



Make life fun for an urban dog

Take a look at the world from your pooch's perspective, writes **Fiona Purdon**

ALL is not well in the "land of dog", says leading veterinarian and animal behaviourist Paul McGreevy.

To begin to understand dogs and how to look after them in the 21st century, he wants dog owners to see the world through their pet's eyes.

"We want dogs that are devoted to us but somehow expect them to cope when left alone," McGreevy says.

"We persistently frustrate our canine companions by ignoring what they truly value - fun, exercise and training."

For about 30 years, McGreevy has been treating, researching and writing about dogs.

Now he has finished his first book for dogs themselves - *A Modern Dog's Life* - to enable owners to become better companions for their dogs.

McGreevy, a University of Sydney veterinary science associate professor, says owners need more knowledge about a dog's biology to better understand the behaviour of their furry friends.

"It (the book) was written for owners who really want to give dogs a better deal," he says.

"People need to approach the care of dogs from a biological perspective to help them understand the reason why dogs behave as they do."

McGreevy says the first priority with dog ownership is choosing the perfect

pet so a family connects with the breed best suited to their lifestyle.

He says that Australians have a "love affair" with cattle dogs and kelpies but they are working dogs that need to be outside, chasing livestock in huge paddocks, rather than cooped up in inner-city dwellings.

"It's important to do your homework," he says.

"It's important to be extremely honest with yourself with how much time and commitment you can offer a dog. It may be that you can't deliver.

"People have to decide whether they want to own dogs who need heaps of exercise or whether they have time for grooming a very fluffy dog or whether they can cope with a dog that sheds hair."

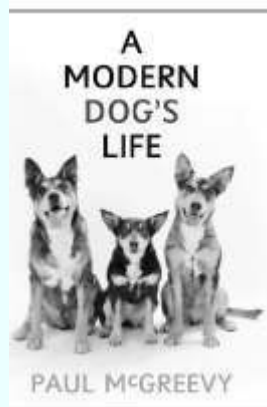
McGreevy says that every dog needs training.

"Training makes the dog's world more predictable and less haphazard and they thrive on that," he says.

Rewards for training can include exercise but dogs also value social interaction with other dogs.

"It's important to understand what dogs want and value, such as play, food and interaction with other dogs and you can use that as rewards in training," he says.

"A reward shouldn't be limited to patting."





McGreevy, the author of six books, says research has shown that the ideal spot to pat a dog is on the chest and many do not like contact on the head.

He is also concerned that not enough dogs are receiving their required exercise, considering an Australian study three years ago of 700 dog owners showed that only half of their pets were walked once a day.

McGreevy, who owns three koolie working dogs that live on his farm, says it is a concern because dogs need to poo up to six times a day.

It is hard for dogs when their backyard is also their toilet.

"Just because they do it, it doesn't mean that it's nice for them," he says.

"A large backyard can be a large boring box for dogs. It's time out of the yard that really counts.

"The most important things are socialising with other dogs, having one-on-one time with their owners and exploring their home patch. Happiness is a tired puppy."

The University of Western Australia has recently finished a study examin-

ing the relationship between dog acquisition and recreational walking.

Study author Hayley Christian, who spoke at last week's Be Active conference in Brisbane, found that dog owners increased their walking to 31 minutes per week. Those with no dog managed only 12 minutes of recreational walking per week.

"To put it simply, dogs want to be walked, need to be walked and provide company when being walked," Christian says.

McGreevy says that 31 minutes a week of exercise is still not enough.

He says research shows there is a relationship between the amount of barking and a dog's frustration with their lack of exercise and outings.

More dogs are suffering from separation anxiety from their owners, especially now that there are fewer stay-at-home mums, he says.

One British study suggests up to 50 per cent of dogs suffer from separation anxiety.

Forty per cent of Australian households own a dog and McGreevy says

that 75 per cent of those are single-dog households.

McGreevy's book, *A Modern Dog's Life*, promotes the program of dogs having a backyard buddy they can visit during the day to provide the "novelty factor" many pets are missing.

"Putting home-alone dogs in touch with each other is a great way of meeting the needs of both dogs who want company," he says.

McGreevy says that many owners do not realise the responsibility and commitment associated with owning a dog.

He would prefer to see less owners and more people who were fully devoted.

"This book might provide a reality check for some people," he says.

"There are plenty of books on feeding, grooming and health care but this book details your dog's behavioural needs.

"Some people get a dog but then don't walk it, train it and don't groom it, so my advice is to get a cat instead."

***A Modern Dog's Life*, Paul McGreevy, UNSW Press, \$34.95**

It's time out of the yard that really counts. Happiness is a tired puppy



PUPPY LOVE: Paul McGreevy with RSPCA dogs (from left) Jay, Pud, Rice and Duke.

Picture: Liam Driver



Off-leash parks

ANIMAL behaviourist Paul McGreevy's tips for use of leash-free parks

Do

- » Aim to use the park when it is reasonably quiet.
- » Leave dog toys at home to avoid them being guarded.
- » Remove your dog if it bullies others.
- » Remove your dog if it is being bullied by others.
- » Keep moving around the park so that your dog keeps an eye on you and does not develop transient territorial defence of a certain zone within the park.

Don't

- » Enter if lots of dogs have gathered on the other side of the gateway. Very few dogs can cope with being greeted by a mob.
- » Let dogs sort it out.

- » Allow your dog to guard you.
- » Force frightened dogs to remain in the park.
- » Hang around in one spot, especially beside a gateway.

Brisbane's best off-leash parks

1. Colmslie Reserve, Morningside
2. Powerhouse Park, New Farm
3. Monoplane St Park, Ashgrove
4. Kedron Brook walkway, Gordon Park/Lutwyche
5. Eianora Park, Wynnum
6. Nudgee Beach, Nudgee
7. Downfall Creek Reserve, Virginia/Wavell Heights

For more information on Brisbane's best off-leash parks, go to www.ourbrisbane.com/lifestyle/best-dog-parks

Fiona Purdon



Save the house from the hound

LAUNDRY gets pulled off the line and chewed (usually a favourite or expensive item) and grassy lawns become dirt pits, dotted with holes and strewn with dug-up plants.

Rubbish bins are turned upside down, their contents scattered, chair legs are gnawed and pillows have been de-stuffed across the length of the lounge room.

Is this the scene that you arrive home to after a day at the office?

According to dog trainer Danielle Dickinson, it's called "bored dog decor" and increasing numbers of pet owners are fed up with the shabby-chic trend.

To this end, Dickinson, of Urban Dog Training, is running seminars specifically for dogs left at home alone so their interior (and exterior) design instincts are suppressed in favour of less destructive pursuits.

Simple and inexpensive tricks - such as using an empty plastic milk bottle or soft drink bottle as a pinata - can keep a pooch occupied for hours and away from your expensive lingerie.

Simply cut holes in the plastic bottle, fill with treats and tie from a pergola or tree. Treasure hunts are another idea - make your dog hunt for food rather than letting him fill up on cushion filling or left-overs he's managed to discover in the rubbish bin.

A seminar will be held on Monday, November 9, from 6.30pm-9pm at South Brisbane Softball Association, Preston Rd Carina. Cost \$35 per person. Bookings essential at www.urbandogtraining.com.au or 3390 8840.