

Pet TV

Why some dog training shows have legs and others are just puppies

The writing was on the wall that Channel 10's recent 'Celebrity Dog School' was doomed to be prematurely put down even before it started to screen. For a start, 'celebrity' was a loose term given to the Z-list human participants—many weren't instantly recognisable either by face or name. There was also the content matter—a half hour program designed to teach the discipline of agility and train dogs of diverse backgrounds and abilities. Many contestants hadn't even mastered basics of come, sit and stay and that's not just a reference to the canine participants.

Another tip-off the show was in dire straits was a call an associate of mine received from one of the show's production team. She was asked to give advice on where they could locate up-market dog boutiques and could she recommend companies that could provide sponsorship opportunities and prizes. Plus content was lacking from their web site and they desperately needed to 'beef it up'. All this was needed with less than two weeks before the first episode was to air.

Of course some training shows have been extremely successful like Victoria Stilwell's 'It's Me Or The Dog' that delivers practical and positive training advice for problem dogs and their owners. Cesar Milan's 'Dog Whisperer' series has also been immensely successful even though Milan's methods have attracted its fair share of controversy. Although these shows have their place and are often entertaining, they mainly deal with problem and extreme behaviours, not the basics that most people need.

However, a new series is about to be launched around the time of this issue's publication that concentrates on the basics. 'Wagging School' is about to be unleashed from Auntie's kennel and has an innovative twist. ABC Science's new series consists of 10 x five minute training sessions that can be found at their website. These concise programs can also be downloaded to your computer and transferred to your mobile phone or video iPod/mp4 player and viewed as many times as you like, when you like, where you like—even at your favourite dog park where training advice is most needed.

Convenience aside, these programs deliver positive and practical training tips from local dog trainer, Chrissie McIntyre. Shot around Sydney, each one tackles how to teach basic training like heel, sit, lie down, leave it and stay. Plus there's training tips on how to prevent separation anxiety, loneliness barking problems and traffic safety for stop/go training on city streets. Just as a training session with your dog should be short and to the point, so too are these well produced shows.

Wagging School will be available at abc.net.au/waggingschool from August 13 and screening weekends on ABC2.



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