

## Beatrice Yell – My animal world

'Guess what? We have a new dog now, from a rescue shelter,' my daughter-in-law rang to tell me. 'You'll meet Kramer when you come up.' The idea had been a point of discussion for a while, mainly because the eldest of her three sons was often depressed, due to ongoing bullying at school.

To have his very own dog would, we hoped, give Byron a new focus. He agreed to feed a dog and take him for walks. During the initial settling-in period, it became clear the puppy had been shouted at and hit by a man. If my son ever raised his voice, he would hide under the nearest bed or under the house and refuse to be coaxed out.

Responding to lots of pats and tummy rubs from the whole family, he gradually became used to the household routine. But he got alarmed whenever the boys had a tussle and charge in between them to break them apart.

He often sat on the lounge with the three boys watching David Attenborough documentaries, then he'd sleep under Byron's bed. Lately, I hear, actually ON his bed.

A changed boy, my number one grandson Byron is calm and quietly self-confident now. Nothing much bothers him. Just before he turned fourteen, we measured him and he was then, on the old scale, five feet ten inches tall. Since then he has grown even taller, but thinner, like a piece of stretched elastic. I threatened to bring a brick to put on his head, but said, 'I think you like being tall.' He smiled at me. Of course he can look down on those nasty kids now and nobody dares tease him anymore. So it seems a dog and more exercise can do wonders for a teenager.

Whenever I visit, I scratch Kramer behind his floppy ears and under his chin and tell him I'm his Nana. He responds to my voice, but he is a treasured companion for Byron, not a watchdog. He only barks if a stranger comes through the gate. He's half kelpie, but nobody can work out the other half of his genes. I tell him,

'It's not your fault your mother was *a floozie*.' He loves other dogs and bounds up to them on his long skinny legs to play. Needless to say, everyone loves Kramer.