



Lion Dog Digest

Sponsored by the
Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation

This issue is, as usual, a little out of the ordinary run of things. We frequently point out that the object of the LDD is to report on the activities of our remarkable dogs in animal society (as opposed to human society).

A long time back we started accumulating 'lion dog incidents'. These are recorded examples of how the RR behaves when in contact/confrontation with wild animal society. We hope hereby to inform those, who are interested in this matter, about what they can expect, lookout for, anticipate, etc.

So we include in this issue two complete LDIs (lion dog incidents) in the form we are currently using to record them. Now, there will be circumstances where full disclosure is not permitted by the parties concerned. So they are entitled to embargo whichever parts they feel are sensitive, let us say, 'politically inappropriate'. This has not yet occurred, but the hope is that the general text will disclose enough data to satisfy the practitioner and that the detailed facts in the heading can be comfortably excluded, at least in part. Please feel free to comment/advise.

For very obvious reasons we regard Zimbabwe/Rhodesia as a most important factor in the whole being of the Rhodesian Ridgeback. It appeared as if we had found an exciting example of the Ridgeback's remarkable herding abilities, a very interesting LDI. Four or five Ridgies were involved, and the herd consisted of 100 or so 'war vets'. Unfortunately over-zealous relating/recording had made the story less acceptable than any level of 'journalistic licence' would permit, so the item was abandoned in that form.

Nonetheless it described a world in which our dogs operate daily, which is far removed from civilised society, a world in which they cope with situations which they may well have faced 100 years ago. Through the Internet, the outside world is better informed on the horrors of Zimbabwe than their neighbours here in South Africa. Though of Africa we are ourselves not necessarily well informed about the realities of the continent.

Thus we record below the lifestyle of Mr Everybody Farmer. This is a comparatively tame example of what is going on up there. There are plenty of farmers in Zimbabwe who can create a more graphic history of events complete with photographs. So though the LDD interests itself with our dogs in animal society we have no qualms about recounting in it events involving so-called humans in these particular circumstances. After all, isn't it merely the way in how 'appropriately' we interpret the word 'animal'. We remain guilty though of associating the bestial acts of humans with the animal world.

For those of you who want to be informed adequately on the horrors afflicting animals in Zimbabwe, please provide your e-mail address and we will put you in contact with suitable sources.

Since the incidents in Zimbabwe (as mentioned on the previous page) were recorded four months ago, life has not stood still. Subsequent to this LDD being compiled, but prior to proof-reading, we received notice of the final stages of the saga of this African farm. Perhaps Thandanani Farm will be one of the last to suffer this fate; it has happened all too frequently in the recent past to so many others. At the end of this Digest you will find the contents of a letter dated 27 November 2002, which was dictated to daughter Daryl by John and Margy Sankey, the last-named having been confined to bed with malaria.

It represents another very sad day for Africa and an even sadder day for the Rhodesian Ridgeback. It is difficult to imagine how breeding can possibly survive there and how even the ZKC (Zimbabwe Kennel Club) can manage to keep soldiering on. There is a very real risk that in the process we shall lose most of the excellent bloodlines that were maintained up there, and our breed can only be so much the poorer. We have involved ourselves (the Foundation) in rescue efforts, but with very little success.

So let us start off at the recent beginnings of the end of this story.

FARMING IN ZIMBABWE

How do you pack 46 years into a suitcase? These are the words of a white farmer who fled her farm, with 15 minutes' warning, from state sponsored thugs (SSTs) who had just killed her pet Eland antelope. The following is a selection of recent incidents in Zimbabwe:

- On Rudolphia farm, state sponsored thugs clubbed to death pet Ridgebacks which could not be rescued in time.
- Martin Olds was murdered here in our area, Nyamandhlovu two years and eight months ago. He was the first farmer murdered, taken out at dawn by SSTs on independence day, 18 April 2000 – murdered because he stood for law and order.
- A year later, 4 March 2001, his mother, Gloria Olds, senselessly murdered on her farm. The known killers still roam free.
- David Stephens, farming in Marondera before that, lost his life when he was dragged from a police station and shot.
- Terry Ford's small terrier dog hit the headlines worldwide when his owner was brutally murdered.
- David Coltart's bodyguard, who was abducted and has not been seen since, lies in an unmarked grave somewhere.

The opposition members that have lost their lives, all for the cause of standing for what is right and just, have not died in vain. For two years and eight months our lives have been spent co-existing with people

who have no desire to co-exist with us. Here in Nyamandhlovu, with our Ridgebacks, we all stand for justice and agriculture, and hereunder we tell you our story.

Our President has been clever. He has turned this scenario into a racial war and is ethnically cleansing the country of white farmers. Countrywide some farmers have left. A lot have had to leave. They have nowhere to go. Our President, himself in power illegally, has purged the country of people who know how to grow food, breed cattle, bring in forex with hunting safaris, and how to conserve the wildlife. Our President has encouraged the resettlement by

A smashed home.



squatters of prime agricultural lands. His SSTs have built their houses in the middle of lands planted with crops. His SSTs have threatened farmers with death if they should plant crops. Cattle have been axed to death or hamstringed. Game has been snared or shot, and in some areas completely wiped out. The endangered rhino in some areas have been snared or shot. In all of these scenarios we live with seven of our 11 Rhodesian Ridgebacks.

The Ridgebacks at Rudolphia farm died because they belonged to a white farmer. Our own loving Chancellor was axed through the head because we caught a thug stealing wood, who in turn, encouraged by the SSTs, accused us of setting our dogs on him to cause him grievous bodily harm.

There is no law and order!

The draconian Media Bill prohibits the sending of news outside the country to let the world know what is going on. Telephone lines are monitored. News still gets out by ways and means.

Right now, we ourselves, on Thandanani farm, have our eviction notices. These notices tell us that the illegal government is taking our farm. We must move off and we will not be compensated. What we are unable to pack and remove we will lose for all time. Where does one put irrigation piping which we have purchased over the last 20 years that irrigates 160ha? Where does one put 500km of drip tape? Where does one put anything? Where in town will we be able to live with 11 Ridgebacks? We are farmers and our only sin – we are white and we are not allowed to farm.

Come 21 September 2002, by the government law, we are supposed to stop farming. Just stop giving water to the cows. Just stop watering the crops. One farmer whose husband was jailed because he had not moved off his farm inquired of the provincial administrator: “what do we do with 15 000 chickens by Monday?” The answer: “Sell them”.

This country is starving and the farmers who produce food, breed cattle, bring in forex with safari hunts, are all victimised and are not allowed to continue doing what they do best.

The Zimbabwe Ambassador to the United States, who lives in the US, was recently asked on Africa Journal how he was going to grow maize for the starving masses on his farm when he lived so far away. At first he denied all knowledge of being given a farm. We all know that the Wilkinsons, who own the farm, were forcibly removed, just like they are trying to remove 2 900 white farmers who are desperately trying to remain on their farms in order to continue doing what they know best. We, and our Ridgebacks, are among those.

A case in point: the thug who comes at least three times a week to survey ‘his’ land on our farm

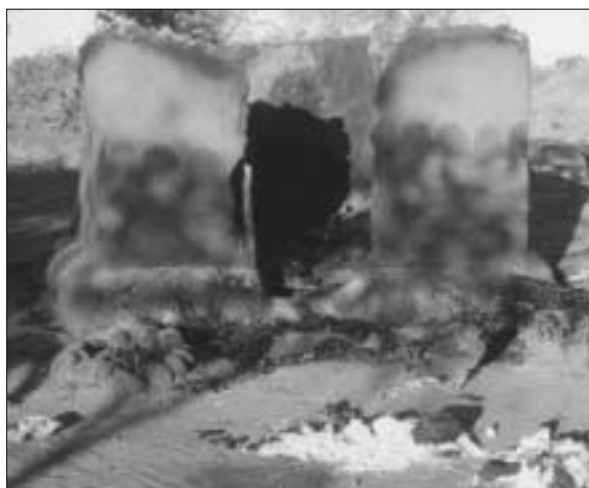
which is planted with crops which will feed the starving masses in Bulawayo, tells my husband John that he will be able to grow better food than John. He does not come up to ‘his’ house on the kopjie where we live. He had a taste of what our Ridgies could be like.

The settlers, who have taken over the land on the farms in our Nyamandhlovu district, and who have been there for nearly three years, have produced nothing. One thousand squatters, who forcibly evicted Peter and Nan Goosen from their farm, Redwood Park, live not far north of us and have grown nothing in these past 32 months. The farm is a sad derelict remembrance of better times.

The two co-operatives next door to us, which started at the same time as we did 20 years ago, produce nothing. In



Vandalised TV outside a smashed hut.



Someone's home.

their cases, both of them were given the land which was at that time legally purchased by government. Outside aid poured in, tractors, farm machinery, seed, fertiliser, etc. It was up to the settlers to start producing food. Today the tractors and machinery lie useless, broken and idle. The people there cannot afford to turn the electricity on. The game on the farm has been shot or snared out.

Instead they chose and took the opportunity to join the SSTs and the border gezi boys, the youths who parade around in green overalls, bravely pointing their guns and intimidating the workforce of bona fide farmers.

The death threats that we have received are numerous. Our Ridgies have a name in this area and



African Footprints – by 'war vets' in 'the drought'.

because of it, up to now, we are seldom harassed on the kopjie. We are still on the land. The death threats that our 150 workers and all their dependants receive are numerous. Most of them are still on the land. The trashing of their houses in the compound sent a lot of our workers home to their land in the rural areas. In another incident, when 16 houses were set alight and those workers lost everything that they possessed, it sent a lot more workers fleeing for their lives. But still we continue.

The Nyamandhlovu aquifer, on which our farm is situated, is essential to grow crops, but to pump the water out of the ground is costly. A normal resettled landless person would be unable to pay for the electricity, purchase pumps,

motors, seed, fertiliser, etc. If we were allowed to, we would be able to plant maize which would feed the whole population of Nyamandhlovu for a month.

Our threats started in January 2002 when the so-called settlers next door decided that the crops on our farm would be nice to acquire. In February 2002, the SSTs rampaged through the workers' compound trying to intimidate them. Twice they bussed people out from town to try to come and intimidate us. As I said above, our Ridgies have a reputation in this area and the intimidators all went home.



Workers' homes – still smouldering.

On 1 March 2002, the so-called war vets shot at us in our fleeing motor car on the Victoria Falls Road – we are still here. We had to put up with quite a lot of nonsense after that. We have had bunches of border gezi youths chanting their party songs while running up and down the road outside the farm. Seeing a Ridgie inside the car they thought better than to pick up and throw rocks at us. We have also had bunches of border gezi youths chanting their party songs again running up and down inside the farm. Inside the farm on the day they told us they were coming to build their houses in the middle of our cultivated lands, our Ridgebacks, three of them, changed the minds of our new settlers. The axes, poles and sticks

they came armed with, flew through the air as they ran to get away from the dogs. Not being trained for attack work the Ridgies were really having a great time. They had not bitten our previous thugs and literally had no instructions to bite this mob off 45 fleeing SSTs.

This date was 28 March 2002, and the start of our first eight day work stoppage during which time we lost 30 tons of maize along with onions, cabbages and other produce. John and I had to herd our own cows so they could graze. Not one worker was allowed to work for us for fear of being beaten up or, worse, losing his life. The work stoppage caused untold damage on our farm. We were unable to transport produce to the market. Our eight-ton truck, loaded with produce, was stopped from going to the market in town. We were unable to irrigate acres of newly planted seedlings that died through lack of water.

Later, on a daily basis, 200 SSTs raided our farm. Our labour fled, our Ridgies did not. During this time 30 tons of maize were stolen. It was a tricky situation. With an unloaded rifle (he had finished the ammo while getting the settlers to drop the stolen goods) John, alone, managed to recover six tons of produce. And he did not even have his usual companion, Maggie the Ridgeback.

On Wednesday, 3 April 2002, our compound was trashed. Workers had their cupboards, TVs, radios, smashed. Blankets were stolen. Personal possessions were trashed. Police response was slow but it did arrive – eventually.

On Sunday, 28 April 2002, 16 houses in our compound were burnt to the ground. Our workers lost everything. Their homes, possessions, everything.

Two farmers' wives in the district, both of whom had cancer, Barbara Hubert and Winnie Keogh, who suffered tremendous pressure from the ugly squatters on the farm, died from stress. We ended up looking after Winnie's Ridgeback.

Theft is on the increase. People countrywide are starving. The Thandanani Farm Ridgebacks are not starving.

The government blames the drought. There was no drought when the President first set the SSTs loose on the white-owned farms. Some farmers now have had enough. Some farmers have had to flee their farms leaving everything behind. The Nyamandhlovu farmers, off and on their farms, remain united and support each other. Twenty-one Nyamandhlovu farmers spent the weekend unnecessarily in jail from 9 to 12 August 2002. Two of the oldest, 79-year-old Charles Sterling and 80-year-old Ted Kirby, spent their time in the Nyamandhlovu jail. The police are given their orders by the CIO and are told what to do. Law and order is non-existent. The bail conditions, as set by the magistrate, say that farmers are not allowed back to live on their farms and these laws cannot be changed because 'someone' high up says so. Packing up one's life is not easy.

Today, as I write this, 29 August 2002, a cattle rancher, a 78-year-old dairy farmer and a woman and her son, a vegetable grower, near to us – it is their turn today to be locked up for staying on their farm. The news is carried around to all of us by means of our really efficient radio system. Our Farmers' Association Chairman, Chris Jarrett, is waiting now at the police station with warm coats and tracksuits to give them support when they arrive. Chris was locked up on 9 August 2002 with the other farmers and knows that one is only allowed two items of clothing in jail.

The farmers in the district bring food and support. Because of the Media Bill the supporters themselves face being arrested for being in a group of people without police permission. The police are deliberately unco-operative, denying police escorts ordered by the magistrate to accompany them to the farm while they pack.

Mike Wood, and his family before him, have lived on their farm for over 100 years. Here again we own the mother of their Ridgeback. The Ridgeback plays an important role among the farmers of Nyamandhlovu. The Wood family was there at the turn of the century when no black people lived here in this part of the country.

People coming to Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) from Britain brought with them everything that started this country off on a good footing those 100 years ago. All the infrastructure in this country was not here at that time. The early farmers and their knowledge made this country the bread-basket of Africa. This country once fed not only itself but surrounding countries as well. Unfortunately they could not stop the population explosion which followed and turned the majority race at that time into the minority race of today.



Margy Sankey with Maggie the Ridgeback.



The ruling party repeatedly reports that it wants to correct the imbalances of the past. Nobody is questioning that the land should be more equitably distributed. The question is the way in which it is being done. What was not done in 20 years is now to be corrected in two-and-a-half years, purely for one man to hang on to what he has already lost. The white man bought land just as the black man has. The difference is that the white-owned land must be given to the state to be resettled. The state is not giving the farms to the landless. The power-hungry top government officials are taking the best land and the landless poor remain landless. Along with it, thousands of farm workers are made homeless.



A row of burnt-out houses.

The annihilation of the Ndebele nation in Matabeleland, North South and Midlands in the early 1980s, is taking place again. This time they are being starved to death. Any opposition member in the country is denied land. Farm workers country-wide are made homeless.

Grace Mugabe herself has just grabbed a 100-million dollar farmhouse in northern Zimbabwe. The value of the rest of the farm is astronomical. The landless do not want the land. The power-hungry officials want the land as a country residence, somewhere where they can go when they finish their work for the week in town.

For over 20 years our President did little or nothing to correct the situation of the masses wanting land. When it was to be seen that he had lost popularity in the 2000 election he gave his thugs free rein to go all out and destroy the opposition. The recent massively flawed 2002 election proved that the country wants change. They want return to law and order and a stop to the thuggery and violence continuing countrywide. The outside world is powerless to help remove the thugs who were elected into power in 1980 and if any of the majority of this country's population does anything to remove the violence they are never heard of again.

And still we continue to farm. On Guy Fawkes Day, in November, the police will come to arrest us because we will still be farming. It matters not to them that they will arrest a woman. They are still looking for the woman farmer from Nyamandhlovu who is presently in hiding. She has gone to ground and hopefully will remain there until some sort of sanity prevails.

All we ask for is to return this country to the rule of law, the law which stops a thug from destroying one's life's work. When 'they' come to evict us – one sure thing – our Ridgies will have to become town dogs until the day when we can safely move back to the farm, and this loyal, loving, and devoted breed can roam free again.

ZIMBABWE TODAY



The kopjie from 1km distant.

I was up on the kopjie when I received a report that there was an invasion down at the packing shed involving a mob of squatters and so-called 'war vets', in this case more correctly referred to as border gezi youth, aka state sponsored thugs (SSTs). So I rushed to my vehicle and jumped in

with three dogs and drove rapidly down to the shed just over a kilometre away. There was a large mob of them present, say 60, so I carried on towards the local police station 10km distant, circumventing trees laid across the road. The officer in charge at the station said there was no possibility he could spare anyone at that time, so I told him that if there was bloodshed it would be his responsibility.

I drove back to the farm, meeting up with my son en route, and he told me that the mob wanted to talk with me. So I asked him to pass on a message that I would only talk to two representatives, and parked the vehicle inside the small housed property only 200m from the shed.

After several messages passed back and forth, the mob moved down to the gate in front of the property where I had parked, and they all started leaning on the 1,2m-high fence; but they were reminded that I would only talk to two of them. There still were problems in determining two representatives from the mob of 60.



Knobkerrie, boots, shoes and booty bags.

At last one was let in through the gate; he had been on the farm previously with all his thugs in attendance. On that occasion I had agreed to call him Penga Boy as his correct name was indecipherable: now he wanted to be referred to as Good Boy. He was shaking like a leaf; eventually another was pulled through the mob (which was still hanging on to the fence and gate) to join him. But then the gate was forced open and I rushed back to the car only 15m behind me and threw open the doors.

The three dogs were very dissatisfied with this unruly mob who immediately took to their heels, falling over each other, throwing axes and sticks (clubs) into the air, and closing the gate behind them as best they could. Contrary to the popular opinion that Ridgies have over-zealous teeth when herding, I have had three which controlled sheep faultlessly. Further, it is no surprise to me that my dogs can chase off a mob of unruly thugs without breaking skin. My earlier threesome were always completely silent, did not touch the sheep at all, kept moving in on the woolly ones in much the same manner as they would dart in on lion when baying in true historical fashion.

Peace eventually returned and the mob regrouped. I continued my negotiations with the chosen two. They came up with three 'charges' against me. The first was that I forced a labourer to sit on a chair in the middle of the field and that he died (he did in fact die, four years later, of causes totally unrelated to his sojourn in the fields). The second was that I had charged them for some ploughing I did for them some several years earlier. And the third was that my dog chased someone up a tree which he regarded as intent to commit grievous bodily harm. In reality the party concerned had attacked my dog (Chancellor) with an axe which he had been using to chop down trees for firewood, obviously without permission; and the dog never touched him.

So negotiations continued; they were going to build their houses in the middle of the maize fields and they demanded that we get out by nightfall. The death threats flowed thick and fast. The farm workers were eventually herded into a bunch and left sitting on the ground around the packing shed; subsequently several of them ceased employment with me as a result of the threats. (The whole labour force had on a previous occasion moved onto another farm for the night after one shot was fired over their heads, such is the fear in which they live.)



Chancellor - his ear fully recovered.

On returning home one night, shots were fired at us as we approached the gate. We drove across to

the compound and found that 16 huts had been torched. I went to the police but they had no transport so I organised six of them into my car; they climbed out half-a-mile before we reached the farm so that they would not be seen to be helping a white farmer. Thereafter they spent two days taking statements and nothing ever came of it.

Two days later, an army Landrover arrived and the occupants asked where the meeting was being held.

Well, I had no idea. They were here for the meeting

concerning my Thandanani Farm, so I directed them to Redwood Farm, which was the main depot for SSTs in the area. So the six of them arrested 30 of my people of whom only three were male, marching them off to wherever: they spent three days in jail, appeared later in court, and the magistrate threw the case out. But the labour force is sullenly subjugated and does not stand up for its rights: their homes are destroyed and possessions smashed and burnt.

From our own point of view we have suffered many invasions; we have, on one occasion, put them to flight and recovered six tons of vegetables: heaven knows what the losses were. My labourers have gone into the maize fields and, on one occasion, captured 25 thieves and two donkeys brought in for cartage.



We caught this one!

operated democratically by any stretch of anyone's imagination.

We had too many experiences of vote-rigging to be in any doubt whatsoever as to the 'validity' of that election. We even had to fight all and sundry (police, military, CIO, 'war vets') to ensure that our workers were left in possession of their identity books in the run-up to the election. (They needed their books to vote.)



Recovered loot.

Meetings are arranged among the settlers (people who have been settled on farms already taken from white farmers) and, to feed themselves, because they have no interest even in subsistence farming, they organise raids into areas where white farmers are still producing crops.

Some months back, during the election, we observed those electoral procedures. At one polling station (kept under surveillance for the full voting period at a distance of 200m from the booths) a total of 25 people called in to cast their vote during the day, yet the boxes were stuffed full when they arrived at the counting station. At another station, observed by the Nyamandhlovu farmers also, the Zanu-PF youth would only admit selected/approved voters. To our knowledge, no polling booth observed by us

THE AFRICAN TRAGEDY

For the past three months Robert Mugabe's mouth piece, Jonathan Moyo, has shouted: "no more farm evictions, land reform is complete and every white farmer has got the remains of at least one farm" (one white farmer to one farm)!

However, yesterday on Thandanani Farm, Nyamandhlovu, at 09h00, nine people assisted by police EVICTED (not assisted) us from our farm because some 'fat cat' wants us off! 'Fat cat' has already taken one of our farms and now wants what we were left with, out of the four farms we originally owned. It was 'PROMISED' that we would be left with this, our ONE remaining farm.

During the night, 'fat cat' arrived and removed approximately 4,5-million dollars worth of irrigation equipment and fertilisers. Tonight? It is anybody's guess what he will remove. Our truck, in trying to remove and take off some of our stuff, has been ordered to come back (to 'fat cat'?)

The police will NOT react. There is no Law and Order.

We and all our 11 Rhodesian Ridgebacks are now without the farm, having been ordered out of our farmhouse by the 'fat cat's' thugs and helped by the grinning police!

This is outright THEFT, happening to all white farmers all over Zimbabwe RIGHT NOW!

We ourselves have had to leave behind ZWD\$500-million worth of moveable assets, and please note, for which we are most unlikely to ever receive any compensation!

At the moment we are trying to retrieve some of our garlic and onions from the shed, but all our labour have been told not to work for us.

The 'fat cat' told our labour to take the farm lorry and sell it to pay themselves their wages as we had 'run away' ... because we owed them money! Our labour then turned to 'fat cat' and said "No. You chased the owners away, therefore it is up to you to pay our wages". On hearing this, 'fat cat' jumped into his car and drove away in a flat huff.

It might interest you to know that 'fat cat' gave to our labourers Zanu PF T-shirts which they refuse to wear as they will NOT support the ruling party!

All the Ridgebacks seem to have settled down in town, but have to continuously jump up, run out and BARK all night at every town noise they hear. On the farm they are used to the sounds of the bush which do not worry them.



Wonder who painted this sign?

This is the message received from Margy Sankey by us here in Johannesburg on 27 November 2002, within 24 hours of this traumatic experience.

The tragedy is that Thandanani Farm delivered a large percentage (about 25%) of the total fresh produce consumption of the City of Bulawayo. How long can this go on before there is a violent retaliation? – probably exactly what the ruling party is waiting for.

LION DOG INCIDENTS

Example: Dog and puppy contacting elephant
Location: Kruger National Park
Occurred: 6 February 2001
Related by: Jaco Badenhorst
Recorded: March 2001
Names: Juba, Tambuku Dragonshadow – DOB 11/12/1997
Inga, Chipangali's Madanha – DOB 14/08/2000

The male dog was two-and-a-half years old at the time, and the puppy bitch about seven months. As the fences around our living quarters are generally electrified, elephant will stand well back from them as a rule, eating only whatever hangs over and well clear of that fence. Elephant are regular visitors to our strongly fenced residence and though familiarity has caused the dogs to take no notice of them, I prefer to have these big fellows standing well back before exiting the gate and putting myself and dogs in/on the vehicle: so I ask my adult dog to move them on when required and he takes his duty very seriously. He has to be serious because the elephant are somewhat reluctant.

On this occasion the young bitch got out also and joined her partner in the dash through the tall, thick, grass. In these conditions the dogs see only grass and tree tops, but the adult dog knew what to look out for. Meanwhile the pup advanced, barking wildly, to within as close as 5m from the pachyderms. There was a yelp and she returned showing a remarkable turn of speed. The older dog saw the elephant off without the pup's assistance.

Comment

There is very little cause for concern when dogs advance close to elephant, rhino, hippopotamus and buffalo. From the dog's point of view, buffalo would represent the greatest danger, followed by elephant (the trunk), hippo, and rhino creating a very low-level risk. However one should not forget that gruesome sight of a herd of buffalo repeatedly tossing a dead lioness high into the air; she obviously had been unacceptably careless: an elephant in musth can chase anything with vigour.

Example: Puppy confronting Mozambican Spitting Cobra
Location: Mpumalanga
Related by: Dave and Sandra Rothwell
Recorded: 8 August 2002
Owners: Dave and Sandra Rothwell
Name: Elle – DOB 15/05/2001

The little brown dog arrived on 3 July 2001. To be called L (spelt Elle). Daughter of Dusty and Oscar and sister to Thombi (of the Russell household). Overall a very quiet puppy that has been spoiled well beyond what a little brown dog should be. Initial training was not too much of a problem; the howling at night, when shut into the kitchen (conveniently situated in the farthest room away from the bedroom) seemed to affect the neighbours more than ourselves. Even so, there were only a couple of howler nights. She was also extremely quick to latch onto the fact that 'going' on newspaper left conveniently in the kitchen was far more hygienic than the floor. As a consequence house training was easy with hardly any mishaps, a true testament to the intelligence of the dogs and their willingness to learn.

Unfortunately the first main incident with Elle was unpleasant. It seems that a trait of this breed is that they must scavenge and that whatever any other dog has in its bowl is different and better than what has been placed in its own bowl. The speed with which she dived into our other dog's bowl surprised us and left the old dog in no doubt that the young whipper snapper needed teaching a lesson. A sharp nip to the

back of the neck drew blood and poor Elle spent a good hour whimpering in pain. It all ended with a trip to the vet as the wound was obviously very sore. No real harm was done and even to this day she still tries to see what other dogs have. The scars from the bite are still evident but it seems not to deter her.

The second main incident was also unpleasant and led us to the discovery that these dogs have allergies similar to humans. Winter months in the Lowveld are hard. The lack of rain means that many things suffer. Water bowls left for dogs become important sources of water for all sorts of things including birds and insects. Bees quickly learn where a source of water is and regularly visit. Small puppies find small buzzy things fascinating and spend much time chasing them, on occasions even catching them. Being stung by certain ones is all part of the learning process. It was no great surprise that Elle got stung: what was a surprise was the reaction afterwards. Her tongue swelled up quickly followed by her whole face. Another trip to the vet and a tablet quickly resolved a situation that could apparently have been life threatening. The reaction to stings did not stop there. Elle learnt quickly to keep away from bees, but those small hornet/wasps that build nests under eaves and on sheltered walls are not so easy to avoid. Brushing past a nest during a game or chase can provoke an angry response and a sting. Another trip to the vet after just such an incident means that we now keep a stock of tablets for incidents with bees or wasps and we are fully aware we have an allergic dog.

More worrying from our point of view is the learning process with more sinister things and just as life-threatening to the dog as the stinging insects. The main reason for choosing a bush dog was for the inbred instincts when it came to dangerous bush creatures. This is purely selfish; we want some warning of when there may be a problem and how to avoid it. Our old dog, a Ridgeback cross, has learnt to leave snakes alone: he sees them and will warn us when they are around. But Elle had not been present when this happened. Even so we quickly learnt that Elle has exactly the same communication methods as the other dog. There are different barks. There is the stranger approaching bark, the playful bark, the angry bark. But the snake bark is totally different. It is more monotone and rhythmic. The first time we heard Elle produce such a bark we investigated and found nothing. However, about half-an-hour after the incident, the dog started with an eye problem. It doesn't take too much to realise that it was the work of a Mozambican Spitting Cobra. We flushed the eyes out and applied some soothing ointment. Even so, the dog looked a sorry state the day afterwards; the actual eyes looked worse than they were because of the ointment. A speedy recovery was made.

Alarm bells were ringing therefore when Elle started to bark in this particular manner when we were having a soiree on the stoep. We have noted in the past that Elle will 'point' to something that she may see and find worrying until we see the thing ourselves. This particular evening the bark and the point were to something just off the stoep. Fortunately we had an expert snake handler with us at the time so we hastily removed children from the area and alerted one Mr Russell. A Mozambican Spitting Cobra was quickly caught and is currently the star turn at Mr Russell's snake talks and demonstrations. Elle's working of the situation was amazing. She knew the snake was danger. She kept well away from it but was prepared to show exactly where it was and that it was dangerous. This will not be the last incident, but if she can reproduce this behaviour then it is exactly what we want: both the dog and ourselves are not under any great threat and we are made aware of the presence of danger.

Needless to say, Elle has become not just a pet but a member of our family who is loved and cherished beyond belief.

HD INCIDENT

We have previously mentioned Dusty and her trials and tribulations regarding the HD dispensation. She is probably the only dog on our planet that can halt lion with her growl. I have personally witnessed her telling an elephant to take another route, and he jumped to it. In its wisdom KUSA has not been prepared to register her puppies. She was a 0.1, which means that she is transitional in one hip. It is accepted by the testing authority that dogs which are, for example 1.1, may very well be accepted as 0.0, when more mature. Ralph Kalwa, Dusty's owner, was advised of this and recently went to the considerable trouble and expense of repeating the whole testing procedure now that Dusty is



Dusty

reaching the end of her breeding career. So now she is a 0.0.

Ralph used to take her to Afsaal in the KNP on almost a daily basis. She was a great hit with the public, particularly the foreign visitors. He dealt with many, many, requests for puppies. Her progeny are spread throughout the world. The enthusiastic purchasers were advised to spay the bitches, and told that if and when the HD rules were corrected, an attempt would be made to contact them to ascertain their current feelings.

So that is the latest position, and we wait to see how successful Ralph is. But what is so galling to this writer is that here we have an RR who has proved herself to be one of the exceptionally very few to actually face up to lion. Sure, she has never bayed one. She doesn't need to. She can stop them in their tracks whenever she feels they are becoming a bit too familiar. So why are her children not good enough for doggie society? Doesn't a girl's character count for anything any more? It's time the guys stopped looking only at her hips.

RABIES INCIDENT

The Citizen, 21 August 2002

EMPANGENI – A man was killed and torn apart by a leopard over the weekend. Family members could only recognise Amos Mncwango's clothing after police recovered his dismembered torso. The attack follows repeated complaints of stock losses in the Ntambanana area.

Mr Mncwango's death follows that of a 55-year-old man at Ngwelezane Hospital on 3 August, after he was bitten by a rabid leopard near Dondotha in June. The man's wounds were positively identified as "being consistent with leopard bites". He returned home, but family members said he began displaying signs of "madness" and was taken back to hospital where he died. Rabies was diagnosed.

According to State Veterinarian Dr Shashi Ramrajh the area is noted for rabies infections.

It is with great sadness that we say farewell to Margy Sankey. She passed away on Monday, 9 December 2002, as a result of liver failure brought on by a bout of malaria. Margy will be sorely missed by all at the Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation, particularly in the view that she was one of the founder members. Our deepest sympathy goes to her husband John and family.



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Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation • PO Box 3829, Northcliff, 2115, South Africa

Tel: +27 11 678-3617 • Fax: +27 11 678-9321 • E-mail: scotty@stewart.org.za • Website: www.rhodesianridgeback.org.za