

# The pig that's top dog

Pot-bellied porker outshines the canines in agility team



This little piggy cleared the fence: Louie shows a doggy colleague how to leap over an obstacle in fine style

By Liz Hull



PICTURES: TERRY

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TROTting through tunnels, leaping over jumps and weaving between poles, Louie would be a valuable member of any dog agility team but for one thing.

He's a pig. The nine-month-old pot-bellied cross-breed is a non-showbusiness version of Babe, the movie pig that thinks it's a sheepdog.

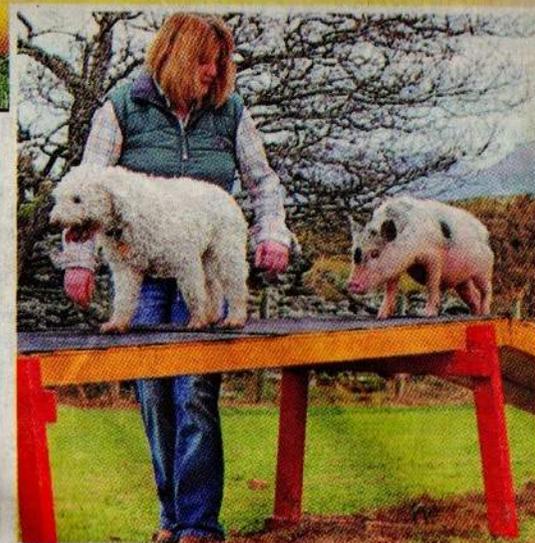
Like any faithful hound, Louie already walks to heel on a lead, responds to his name and even plays fetch.

He will tackle the toughest of agility courses on command – so long as there is a ginger biscuit for him at the end. And such is his aptitude that owner Sue Williams hopes he will one day perform in her Cheshire county dog display team at Crufts.

Mrs Williams, 42, an animal behaviourist, said Louie had joined her eight-strong pig collection at the age of three months. Because the others were so much bigger he had to be kept separately for his own



Best trotter forward: Louie negotiates a tunnel and, watched by proud owner Sue Williams, shows he also has a head for heights



PICTURES: TERRY KANE/BARROFT MEDIA

safety and was given the freedom to roam the grounds of her home in Porthmadog, North Wales.

'One day, when I was training my dogs, I was trying to get one to run through a tunnel,' she said.

'Louie decided to zoom through the tunnel instead. I was really taken aback. I thought, "Hold on a

minute – the pig's doing a better job than the dog".'

According to Mrs Williams, Louie has been accepted by his canine colleagues because he has earned his place in the team.

Together they have appeared in half a dozen agricultural and talent shows and, once Louie is granted

an official animal exhibition licence from the local council, Mrs Williams hopes he will be able to compete in real dog shows and even Crufts.

'The crowds are always totally amazed when they see what Louie can do, and how well he performs in comparison with the dogs,' she added. 'It just shows dog and animal

owners that if you use the right type of training and reinforce good behaviour through reward you can do anything with any animal.

'He retains information quicker than a dog so, once he's done a trick a few times, he knows what he's doing. Plus, he absolutely loves his ginger biscuits.'

## How a zap to the brain could bring out the genius in you

IT could be the breakthrough that allows you to unleash your genius ... or at the very least, crack the final crossword clue.

Scientists have discovered zapping the brain with a gentle electrical current could provide us with a flash of inspiration under pressure.

Professor Allan Snyder began his research after being intrigued by the finding that some brain damage can make patients more open to new ideas.

He believed that fleetingly 'exciting' the parts of the brain that are key to inspiration could help us solve problems, help distract us from the humdrum and unlock our inner potential so we see 'the world anew'.

Professor Snyder, a fellow of the Royal Society, Britain's most prestigious scientific body, tested his theory by asking university student

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volunteers to solve puzzles that used matchsticks, while a weak current was administered to the anterior temporal lobe of their brains, some from the right side and some from the left.

Those zapped on the right did three times as well as those zapped on the left, and similarly better than some who were not zapped at all, the journal Plos ONE reports.

This, says the University of Sydney researcher, is probably because the electricity boosted the activity of brain cells key to insight. Furthermore, the activity of cells on the left side of the brain, that we use to process quickly the familiar, may have been inhibited.

## A pretty penny...£250 worth of make up in the average handbag

FORGET mobile phones or MP3 players – the most expensive thing in a woman's handbag is probably her make-up.

The average British female carries £256 worth of cosmetics every day, a study has revealed. She typically squeezes 13 essential products into her make-up bag, each costing an average of £20.

Mascara is the most popular choice, with 95 per cent of women saying they wouldn't leave home without it. Perfume and foundation are also handbag staples, with almost four out of five carrying them everywhere.

Make-up bags are most likely to be full to bursting on a Friday afternoon in

Daily Mail Reporter

preparation for a night out – and on a Monday morning to mask the excesses of the weekend. And while the largest cosmetic collections belong to those between 18 and 25, it's professional women aged 35 to 44 whose make-up bags are worth the most.

But despite the value of their cosmetics hoards, almost three-quarters of women don't include their make-up kits on their insurance policy.

Ruth Attridge from Debenhams, which carried out the research, said: 'Without personal belongings insurance, the true cost of beauty could be an ugly surprise.'