

# Caravanning with Pets

By Jules Perrin

We, like many other retirees, have two furry grandkids. Asher (AKA Lady Guts-A-Lot) is a 7 year old Cavalier and Baldrick (AKA Death Breath) is a 13 year old Terrier.

Picture the scene, a caravanning stay over in Maldon in deep winter. Now for those who don't know a Maldon winter, by Australian standards, it's cold. Not the coldest place but you still need to make sure the dog doesn't weld to the tree with frozen pee. To top it off, Lady Guts-A-Lot was recently shorn so her coat was shortish.

My accompanying caravanning novice, Sue, felt sorry for Lady Guts-A-Lot and suggested we wrap her in something to keep her warm outside. While I was deep in thought, to be truthful I was probably reading the paper, and was not as attentive as I should have been, Sue whips out my old work jumper and says, "This is ideal". Not wishing to disagree, "Yes that's good". Wrong move number one.

Before I read the next paragraph there is a flurry of glistening steel as Sue slices the sleeve off my treasured work jumper. Now this jumper was a time honoured and well respected favourite jumper for working. It was a mobile historical record of house repair successes and failures. I am sure other men can relate to this as they would have equally favourite jumpers for fishing or camping.

Not a millisecond's thought was given to the historical significance of this precious jumper. Just hack away and the poor thing was dismembered.

This is where I made the second wrong move. I protested the innocence of the jumper and the significance of the jumper's demise. All this fell on deaf ears. Reason one was that I hadn't listened. Reason two I was putting too much emphasis on the importance of "only an old jumper". Didn't she remember the important stuff like the fact that I fell through

my first roof in that jumper (Another story). We maybe not a good example but you get the idea.

Then the guilt trip begins. “Do you want Asher to freeze?” and “You are nice and warm but Asher doesn’t have much hair let to keep her warm”. I would be warmer if I still had my old jumper to wear. Adding insult to injury, Sue wanted a picture and insisted I carry Asher to show the *innovation* of the jumper in use.

I did contemplate sewing the sleeve back on but the idea was not well supported nor encouraged by others. Long live the memory of the jumper.

Another aspect of travelling with pets is their personal habits. Dogs are not always as scrupulous in the matter of hygiene or personal habits. They can make some of us blokes look like angelic sophisticated well groomed men of the world.

Two aspects in particular are that dogs snore and fart. We blokes are more refined than that.

We learned very early on that a caravan is a tight and closed space. What you feed the dogs goes in OK, in the case of Lady Guts A Lot it goes in very quickly, but the amount of gas and the toxicity of the gas coming out the other end can be lethal. Raw chicken and some canned foods seem to generate vast quantities of debilitating fumes. Trouble is they are also silent and before you have a chance to react you are enveloped in this cocoon of flesh eating, lung cramping envelope. Now caravans are not designed for you to extradite yourself from the bed and safely exit the door. Several times we’ve done ourselves some damage doing just that. Once the all clear is sounded, usually by one of us sacrificing our sense of smell to test the van, the dogs are quickly evicted from the van. Alas the eviction is long past the offending event but I am sure they have a snicker on the face as they depart.

One other habit is the dog's snoring. Death Breath doesn't snore much but, by their breed, Cavies do snore. Asher in a deep sleep is not just a gentle rumble but a window shattering vibration. She's had tests etc which prove its all in the breed and we just have to live with it. So when she snores we give her a nudge, look at each other and quote the movie. "Ahhh the serenity".

