

One dog lost, another one found

We all know how frustrating it can be to lose something we just shouldn't lose, or perhaps know we haven't actually lost it, but have forgotten where we put it!

My advice to you is to be especially careful when you go out walking in the countryside, as you never know what you might find when you are out there — or what you might end up losing.

At least that is the general version of events that Anita and Joy, our friend from England who was in town on a visit, gave me last Saturday!

The pair of them had decided to go for a walk along the country lanes near where we are staying in Reva, and thought it would be appropriate to take the dogs — Bailey and Riley — along with them.

So our two English 'country gals' headed out on the road to nowhere with a couple of old Labradors in tow, and I expected to see them back in about an hour.

Now, I should advise point out that Riley is the older, more sensible dog of the two, while Bailey is, as we say in today's politically correct world, somewhat "intellectually challenged."

Bailey's sense of direction is generally scent- rather than vision-oriented, which, coupled with an uncanny ability to tune out sounds he doesn't want to hear (such as his owners call), makes him a prime candidate for wandering off.

Riley, on the other hand, is a good boy and stays close at hand, always within a call or a whistle's distance, although that might be due in part to the fact that he suffers a little from arthritis in his hips!

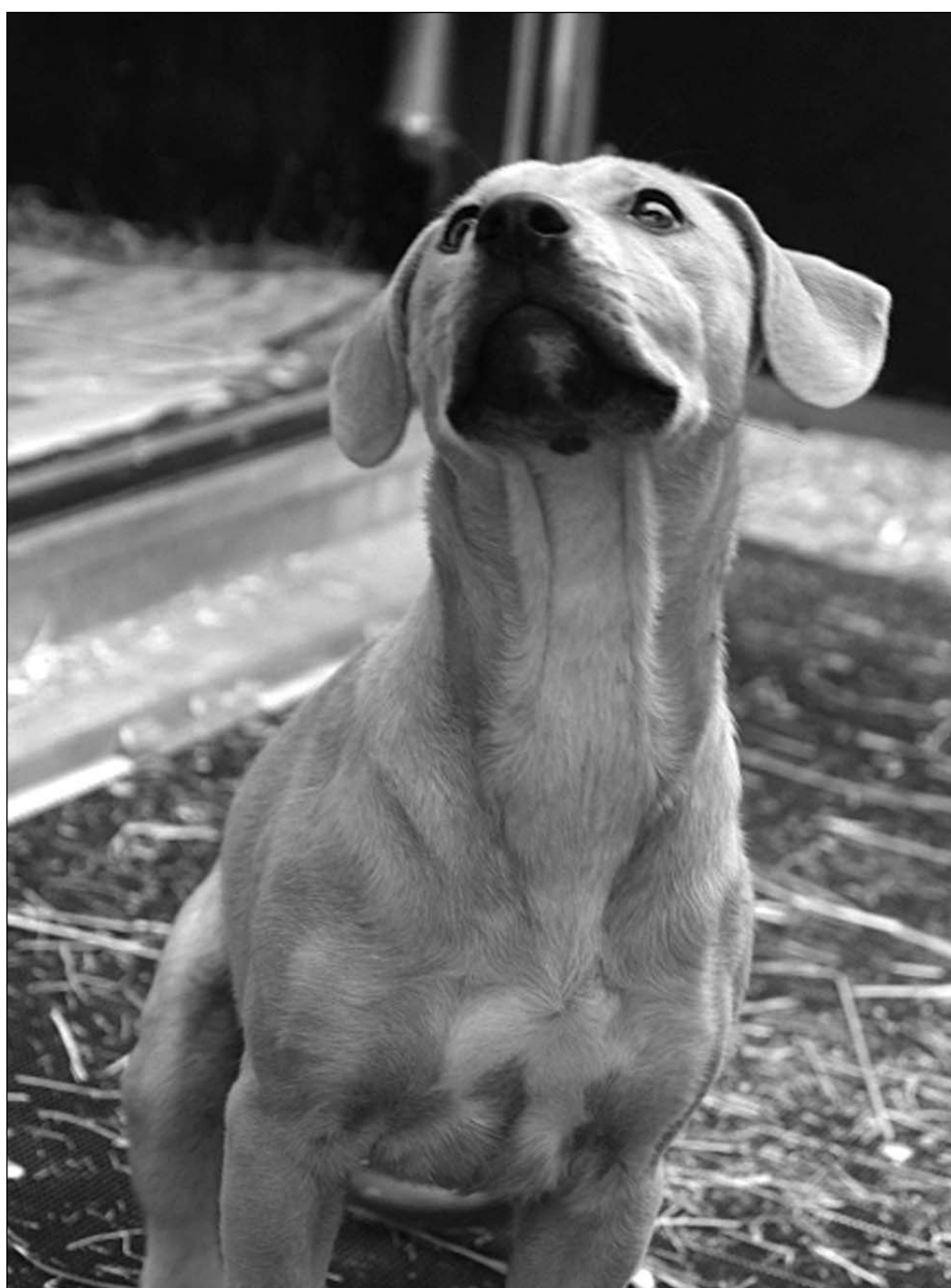
Despite my warning them, the girls took the dogs with them on the walk with no constraint mechanism. Bailey was free to roam wherever his fancy chose to take him and as, is his wont, he strolled off out of sight.

Suffice it to say it was a couple of hours before the girls finally returned and confessed that Bailey had done a runner, and a further couple of hours were spent searching the area for him.

I remembered that some hunters had recently left a deer carcass on the side of the road (why do they do that?) and had visions of Bailey helping himself to a large portion of rancid venison that he would no doubt "barf up" later that evening.

Luckily, my "reccy" of the unfortunate deer's final resting place showed no signs of an dog, so the hunt continued.

We searched the fields and woods around the house, and just as darkness was beginning to descend, there came the unmistakable sound of



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ginny is a puppy that found its way into the Snogles' trailer. Though they were tempted to keep it, they thought someone might be looking for it and decided to take it to the Culpeper Animal Shelter. They plan to adopt it if no one claims it in the next week.



DAVID AND ANITA HASBURY-SNOGLES

jingling dog tags from the woods at the edge of the pasture.

Eventually, out popped this little black dog licking his lips and bounding along as if it were all just a game — which to him it probably was!

The next day the girls decided to go for another walk in the area, but wisely decided not to take the dogs with them. On their return, I was advised that I should check the back of our trailer — the gardener had just been to the house with heavy mowing equipment, so I feared the

worst and went to survey what I thought might be some nasty damage.

As it turned out, there was no damage to the trailer at all, but when I opened the door to the horse section, out popped this bouncy little puppy! The little devil had followed the girls all the way back home and had decided life was none too bad living in a trailer.

It seemed like a fait accompli to me, but Joy insisted that fate had decided the puppy, which they had already christened "Ginny" (short for Virginia!), should be with us. Anita had fed and watered her and made a bed among the hay bales, and there was already talk of needing to buy a collar, leash, bowls, food and flea treatment, which, of course, we did the next morning!

I'll admit she was cute and did seem pretty well trained for just 4 months old or so.

Despite Joy's insistence that we should keep Ginny, we decided we should take

her to the Culpeper Animal Shelter and see if anyone had reported her missing.

After all, it wouldn't be fair if she belonged to a young child somewhere who was now distraught at having lost his/her favourite puppy.

The ease with which the ladies at the Animal Shelter took Ginny from us was impressive, but just a little upsetting too — I don't know what we were expecting really, but we came away saddened to have lost our new little friend.

Apparently, the law states that any stray animal admitted to the shelter has to be kept for seven days before adoption! We decided if no one claims her by the end of the week, we will go back and welcome her to our humble home (assuming, of course, they'll let us), and then we'll know if fate really was playing it's hand that day!

David Snogles can be reached at david_hasbury@yahoo.com.

Dealing with fertilizer prices

It looks like fertilizer has moved into uncharted territory as world supply-and-demand factors drive prices to unheard of levels and daily changes are seen by suppliers.

Extension Agronomists Mark Alley and Wade Thomason say factors driving the situation are clearly linked to increases in 2007 corn acres, which could be up as much as 17 percent, and the unexpected drop in world wheat supply.

With a 30-year low in wheat hanging over the market, prices have responded upward and farmers have followed suit by planting more wheat.

They say it was expected that once 2007 corn planting and fertilizing was complete, fertilizer demand would relax, but this did not happen with the wheat situation.

Swelling wheat prices and farmers increasing their orders for nutrients needed to grow a larger crop of wheat.

The interesting fact is the price of one crop impacts the price of another. If one grain rises, the others can be pulled up along the way.

Historically, corn and soybeans have had this relationship, which continues, but this year's big player seems to be the starch crops — wheat, corn and barley that feed people and animals, but can be used in making ethanol, primarily using corn. The market has become one big boiling pot of grain prices.

Alley and Thomason say this increased demand for fertilizer is not limited to the U.S. but is also found in most world regions with leading



CARL STAFFORD

countries besides the U.S., including Brazil, China and India.

They say there could be a shortage of potash, a major ingredient in all crop production scenarios that can be yield limiting when deficient. A shortage boils down to world demand exceeding world production capacity. We do not have an abundance of potash producing capacity.

Dealing with these fertilizer prices requires growers to adopt an efficiency strategy that employs these basic principles:

- purchase only what you need.
- maintain soil pH to maximize availability of nutrients.
- band nutrients at planting to increase efficiency.
- split apply nitrogen for improved efficiency.
- knife in nitrogen in corn to increase efficiency.
- Soil samples to farmers are free — use them to set needs.
- meet with suppliers early to establish needs, supply and cost.

Carl Stafford is Culpeper County Extension Agent, Animal Science. He can be reached at cstafford@vt.edu.

Christmas tree farm finds tops cut off of large firs

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FLAG POND, Tenn. — Authorities are on the lookout for a Grinch who stole the tops off more than two dozen Christmas trees from Danny Tipton's farm.

The thief or thieves raided the farm in eastern Tennessee sometime between Nov. 24 and last week and cut the top off the Fraser firs that were 10 to 12 feet tall.

"It's like the Grinch stealing Christmas trees," Sheriff Kent Harris said.

Tipton grows the taller trees for use in businesses, churches and homes with high ceilings and they usually sell for about \$100 each.

The culprit sawed the top six feet off about 28 trees and hauled them off the property, probably to sell off for use in smaller homes. Tipton estimates they would get about \$15 to \$20 each.

"It's a very low person who commits such a crime as this at Christmastime," Sheriff's Maj. Ronnie Adkins said.

Tipton still has about 6,000 trees growing on his farm near the North Carolina border, but they are in various stages of maturity.

The pilfered firs were ready for sale when they were taken sometime last week.

"I had gone to harvest the trees," Tipton said.

"That's when I noticed there had been somebody in there cutting them. (It was) sort of disbelief. I couldn't believe anybody would go to the extremes they went to get them."

Washington has record-setting wine grape crop

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CASHMERE, Wash. — Washington state's wine grape crop, second only to California's crop nationwide, was a record 127,150 tons this year, an industry group reported.

Favorable weather and an increase in plantings brought

a 5.5 percent increase in the harvest of cabernet, merlot, riesling and other varietals, said Vicky Scharlau, executive director of the Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers.

"Mother Nature smiled on Washington state once again this year and provided an ideal climate for grapes," Scharlau

said. "She provided us with a fast start, a slow middle and a long finish to produce a vintage to remember."

The quality of the grapes also was strong, growers said.

"The grapes got as ripe as we wanted and the color was really good for the reds. The wines are going to be really good," said Scott Williams,

winemaker at Kiona Vineyards & Winery on Red Mountain near Benton City.

Final reports on new plantings from the state Department of Agriculture won't be available until next year, but the area devoted to premium wine grapes has grown about 11,000 acres in 1993 to 31,000 last year.

ASK THE JEWELER
at Petersen Jewelers

Q: Is blue topaz or turquoise the birthstone for December?

A: Both! As a matter of fact a third modern birthstone for December is tanzanite. The ancient/traditional birthstone for December was the ruby for the Hebrews, Romans, and Arabs. The ancient Hindu birthstone for December was the topaz and the ancient December birthstone for the Polish and Russians was the turquoise. Choose the one that suits you best!

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