

I really liked all my dog patients, by James Herriot

I really liked all my dog patients except for two. These two dogs were called Ruffles and Muffles and they were spoilt, bad tempered little animals.

The trouble always started the moment I got in their front door.

“Down, Down” I would cry. They would be standing on their hind legs frantically clawing at my trousers. It was agony, and not very good for my trousers either.

Their owners, Mr and Mrs Whithorn always found it very funny and laughed and laughed when it happened. They also found it very funny that when I was leaving the little beasts would do their best to bite my ankles.

There was one particular visit when, after my usual greeting from the dogs, I asked Mr Whithorn what the problem was.

“The little darling is lame” he said picking up Ruffles, and putting him on the table. “He’s in agony poor dear”.

I took hold of the dog’s paw but had to quickly whip my hand away as the dogs teeth snapped shut less than an inch from my fingers.

“Oh my precious” said Mrs Whithorn to the dog “It’s so painful isn’t my little darling”. Then turning to me she said “Do be careful Mr Herriot, I think you’re hurting him.”

I managed to control my temper and very carefully managed to pick up the dog’s paw once again. This time I saw what I had expected to see...a little reddish swelling between his toes.

All it was, was a cyst...not nearly serious enough to justify a home visit...but the Whithorns wouldn’t bring the dogs to the Surgery because they said it frightened the little darlings.

“This is just a harmless cyst” I said “Just bathe the paw in hot water until it bursts.”

Then Mrs Whithorn lifted the other little dog onto the table “We’re a little worried about dear Muffles as well” she said “Will you give him a really

good check up as well.”

So I did. There was absolutely nothing wrong with the animal. The only real problem both dogs had was that they were old and overweight for dogs of their breed.

At last I was free to go.

The two little dogs did what they always did. They stood either side of the door, bared their teeth at me and growled. Their owners roared with laughter. “You see, Mr Herriot, they don’t want you to go...oh the little darlings.”

I finally managed to get out but not before I’d got two really nasty nips on my ankles.

Once outside I met the milkman. He looked at my face, then looked at my ankles, smiled and said

“Mornin, Mr Herriot. You been in to see them dogs, by any chance?”