

From refuse to muse

Dropped off as a rodent-sized pup on the doorstep of a holiday farm host, the tiny Whippet pup's future looked anything but certain. But a kind-hearted farmer took on the abandoned dog and Zipper grew up on a farm thinking — or at least wishing — he was a sheepdog.

At the age of seven months Zipper was added to the farmer's pack of working dogs and put through standard sheepdog tutorial. Although keen to fit in and do the right thing, it soon became apparent that Zipper's instinctive hunting ability was getting in the way of good sheep herding.

First off the ute and first easily to the flock, Zipper would then grab the first sheep he could and hang onto it awaiting instruction. It simply was not in his nature to herd the animals as the working dogs did naturally. The farmer was often left scratching his head as to how to train this misfit.

After multiple chances to get the program right, Zipper was left tied up at home when the pack of Kelpies went to work. Zipper survived his first winter on the chain with limited shelter but was just not born with a coat that was sufficient to keep him warm on the frosty Victorian nights. When Christi Valentine-Anderson and her husband — also farmers — visited the Whippet's owners they

immediately fell in love with Zipper and the farmer seized the opportunity to place Zipper in an indoor environment.

The Whippet has not only become a key part of the couple's life, he sleeps between them and has his very own line of designer dog wear, Prik and Ribs collars and leads, which was developed based on his needs. The designs include The Zipper Collar, which is designed for thin-skinned runners such as Greyhounds and Whippets.

"The wide piece of soft leather lined in fleece protects that long skinny neck and windpipe from Zipper's relentless need for speed," says Christi. Now, every morning the happy trio have coffee in bed followed by an eight-kilometre run then a day of casual farm work, photo shoots and lots and lots of cuddles, says Christi. "We can not express our love for this skinny dog ... it goes beyond words! He is our muse."

Christi Valentine-Anderson designed a range of collars and leads based solely on her new Whippet's needs.



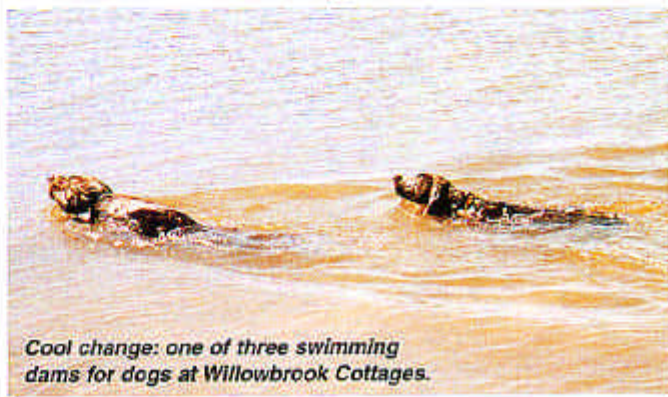
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