

A dog's life...

Did you watch the BBC2 documentary last month, 'Horizon: The Secret Life of the Dog'? If you saw it you'll know what I mean when I say, "Wow, did you see that genius Collie from Germany! (or was it Austria?)".

Now, my dog, Ivor, is hard pressed to recognise his own name after a night's sleep. Obviously, I put a lot of work in at the puppy stage so I have got "sit" pretty well sorted, but that's it really and his head is now full. Okay, like most dogs he probably does have the 15 word vocabulary of the typical canine, although now he is old his selective deafness means most of these have become optional commands, in his opinion.

Anyway, this foreign dog called Betsy could recognise more than 340 words. The most impressive task she was set was when she was shown a picture of a toy, she would then run to the next room

and amongst a dozen or so other toys fetch the illustrated object. And now that they aren't allowed



Betsy the Collie

to make things up on TV it must have been true!

From a veterinary standpoint the programme became interesting when they discussed the detection of diseases using gene mapping on the canine genome (DNA) using breed specific diseases (see www.dogmap.ch). This highlighted the potential human benefit from the diseases I see daily in certain breeds. When detected, this gives hope for medical breakthroughs from man's best friend. In all honesty though, the next day at work all we talked about was that amazingly clever Collie. Wow! ■

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To watch 'The Secret Life of the Dog' on BBC iPlayer log onto www.bbc.co.uk/i/pssgh