

True Case History

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For details of behaviour courses visit www.coape.org, for details of the Gentle Leader visit www.gentleleader.co.uk and for info on books, training classes, videos, products and Peter's behaviour referral practice log on to: www.pneville.com or write to him at: COAPE, PO Box 6, Fortrose, Ross-shire, IV10 8WB



It's not often that a Pug is in need of a behaviourist, but this

I don't usually see Pugs for behaviour problems, so I was quite keen to meet Jingo to see what was causing his barking problem. Terry called me shortly after I received this email from him, and we arranged for me to visit him the following week to assist with the case of Jingo the barking Pug.

When I arrived at Terry's house, I saw Jingo waiting at the gate, and, like any other delightful Pug I have met in the past, he was nearly out of his skin with excitement at meeting a new person! After negotiating the gate and Jingo, I managed to get to the front door where Terry was waiting. He picked Jingo up and only after I gave him a chin scratch did Jingo start to relax.

Terry explained about Jingo's history as we had a cup of coffee. Jingo's mother had sadly died shortly after giving birth to two pups, and since the pups were only three days old, they spent a few weeks at the vet's where they were hand-fed. Once the vet was comfortable that Terry and his partner could continue, Jingo and his brother, Harry, were allowed to come home. Harry eventually went off to live with Terry's sister, and the two dogs still get on like a house on fire when they meet at family gatherings.

Jingo's barking had started about two months previously, after

Dear Peter

I have received a letter from my neighbours, complaining about my Pug, Jingo, who is apparently barking whenever I am not home. I live in a townhouse and really do not want to rehome my dog because of this, but I also can't have him annoying my neighbours. Please can you help me?

Kind regards,
Terry

Terry and his partner moved into their current townhouse. Jingo didn't have unsupervised access to his 'old' garden since it wasn't securely fenced off, but at the new house they decided that he should stay outside since there was a lovely and safe garden. In the mornings, his bed and bowls were placed outside under a veranda, and he could spend all day playing outside. (Remember, we are talking South African weather here, not British winters like the one we have just been through!)

Outside help

Jingo, on the other hand, had different ideas. To him, being left outside was not the done thing, and he had no idea how to cope with it. Not only was he not used to it, but he also had, for the first time in his life, the opportunity to look outside and respond noisily to all sorts of things, such as pedestrians, other dogs, birds and the odd neighbourhood cat. To add to the problem,

Terry discovered that his neighbours were throwing food over the wall to try to keep Jingo quiet when he barked, and Terry was worried about Jingo choking on something while nobody was at home to help should something go wrong.

During my observation of Jingo, it became quite clear that his barking was not an expression of anxiety. Although he was happy to meet his owners when they came home, he was not overly attached or distressed when they left him alone. The cause for his barking was a background of pure boredom, with the stimulation of all those outside events to become aroused by, but not get at or interact with. When Terry put Jingo in the garden in the mornings, he left all Jingo's toys inside the house, in his toy box. In the past, the dog had access to all his chews, his rubber toys, his favourite Busy Buddy, and a few other choice entertainment objects that

month's case was literally calling out for help...

he was quite fond of. Now, he was left outside without anything to do except bark in frustration at things he couldn't reach.

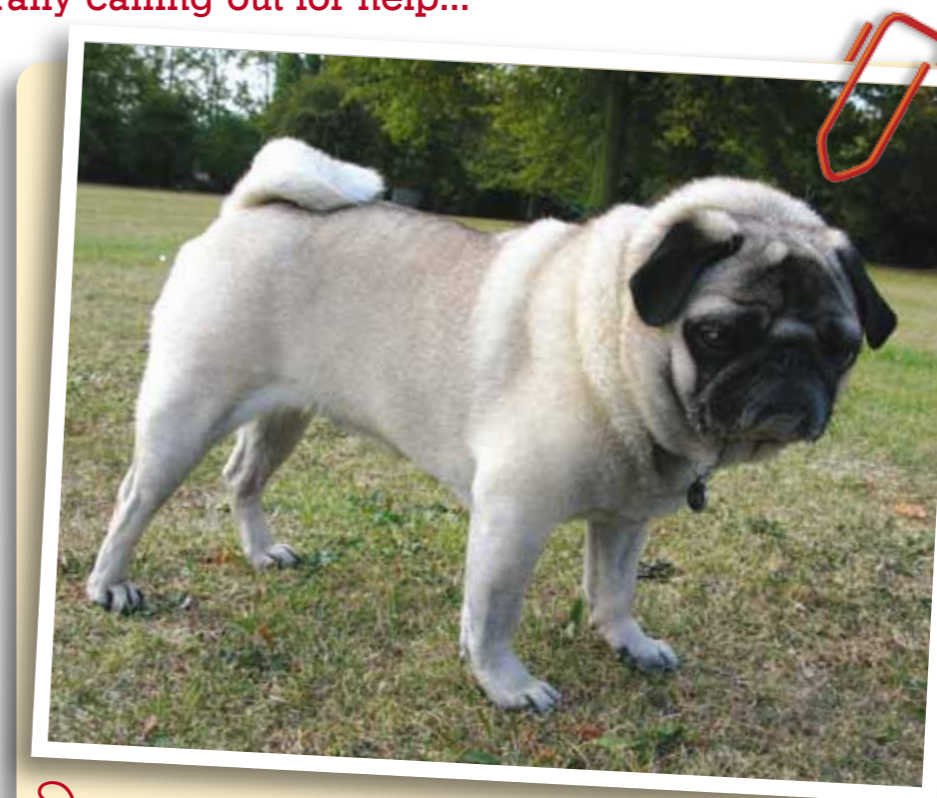
And then, of course, it didn't help that the neighbours were throwing biscuits and bones over the wall in an attempt to keep him quiet. Being a bright dog, Jingo quickly realised that if he sat and barked at a particular part of the wall for a few minutes, a bone would fall from the sky and he'd have something to do. Chewing is one of Jingo's favourite pastimes and the neighbours were inadvertently rewarding him for his barking.

Gardening leave

Next to chewing, he also adored digging, and the garden was starting to show some signs of taking strain - there were Pug-sized holes in a few corners, and Terry mentioned that Jingo was developing a taste for the roots of his rose bushes.

So, the problems to be overcome here included the barking, some digging and the consumption of a few rose bushes. Thankfully, I could give Terry some good news. Jingo's problem could be resolved relatively easily, and they could continue with life as normal without having to contemplate rehoming or moving.

Firstly, I asked if there were any objections to leaving an accessible window open for Jingo. That way, he could get into the house if he felt like it. Since this is what he was used to initially, it could help



Case History File

Jingo

DOG:	Jingo
BREED:	Pug
AGE:	Three
SEX:	Male, neutered
PROBLEM:	Barking
OWNER:	Terry Harris
ADDRESS:	Cape Town, South Africa

Percy, a Pug, posed by a model. Photo by Claire Matthews

him to settle down sooner. Terry agreed to this happily, adding that it didn't even occur to them to give the dog this option.

Next, we had to work on the barking. In order to stop the

reward from next door, Terry had to speak to his neighbours about the bones and biscuits. They needed to understand how their actions were continuing the problems, even though their intentions were

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good. Terry was also asked to buy Jingo an 'outside' toy box and to fill it with suitable chew toys, similar to his 'indoor' box. The toys were to be rotated to keep them interesting, and Terry could even hide a few in and around the house for Jingo to find during the day. By providing him with suitable mental stimulation, we could keep him busy all day, thus preventing him from barking unnecessarily.

The roses posed a bit more of a problem, but environmental management provided the answer there. We agreed to put up some

temporary garden fencing to stop Jingo's forays into the rose bushes while we got him accustomed to his new toy box and routines.

Instead of leaving his food in a food bowl, I asked Terry to scatter it around the garden and patio so Jingo could spend a few hours tracking each nugget - a wonderful game that most dogs love playing, as it is so intensely rewarding and a great way to combat boredom.

The digging could be resolved by providing a digging patch and teaching Jingo only to do his excavations in there. The digging patch would be clearly marked and in a corner of the garden where the digging was already happening. To make sure Jingo got the idea of the patch, Terry would bury some toys and a few treats in the patch and encourage Jingo to find them.

Creating a digging patch is relatively easy, but does require some thought. For instance, the area we chose was in the shade, but also in a well drained part of

the garden. Very few dogs enjoy digging in mud, and Jingo didn't strike me as the muddy type! We also made sure that the soil was well turned and that it would be easy for him to dig there. Sand is usually better, but can act as a magnet for every neighbourhood cat to use as a toilet. This, of course, is no problem for the dog, who would soon clean it up, but it sure doesn't make for a nice-smelling toy dog that you want to pet or kiss! Then, I added a reminder to Terry to keep restocking the digging pit with toys and treats.

Neighbourhood watch

With all these points in place, I asked Terry to contact me within a week to report on their progress.

A week later, I received the much-anticipated email. The neighbours turned out to be a bit of a sticking point, as they quite enjoyed saving their leftover bones for Jingo. After explaining that it was a health risk and how it was

influencing the barking, they eventually agreed not to throw food over the wall, and Terry compromised by taking Jingo next door a couple of evenings for a visit. This seemed to please everyone, and the food issue disappeared.

The digging patch worked like a charm, and, as soon as Terry opened a window, taught Jingo "in and out", and put two toy boxes down, the barking just disappeared. The roses were fenced off, and we would know in a few weeks if it was safe to remove the fence. I had no doubt, though, that Jingo would pleasantly surprise his owners by not even looking at the roses.

This was confirmed five weeks later when I received my final email from Terry to let me know that the fences were taken away and that Jingo didn't show any interest in the roses. What a clever, quiet, nice Pug he had become! I wonder how many years it will be before I see another one of these funny little guys! ■

Percy, a Pug, posed by a model. Photo by Claire Matthews

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