

Photos by Sarah Whitehead

Sarah Whitehead is a pet behaviour counsellor who runs puppy socialisation classes, courses in animal behaviour and tackles behaviour problems in the south of England.



# From the mouths of Babes...

So you think that dog training has its challenges? If you are feeling back about your dog's recall, perhaps you should put things in perspective with a foray into the art of training other species

I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED that if you really want to be a good trainer, then you should work with a cat or a chicken! The real reason for this is that here are two species that simply don't allow humans to use punishment. Try punishing the average cat in training, and it will simply turn tail and head off to live with your neighbours. Try withholding a reward from a chicken that thinks it should have been given it, and it can sulk for hours - or even feign death!

In the last few years, astonishing leaps have been made in the dog world through the compassionate and scientific approach to training other species of animal. For example, dolphin trainers have long used a 'bridge' in training - a marker that tells the animal exactly which behaviour it is

being rewarded for, at a distance. This is because a human cannot give a fish to a dolphin when it is high in the air, in the midst of a jump out of the water, or is 20 feet under the surface. Out of this technology came clicker training for dogs - with all the same benefits and uses.

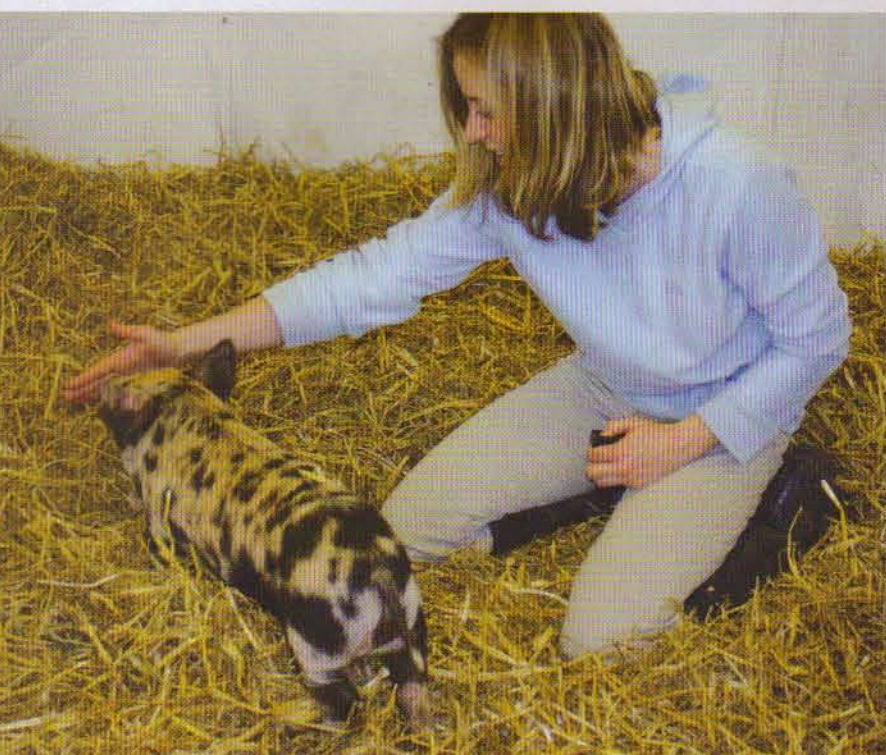
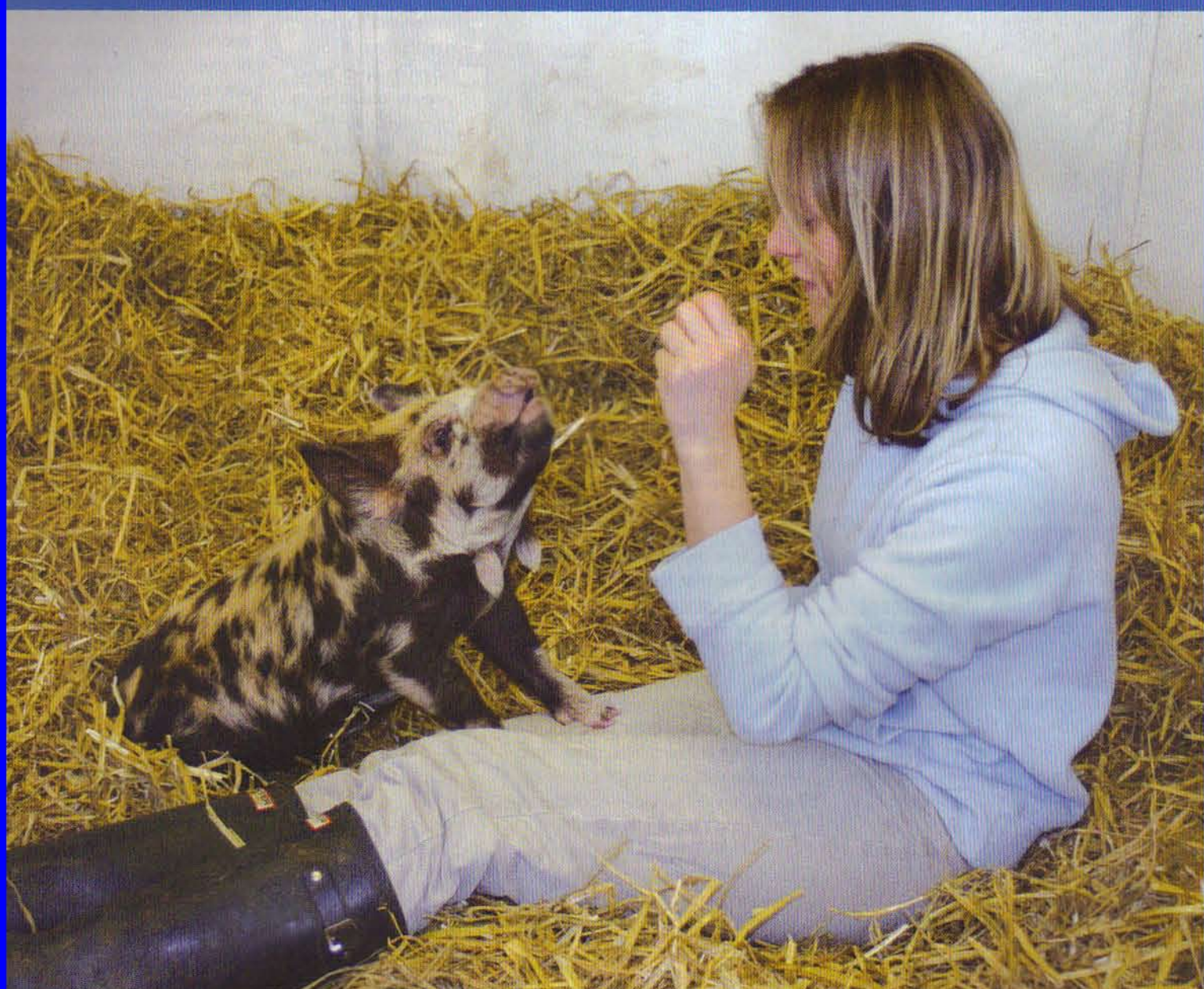
## Babe vs Basset

Pigs are well known for their intelligence, but perhaps not for their trainability. One of my instructors had the joy of training three Kune-Kune piglets last year, as part of a study comparing the learning abilities and cultural status of piglets versus pets.

This study looked at the impact of using the same approaches to training that we use in puppy classes - kind, motivational, non-punitive methods, using clicker training. These were tailored to meet the

pigs' individual needs - particularly the husbandry that they need to cope with for the rest of their lives. These included recall, so that the pigs would come in from their field voluntarily; being walked on a harness and lead, so that they can interact with the public on open days at the agricultural college where they live; handling, so that they enjoy this contact and are confident during veterinary examination; and target training, so that they can be taught to stand still for minor health procedures and to increase their environmental enrichment.

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**Kune-Kunes have lovely temperaments and have proved very responsive. At five weeks, the piglets learned to sit and stand on command and were touching targets with their snouts. Walking on the lead proved the greatest challenge (perhaps there's little difference between piglets and puppies after all!)**

die - and the impact on human lives is clear, too. Thankfully, pioneering work may soon make this a thing of the past.

Inspirational trainers have been clicker training Gambian giant-pouched rats to do the same job. Just like the dogs, these rats work for food rewards. They are accurate and have an incredibly sensitive sense of smell, but they are light enough not to trigger a landmine detonation - keeping both them and their handlers safe. Indeed, in a test along a southern Mozambique railway, which was heavily mined during the country's 17-year civil war, teams of three giant-pouched rats found every single one of 20 live mines in a previously unsurveyed 4,300-square-foot swatch of land.

Quite apart from their size, weight and accuracy, they may present another advantage, too. "Throw a stick for a dog to fetch, and after 10 times, the dog will say, 'Get it yourself, buddy,'" their head trainer says. "Rats will keep working as long as they want food." ::

there's little difference between piglets and puppies after all!) - but is very necessary, as although smaller than commercial breeds, the word 'Kune' translates from Maori as 'fat and round' and an adult pig can weigh up to 240lb.

Over the years, the training of many different animal species has given both joy and disappointment to those of us involved with animal welfare. As a child, I was fascinated by a photo in the front of one of the many dog books that I was given for Christmas and birthdays. It showed a Christmas of different kinds - dogs, cats, chickens, ducks - all sat side by side in perfect contentment; all clearly trained to stay where they were without eating (or being eaten by) their neighbour. Of course, this was before the days of computer technology and photo manipulation, and I was hugely impressed by the abilities of the animal trainer who

had organised the photo. Years later, I had a chance to meet this man, and, at the end of his lecture, asked him very shyly how he had done it. Rather unfortunately, he instantly eradicated my long-held naivety by telling me that they'd wired all the animals in place by tying their feet to bales of straw!

In contrast to this are others, who have been working to improve the welfare of captive animals by training them to offer behaviours that are necessary for management and care, and also to improve their day-to-day lives. There are also those who are working to save human lives.

For many years, dogs have been trained to sniff out buried landmines in war-torn places, such as Afghanistan. However, despite their great success, dogs do sometimes become the innocent casualties of this life-saving work. One step in the wrong direction can cause the dog to

## Train your dog online!

Sarah Whitehead's online dog training course is a new concept in kind, fair and effective dog training. In only four weeks you will discover just how easy it is to train your own dog in the comfort of your living room! Okay, so you might be asked to venture into the kitchen or the garden once in a while, but essentially this training programme is designed for those who want quick, easy and long-lasting results while having some fun along the way.

Sarah's methods are suitable for all dogs, no matter what breed, type, shape, size or age. Puppies and rehomed dogs respond brilliantly to the gentle, consistent techniques - and you'll see just how much they love to learn. All the family can get involved in training, too - whether you are seven or 70, have had a lifetime with dogs or are a new owner, these methods are for you.

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