

CHLOE SPEAKS OUT

My name is Chloe and I'm a Springer Spaniel. You may have heard about my trip down the Ards Peninsula, and my views on the 'Old Boy's' granddaughter Poppy. However there's a lot more that you need to know about me. Oh yes. Woof! Woof!

I should make it clear at this stage that the 'Man who Feeds and Walks me' is not my 'Owner'. That word suggests that he dominates me. I'm not 'owned' by anyone. That's why I refer to him as the 'Old Boy'.

I would like your Group to make a 'New Year's Resolution'. I've heard that you spend a lot of time discussing Cats. I would appreciate it if you would resolve to spend an equal amount of time discussing Dogs. Cats are interested in themselves and their families. But, as far as I can see, they have little interest in humans - except as a source of food and shelter.

We Dogs, on the other hand, have a genuine interest in, and affection for, human beings – especially if they treat us well. I like to think of the 'Old Boy' as my 'Pack Leader'. I encourage him to throw a ball for me at any time of the day or night. Surprisingly he doesn't seem to want to play when he gets up during the night.

I know that humans can be a pain in the neck at times. They may be the dominant species in the world at the moment - but this could change. That's why I want to listen to David Attenborough's new series on 'The History of Life'.

I've learnt from experience how to handle the 'Old Boy'. I let him think that he's in charge; but, when he's not around, I do exactly as I like. For example I climb up on the couch and leave dog hairs on it. This is strictly forbidden.

I should tell you that I've made my own 'New Year's Resolution' for 2009. It is to behave much better when I am walking on the lead. At present I pull forwards and sideways all the time. This annoys the 'Old Boy' as he cannot relax, and it hurts his arm. In return for this Resolution, I expect him to take me for more walks, and for longer walks. I expect also to be given much better food. At present the 'Old Boy' is buying dried food at nearly half the price he used to pay. It's not even fit for Cats!. When I challenge him about it, he mutters about the 'Credit Crunch' and 'Having to live on a Pension'.

I have to admit that the 'Doggie Bags' he brings home nowadays are much better than the old ones. I attribute this to the better class of restaurant that he is eating in these days. There's nothing I like more for breakfast than pork chops with apple and boiled potatoes – even if they are all mixed in together. I don't know how he can afford to eat in such places if he is hard up.

My status among the local dogs has risen considerably in recent months. This is because of my 'understandings' with the largest and the most aggressive dogs in the Park. I sniff them all over and show an appropriate degree of subservience; but never challenge them on their home 'patch'. Because of my diplomatic work, I have some influence in most areas of the park. Of course the 'Old Boy' is totally unaware of what is going on.

I have to use my diplomatic skills with the 'Old Boy' as well. If I behave badly, he threatens me with 'Obedience Classes'. However I suspect that he is too mean to pay for them. His ultimate threat is to take me to the Vet to be neutered. I am sure he would not like me to take him to be neutered. Mind you, I have some doubts about his capabilities in that respect!

The 'Old Boy' and I seem to interpret certain words differently. In the Park the word 'Come' is one of them. He sees it as a request to be obeyed instantly. I see it as a polite reminder that if I wish to leave with him I might consider moving in his direction within the next 15 minutes or so. The usual result is a fixed stare and a muttering of the words 'Obedience Classes'.

I met a thick-jowled Scottish Dog in the park recently. I told him about the poor quality dried food I'd been getting recently. He wanted to go straight to the shops to buy some better food; but I said that I didn't have any money. He seemed astonished. "Can't you print some?" he said. "Or borrow some, and pay in back later." I said that I believed in living within my means. He was even more astonished! Then he asked me to accompany him to an important Summit Meeting in Switzerland; but I said that I was happy where I was.

Eric Browett

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