

ZEUS is the jolliest, glossiest, 'waggiest' black labrador and, according to his owner Les Agius, is 'the most pampered dog in the world'. As he gambols joyfully across a Cotswold stubble field, the scene of his daily walk, there is no hint of his traumatic start in life.

Zeus was a Labrador Rescue statistic, collected at five months from a council flat, which he had wrecked in his distress at being left at home alone. 'He was clingy at first, but it soon passed,' says Mr Agius. 'Labradors so want to please; all they want is attention.'

The popular rescue-dog image is that of a pleading Battersea mutt, but an increasing number are pure-breeds, given away or abandoned by owners unprepared for their fashionable puppy's metamorphosis into an uncontrollable five-stone destroyer.

MARK FAIRHURST The Dogs Trust (formerly the National Canine Defence League), which coined the slogan 'A dog is for life, not just for Christmas', has rehomed 11,000 dogs this year and has 1,700 on its books at any

one time. Many pure-breeds were passed immediately to the breed-specific rescue societies, which number more than 160, and through which it is possible to adopt anything from a borzoi to a border terrier.

'There are far too many dogs being bred, which is why so many have to be rehomed,' says Jill Winter, who has two rescue springer spaniels. 'People buy cute puppies without doing any research. I would like to see far more people taking on a rescue dog than a puppy. It doesn't matter what breed you want—there will always be one to rescue.'

The charity The Labrador Rescue Trust celebrates its 20th anniversary next year; its 100 volunteers organise the rehoming of about 700 dogs a year. North West English Springer Spaniel Rescue rehomes 300 dogs a year; The Pug Dog Welfare and Rescue Association has a waiting list of 200. Groups range from the high-profile Retired Greyhound Trust, which has more than 60 branches and has rehomed 35,000 dogs over its 30 years, to one-man bands representing obscure breeds such as the Cesky terrier or Finnish spitz.

Jennifer Blaber of the Dogs Trust comments: 'The trend for "designer dogs", fashionable breeds and celebrity



GIVE A DOG A HOME

Could you make a rescue dog happy?
If you want a specific breed, consider
rehoming one of the thousands
of dogs rescued every year by
breed organisations, says
KATE GREEN

MIST'S STORY

Mist was a stray, so there is little past history on her, although it's obvious that she had broken her leg fairly recently, and, judging by her size, she may be two or three years old. A deerhound-cross lurcher, she is a very nervous dog, prone to panic when she feels threatened, and so is unsuitable for a household that has young children. Unfortunately, she's not very good with cats, and will be nervous of unfamiliar dogs. She needs a firm but gentle handler who can build up her confidence gradually.

If you're interested in giving a home to Mist, telephone 01422 240168 or visit www.lurcher.org





ownership has had an impact on the numbers of dogs needing rehoming. We now get people ringing and asking if we can take their labradoodle—they had been influenced by a famous person having one and then couldn't cope with it. After the film *101 Dalmatians*, there was an influx of homeless dalmatians that had outgrown the cute puppy stage.'

All life is contained behind the 'Home urgently required' headings on Greyhound and Lurcher Rescue's website. There was a beautiful badger-faced retired greyhound bitch whose owner said: 'My wife refuses to entertain the idea of having her at home'; Annie came from a dog auction at Swansea track and had a troublesome racing cut; Charlie broke his wrist in Ireland, but never had it fixed; Claude belonged to a homeless person; Henry ➤

Belinda Filmer of Labrador Rescue with her own and rehomed dogs Bertie, Fudge, Hannah, Amber, Zeus and Rosie

COULD YOU RESCUE A DOG?

These are the questions you will be asked

- Where will it live? (The Dogs Trust will not permit a rehomed dog to be kennelled or chained up)
- Is your garden dog-proofed?
- Are you fit enough?
- Do you have children? (Some dogs are nervous of children)
- Do you have other dogs? (Some dogs need to be an 'only')
- Will you want to take the dog in the car?
- Do you live among livestock?
- Do you want a trained dog?
- Could you train a difficult dog?
- And, most importantly, are you committed?



MARCO'S STORY

Marco is a large four-year-old white-and-fawn greyhound who, unfortunately, wasn't terribly good at racing. Marco has lots of character and a lovely temperament, and is always eager to meet new people. He likes to be made a fuss of, and enjoys being given treats. He's keen on going for walks, and can be very bouncy. *If you'd like to own Marco, telephone 01474 815273, or visit www.rgtcroftview.co.uk No greyhounds will be rehomed after December 16 due to the stress of Christmas on dogs. The kennels will reopen on January 6*

lived in 'horrendous conditions'; and Prince is upset at being returned to kennels after living in a home with a baby.

Greyhound rescuers include writers J. K. Rowling, who recently took home Sapphire from a centre in Fife, and Jilly Cooper, whose Feather was found wandering with a muzzle on, plus *One Foot in the Grave* actress Annette Crosbie. The latter two have tackled Gordon Brown about new welfare laws to protect greyhounds—some 9,000 retire from the track each year.

'Greyhounds don't need half as much exercise as people think; all they want to do is sleep. And they are the most gentle and affectionate dogs you could possibly imagine,' says Miss Crosbie.

Belinda Filmer, the South-West regional co-ordinator for Labrador Rescue, has fostered 50 dogs and matched many more, including Zeus with Mr Agius. She kept Hannah, who had produced 80 offspring by the age of six for a Welsh puppy farm; Bertie, who was left on his own during a thunderstorm and chewed through a computer cable; and Fudge, whose owner couldn't cope with a dog, five children and, fatally, a rabbit.



Mrs Filmer explains: 'Very few have been mistreated, but you get the occasional twit who buys an "Andrex puppy" and is then surprised when it turns into an adolescent hooligan. Most are genuine cases, the result of people's changes in circumstances.

'We match the dog to the person, not the other way round. We do rehome to people with no experience, but we don't let young dogs—those under six—go to elderly people. I've sent a 77-year-old lady with arthritis an 11-year-old dog, also with arthritis, and a retired gundog is blissfully happy with a retired gentleman farmer. You can make so many sad beginnings have happy endings.'

Visit www.countrylife.co.uk/rescuedogs for the latest cases from *Battersea Dogs & Cats Home* needing a country home

CONTACT DETAILS

Dogs Trust 020-7837 0006; www.dogstrust.org.uk

Guidelines for children 020-7833 7656; www.learnwithdogs.co.uk

Dog Rescue Pages for breed contacts www.dogpages.org.uk

The Kennel Club 0870 6066750; www.thekennelclub.org.uk

Greyhound and Lurcher Rescue www.greyhoundandlurcherrescue.co.uk

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home 020-7627 9218; www.dogshome.org

DODGER'S STORY

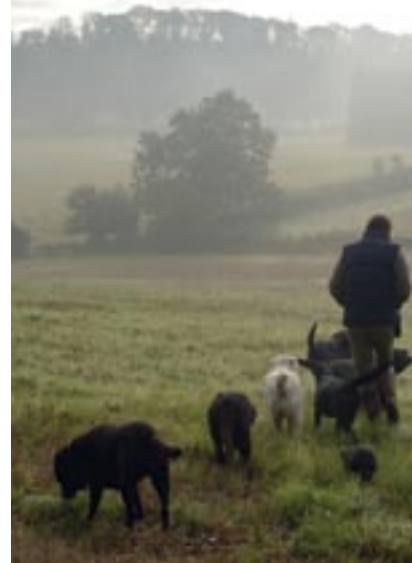
DODGER began life in a drug-affected home, after which he was going to be destroyed at the age of two. After being rescued, he suffered a massive fit. Jill Winter read of his plight on Springer Spaniel Rescue's website last year, and felt she could devote the necessary time to him.

'He was dreadfully thin and had a nervous chomping habit, like a nodding toy dog,' explains Mrs Winter, who also has Jack, a springer-cocker cross, whose previous owner suffered from asthma.

'Although I work from home, I had problems leaving Dodger for any time at all. He would howl and rip up furniture. I can now leave him for two hours, but I never leave him hungry or without having given him a long walk. He has toys and a barrier across the door, so that he's confined to one room, but doesn't feel shut in.'

Mrs Winter's advice to would-be adopters is to attend dog-training classes. 'Dodger is now a very happy and sociable dog, and we're extremely proud of his progress.'

CHOOSE THE RIGHT DOG



If you are:

ACTIVE: choose a working dog, such as a gundog, terrier or collie

A FAMILY WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: a labrador, golden retriever, whippet, retired greyhound, border terrier, Cavalier King Charles spaniel

OLDER: a retired greyhound, whippet, pug, smaller poodle, dachshund

ALLERGIC OR HOUSEPROUD: a non-shedding breed, such as a wire-coated, Bedlington, Yorkshire, Irish or Airedale terrier, miniature schnauzer, poodle, curly-coated retriever, Irish water spaniel

KEEN ON GROOMING: an Afghan, Old English sheepdog, poodle, Maltese terrier

WORKING ALL DAY: an older dog or retired greyhound. Avoid collies, terriers and working dogs (whatever you get, you must employ a dog walker; many breed rescue centres will not consider anyone who has to leave a dog for more than four hours)

AN OWNER OF LIVESTOCK: some lurchers are to be avoided, especially if you have cats, and terriers may chase chickens!

AN IMMACULATE GARDENER: toy breeds, lapdogs and Bichon Frise

WANTING QUIET: a whippet, greyhound, lurcher. Avoid guard-dog types and small terriers

WANTING TO AVOID VETS' BILLS: cross-breeds tend to have fewer genetic disorders, and dogs bred for work, rather than looks, tend to have fewer problems

NEEDING A GUARD DOG: German shepherd, rottweiler, doberman, Staffordshire bull terrier, boxer, giant schnauzer

(*Guidelines from the Dogs Trust*)

A SELECTION OF DOGS TO RESCUE

Follow our guide to popular breeds to find the perfect companion for you to rehome



ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL

The oldest sporting gundog—intelligent, hardy, extrovert, eager to please and good with children without being aggressive. Can occasionally be prone to sheep worrying. Very boisterous and needs a vast amount of exercise or you'll have problems. Wonderful good-tempered family dog (www.englishspringerrescue.org.uk)



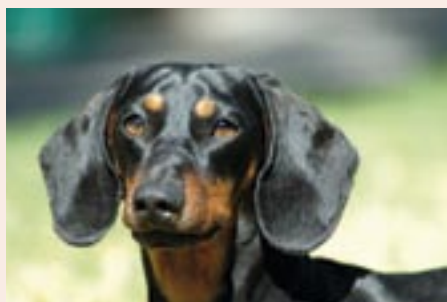
ENGLISH POINTER

Great jogging companion—they like to run, but are also soppy couch potatoes who love sleeping on the furniture. A fenced area is essential—pointers are bred to hunt and will not immediately understand new boundaries. Crate training is a good way of giving the pointer privacy—for a time—as he adjusts to a new home (www.dogpages.org.uk)



DALMATION

Bred as a carriage dog, with huge stamina, and needs plenty of companionship and exercise. Suffers from a fashion-accessory image, but is not a city dog. Good house dog, outgoing and friendly with an excessively waggy tail that will smash any ornaments within reach to smithereens (www.dalmationwelfare.co.uk)



DACHSHUND

Endearing, characterful, friendly little dog who was bred to flush badgers, and is, therefore, immensely courageous. Independent and territorial, dachshunds need fair and consistent handling, or you'll end up with a mini-tyrant. Beware back problems—dachshunds should avoid stairs and leaping out of cars (www.dachshundclub.co.uk, has a 6–12 month waiting list)



LURCHER

A type—sight-hound, working-dog cross—rather than a breed, the lurcher was first bred as a poacher's accomplice (*lur* is Romany for thief). Loving, characterful, capable of thrilling acceleration and thus exciting to exercise, but not for the impractical or squeamish—lurchers can bring down deer. Yet, like the greyhound, lurchers also have a tranquil stillness (www.lurcher.org)



LABRADOR

Labradors are sociable and faithful; they want to be with you, whatever you're doing, and don't like their own company, so shouldn't be left alone for a long time. They need considerable exercise, in all weathers, to stay both slim and quiet, and they eat an awful lot—labradors don't flourish on cheap food. Gentle and kind with children (www.labrador-rescue.com)



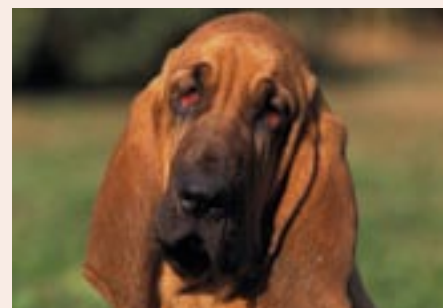
FOX TERRIER

Bred to bolt foxes and kill vermin, the fox terrier oozes personality and is loyal and hardy. The wire-haired variety used to have a mild reputation for snappishness; the smooth can be more difficult to train. Both like digging and chasing, especially cats and chickens, and should be kept on a lead near the road, as they can suddenly dash off (www.foxterrierclub.co.uk)



NORFOLK TERRIER

Lovable, appealing and cheerful little dogs—although their yap can shatter glass—who usually settle easily into a new home. They do need proper exercise, despite their smallness, and they love hunting. They're escapologists and tend not to have any road sense, so a well-fenced garden is a must. Bitches can be more difficult to house-train (www.norfolkterrier.club)



BLOODHOUND

Noble, dignified, wise—and very slobbery—big, strong dogs. Bloodhounds were bred to hunt by scent, and once they have it, they're oblivious to anything else, so dog-proof fencing and awareness of nearby roads are essential. Bloodhounds are affectionate and sensitive—a stern tone is all that's needed as a reprimand (www.bloodhounds.co.uk)