



Kathy Kopellis McLeod with her dogs Bullet, left, and Chilli, both siberian huskies. Picture: Ian Cugley

The dog whisperer

Aggression and anxiety are the biggest issues with dogs across all breeds and dog-to-dog aggression is a big problem for owners

If keeping your precious pooch in line is proving impossible, one woman may have the answer.



Tonia McNelly

email ripples with your news
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Old phones needed

Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA) is helping the people of East Timor with a collection of old mobile phones. If you have any mobiles you no longer use, and you still have the pin numbers and preferably the chargers, the charity needs them. The phones are given to East Timorese working in areas such as community radio or vocational training. They will help them greatly. Contact Kate on kate@apheda.org.au and

Kathy Kopellis McLeod is a real-life Dr Doolittle who can talk to the dogs, read their expressions and teach you how to stop them misbehaving.

Kathy – a certified dog-behaviour consultant and former RSPCA dog instructor – has 14 years' experience under her belt.

She owns four siberian huskies that work alongside her to help make the other dogs behave better.

One of them, Chilli, is the first-person voice – or should I say dog – of her new book *105 Great Ideas to Having a Well Behaved Dog*.

This pocket-size book has advice, tips and ideas for coping with your best friend. It explains what your pooch's looks mean, how dogs think, gives tips on toilet training and reveals the best words and phrases to use in training.

Kathy, 39, visits the homes of owners whose dogs are causing mayhem.

"I have back-to-back bookings with referrals coming from dog trainers and veterinarians," she says. "I work seven days a week and respond to lots of emergency calls."

Kathy helps overcome issues such as aggression, separation anxiety, excessive barking and general misbehaviour.

"When I was running the RSPCA dog obedience classes I would see lots of behaviour problems," she says.

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She sits down with owners and their dogs for one-on-one sessions to work through the problems. It requires confidence-building in the dog and owner who, by this stage, can often be too scared to take their pet out.

Kathy introduces ideas such as counter conditioning, which gives the dog other responsive options.

This is where her huskies come into play. Like traditional role play, the aggressive dog is slowly introduced to one of Kathy's huskies.

"I use my dogs because I trust them and know they are well behaved," she says.

"Watching the patient dog's body language, I ensure they are removed from any situation before they can react and then I slowly introduce the dog back to the situation at a pace the dog can cope with and reinforce (behaviour) with food."

Kathy also holds Reactive Rover classes for dogs that have completed private classes with her.

These involve six dogs and are like mini workshops for the dogs and owners, giving them a safe environment to practise their new skills.

■ *105 Great Ideas to Having a Well Behaved Dog* is \$12.95. It's available from selected vet clinics or by phoning Kathy on 9345 5277.