

The Dog Whisperer



According to conventional wisdom, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Well, don't try telling that to Dr. Alfred A. Dinklaker! Since July, when he founded Cooperative Canine Consultations, the distinguished veterinarian has taught new tricks to more than thirty old dogs. But there's no "trick" to his business, for Dr. Dinklaker is an accredited¹ dog whisperer. The doctor takes pains to disassociate himself from horse whisperers, who typically adopt sympathetic views of the animals' motives based on equine Sufism, then rap them on the snout with a bag of petrified carrots when that technique invariably fails. Instead, Dinklaker gains the trust of the pooch by whispering certain code words such as "arf!" and "woof!" into its ear. If that sounds like dogspeak, that's because it is! The doctor has long been one of the world's leading interspecific communicators. (He learned to speak Cat when a clowder of Siamese abducted him as an infant. When they subsequently traded him to a gang of urban beagles for a quart of milk, he quickly picked up Dog.) After a few sessions, the client mutt usually responds explicitly to Dinklaker's words; learning the "trick" generally follows soon thereafter. In one famous instance, the doctor taught the eponymous star of the Rags the Poodle Show to recite in passable English Hamlet's "What a piece of work is man!" soliloquy. But it wasn't easy. For each new word Rags "learned," he "forgot" an aspect of his housebreaking training. Sure, Dinklaker was well paid for his work, however he had to eat² the cost of a new sofa.

1. a euphemism
2. another one