



UNLEASH
YOUR DOG'S
INNER
LEGEND



FOUR-LEGGED LEGENDS OF LOCKDOWN

For humans, lockdown has been a very challenging time. For those fortunate enough to be spending this time with furry friends at their side, lockdown has also been a time of special bonding.

All around the world, stories of four-legged legends were shared. Some entertaining, some heartwarming, and all of them sure to make us appreciate the unique value that dogs add to our lives.

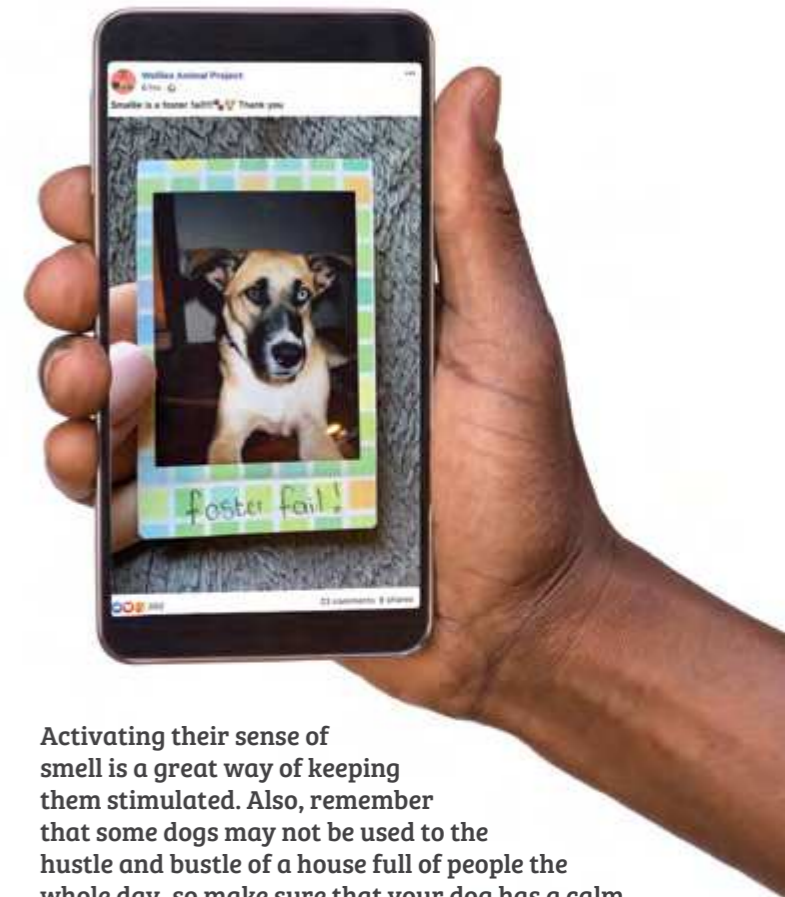
One video perhaps sums up the amazing spirit of dogs during this period. A Great Dane called Luca copies his owner as he does lunging exercises inside his home. It's simply adorable but it also perfectly illustrates the irrepressible positivity of dogs. While humans tend to get bogged down by their circumstance and the devastating news from across the planet, it's though our canine companions have a built-in filter — only allowing through feel-good vibes and eternal optimism.

Scientists have long pointed out the psychological benefits of interactions with dogs. This is the case especially with people who have been spending the lockdown period alone, isolated from human contact. Research done at PDSA, an animal charity in the UK shows that pets can have a very calming effect on people going through anxious times and can provide a sense of purpose and focus which is particularly important for vulnerable and lonely people.



Not surprisingly, animal shelters saw an upsurge in fostering just before lockdown started. Wollies Animal Project in Pretoria reported a record 180 dogs going into foster care before lockdown, with 43 turning into 'foster fails' — when the dogs are adopted for good. One heartwarming video shows volunteers at a dog shelter in Tampa in the USA applauding from empty cages as all the dogs at the shelter went to foster parents during this time.

Then there are also some very special individual dogs who've stood out for their contributions during the crisis. One such dog is Sundance, a golden retriever. His owner's neighbour in Colorado suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which makes her particularly vulnerable COVID-19. Sundance was trained to make the short journey along a garden path to collect the elderly neighbour's shopping list — and, to return the grocery bag filled with her requirements afterwards! Now that's neighbourly love.



Activating their sense of smell is a great way of keeping them stimulated. Also, remember that some dogs may not be used to the hustle and bustle of a house full of people the whole day, so make sure that your dog has a calm, quiet place it can retreat to if feeling overwhelmed.

And do take it easy on the human food treats. Just like you, your dog will want to be in tip-top shape when you go out for the much-loved morning run. In fact, rumour has it that dogs have been talking amongst themselves about making the morning run an institution, even after lockdown...

Another golden retriever, Ricochet, works for Pawsitive Teams' Canine Inspired Reintegration Programme in San Diego. The programme uses therapy dogs to support victims of post-traumatic stress syndrome, people with disabilities and children in hospital. During the lockdown, his services were made available to any frontline medical worker who needs it via FaceTime. And then are the countless dogs who enthusiastically join in to cheer on emergency workers during 'thank you hour' at 8 pm.

With all the positives that dogs bring into our lives during this time, it's also important to remember that most dogs are also experiencing a new scenario. Extra care should be taken to make sure that dogs are mentally stimulated and get exercise in alternative ways.

