

# WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE DO IT?

**M**any dogs received the best present this past Christmas - a house with a garden and a decent sized backyard. We moved a few days before Christmas and, for a while, it seemed like Scooter and Lilly thought they were on holiday. Without sounding too much like a Braggersaurus, our new home is perfect for us. It has great living spaces, lots of storage and beautiful views over parkland. Oh, and although we weren't seeking one, it came with a pool!

After months of trolling through real estate listings online and dedicating our weekends to house viewings, we finally found a place that we could all call home. There were some Saturdays where we would have a list of over ten houses to view and this proved really exhausting. Everyone has deal breakers when looking for a new home. Examples such as whether the house has a bath or only a shower; modern kitchen vs. one you can renovate to your personal standards. For us, many of the deal breakers revolved around our needs of the two dogs and cat.

Important consideration was given to whether there was an off-leash park in walking distance and a fully fenced and secure yard. For our cat we had to have an area where she could enter and exit, bypassing the dogs, as we're still not a fully blended family.

The dogs appreciate the off-leash park and the lawn as well as all the added space we have. However, the biggest surprise is that they love the pool. When my boyfriend, Paul, arrives home from work, he's met with frenzied excitement from Scooter and Lilly. His arrival signals the fun of a late afternoon swim. There are a couple of toys that have become a big part of pool-time fun and both dogs compete to swim and retrieve their favourite.

My dogs react more to actions than language. Sure, they understand words like treat, walk, Squeaky Monster, Ducky, sit, stay, come etc. However, they're more reactive to what is happening in their home environment. They're just not as gifted as a Border Collie named Chaser, who according to recent news reports, may be the world's smartest dog. After spending three years training with psychologists at a University in South Carolina, it appears he can understand over 1,000 words.

Phrases that my dogs probably know really well is 'I love you'. I have been whispering this around the house for the last couple of weeks. It's followed by the phrase, 'I miss you'. You see, Paul has had to go to the other side of the planet for five weeks on business, and this seems like a crippling period of time to be apart. I am like the Who that whispered and managed to attract the ears of an Elephant called Horton. For those of you not familiar with Dr Seuss' story called Horton Hears a Who, it is a charming tale of how an Elephant hears the cry for help from a microscopic civilisation on a tiny speck on dust.

My 'Miss You' mantra doesn't fall on deaf ears here. The dogs, too, miss Paul and seem to understand my moments of reflection. However, being the positive person that I am, I refuse to accept my one-person invitation to a pity party. Instead I clap my hands, grab a towel, and say some words that send two furry creatures into a butt-wriggling, tail thumping dance of joy. 'Let's get Squeaky Monster and go to the pool!'

Wishing all our readers a peaceful transition into the autumn months. So many of us have friends and family affected by the harshest weather conditions in the last few months, and we all feel that pain. And in the words of Horton "a person's a person, no matter how small", we can all learn a lot from an elephant that keeps the faith and shows compassion to people he has never met.

Lisa Treen - Urban Animal Editor

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