem directly. He said he thought George was exhibiting two symptoms: predatory chase instinct and fear aggression, both of which are linked to fear (see panel 1 on previous page).

He also thought George was suffering from "top dog" syndrome, bullying the other dogs and acting above his status — just like a wild dog, George believed he was the leader of the pack. We had bought our lurcher and George at the same time, thinking it would be a good idea to have puppies of the same age so that each would have a companion as it grew, to play with and to help it develop. Interestingly, according to Stan, this is not always the case. Often, integrating two dogs into a family at the same time can lead to one becoming stronger than the other, which is exactly what seemed to have happened with ours. As George grew more courageous and feisty, the lurcher became more timid and shy, waiting for acknowledgement for her behaviour and copying George. The lurcher would even join in the horse-chasing game, but it was clear that it was George who was the ringleader. It sounded to Stan as though George had little respect for humans, too — one of the most difficult behavioural problems to cure.

### Back to basics

After Stan had met my family and had another short discussion about what he was intending to do, we moved into the kitchen to begin George's preliminary training: going back to basics (see panel 2, right). While Stan prepared pieces of cheese as titbits for the training, he gave us a rundown of possible reasons behind George's behaviour. He said it may be a combination of breeding and early training, but it also had a lot to do with the animal pack instinct that wild dogs have and domestic dogs still harbour.

Stan began the procedure, which I must admit completely astounded both my mother and me. He attached bells to George's lead — a "jingler" — in order to keep his mind focused on what Stan was doing. To begin with it seemed as though the little terrier was confused as to what he was meant to be doing and appeared simply to be cowering in anticipation of Stan's tug on the lead or the moments when Stan would turn away his head. After only a few attempts, however, George was waiting to be



▲ Turning its head means the dog acknowledges your authority — don't reward it before then

told when he could take the cheese from Stan's hand, instead of simply snapping up the treats. Stan would hold the cheese right under George's nose and he would not move to eat until Stan gave him the command — he seemed to have got it. Stan also used another kind of jingler, which was simply a plastic bottle filled with small stones that made a horrible sound when shaken or dropped. He used this in training to shock George, as a form of reprimand when he wasn't doing what Stan was asking him to do.

At one point, Stan said to us that the next time the cheese was placed in front of George, the little dog would actually turn his head away, and, to our amazement, this is exactly what happened. The tables had started to turn; George appeared to realise that perhaps he was not leader of the pack — Stan was.

After a mere 20 minutes or so of Stan's training routine, our boisterous, overpowering terrier had been transformed into a timid and obedient blue-eyed boy. I then took over and tried the training myself and George behaved impeccably for me, too. He wasn't snapping at food, but patiently waiting for me to give him permission to take it from me. I was now the one in control. He was sitting and waiting when I told him to, and walking to heel with no fuss whatsoever. In a short space of time, Stan had managed completely to change my dog's status,



### STAN ON: TEACH YOUR DOG THE "OFF" COMMAND

PANEL 2

This pivotal exercise should be put in place before any other training is started. This exercise will allow you to take control of your dog in numerous situations, but timing and body language are key.

Put your dog on its 5ft lead with the jingler attached. Take a treat — cheese, puffed jerky or frankfurter are ideal — make the dog sit, hold the lead in your left hand and the treat in your right, offer the treat and gently say, "Good. Take it." Do this at least four times, then offer the dog the treat and do not say anything. When the dog goes to take the treat, turn your head sharply to the right and bring your hand with the treat up to your chest, giving a slight tug on the lead with your left hand and gently say, "off". The jingler helps focus the dog on the real message: "This is my bone and I am prepared to share it, but only when I give permission." That permission is saying, "take it". You are also training control of the greatest resource possible — food. I emphasise being gentle with the "off" command, as we tend to bark orders at our animals. Only issue commands in a loud or stern voice if the dog is not doing as you say. At all other times it should be a request, not a bellow.

Repeat the "off" command until the dog turns its head away. Watch for the movement and the body language, and as soon as this happens say, "Good — take it," in a praising tone and give it the treat. Repeat until the dog naturally turns its head each time you offer a treat.

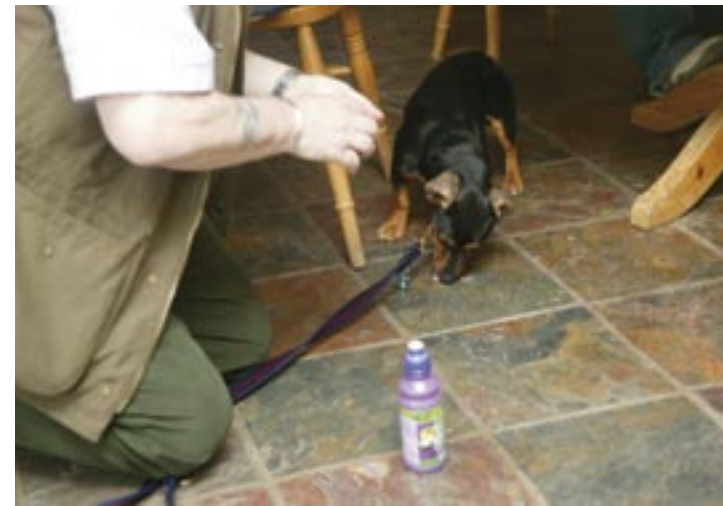
Keep the dog on a lead in the house and be sure always to be present when the lead is on. If it tries to nip or jumps up, grab the lead and say, "off", for the nip, and, "off, sit", for the jump, giving a slight corrective jerk on the lead at the same time to activate the jingler. Do not praise the dog when he stops as you will only be praising the nipping or jumping. Repeat the exercise until he stops jumping and nipping. The word "good" is also important, as it acts as a secondary reinforcer or trigger word, similar to using a clicker, so keep it "good", and not "good boy", or similar.

and the most impressive thing was that it hadn't required voice or hand to be raised.

### Put to the test.

Still in awe of what we had seen indoors, it was time to put George to the test — the outside world. As soon as we stepped out of the front door, he appeared to be behaving impeccably, even with our lurcher jumping around him and encouraging him to play.

Next, it was time to get the horses out and see how George behaved with them. Jingler bottle in hand, I stood with George on the lead



as a horse was trotted past. If George began to bark, get excited or pull on the lead at all, I was to throw the jingler down in front of him to deter him. The first time a horse trotted passed, I could see that he was dying to jump out and charge at it, but I shook the bottle and could sense that he was trying everything in his power not to bark or run after the animal. It was then I realised that the training really had changed George. We trotted the horses over and over again, shaking the bottle as they walked right past and still George did not move.

I was thoroughly impressed with the day's events and almost speechless about what Stan had managed to do. He did reinforce that this was not the end of the training — as with anything, it had to be repeated in order to be maintained. He sent us all the details

### ▲ A bottle filled with stones works well when it comes to noise aversion

of the problems George was experiencing, how to deal with them and how to maintain the training. Stan left us with some jinglers and, a month on, our terrier is still a pillar of society — fingers crossed. Getting back to basics really does seem to work. Dog training does not take a huge amount of time, but I think it is crucial not to forget where dogs come from, what their background is and how they need to be treated accordingly. ■

For more details, tel (020) 8979 2019 or visit [www.doglistener.co.uk](http://www.doglistener.co.uk)

Stan Rawlinson will be appearing on the Shooting Times stand (A133) at The CLA Game Fair, from 28 to 30 July, where he will be available to answer any queries you may have regarding dog behaviour.

### ▼ A reformed character: George refrains from leaping at a horse

