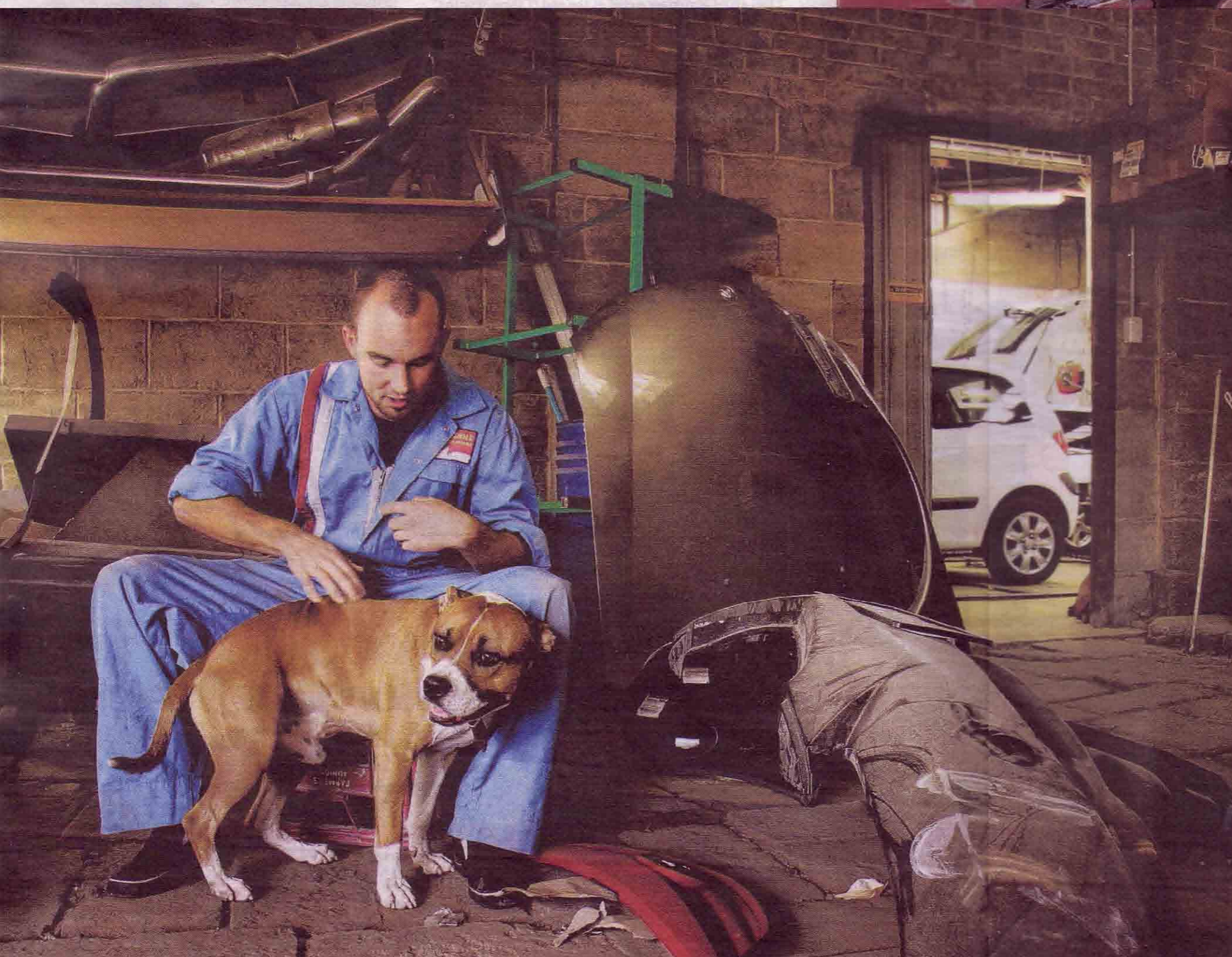


HOTDOGS

FROM CITY SLICKERS TO BUSH BASHERS, MAN'S BEST FRIEND IS CELEBRATED IN A NEW BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS

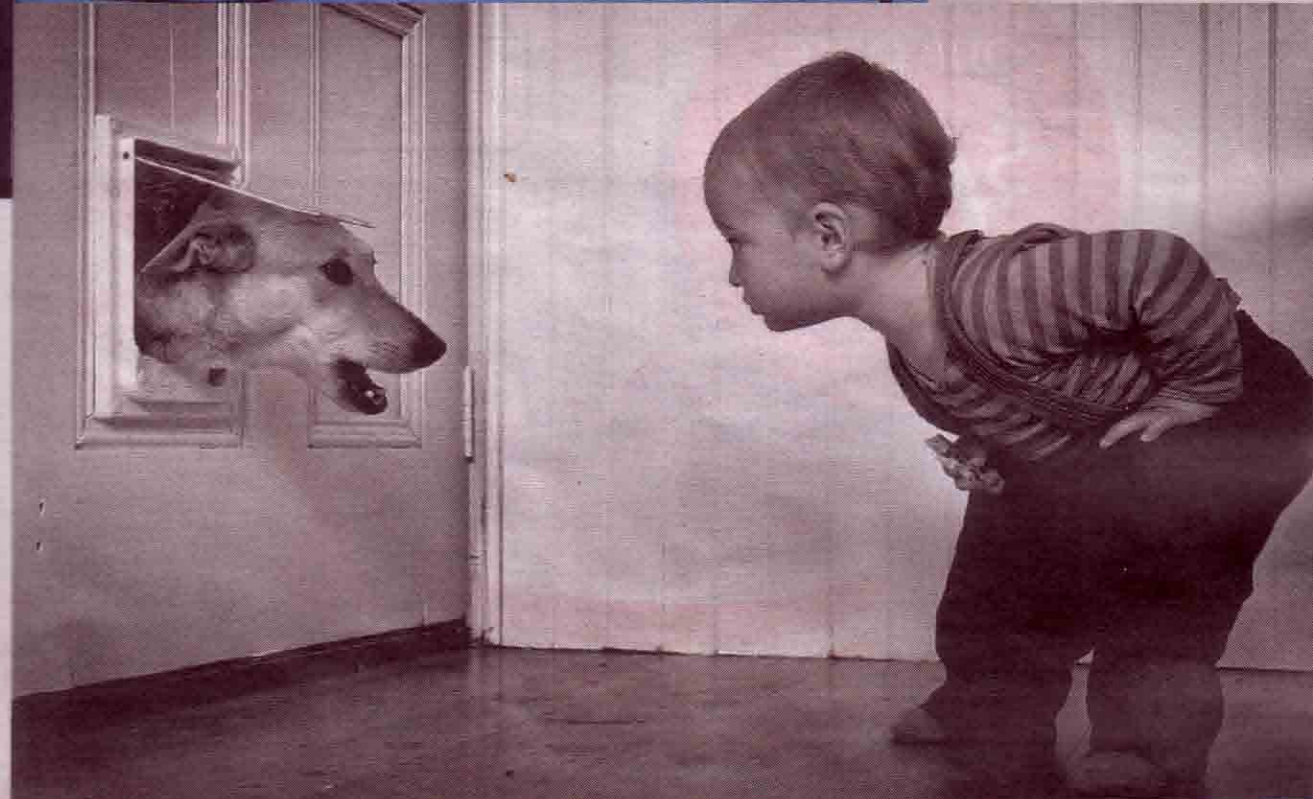
WORDS ANGELA GOODE PICTURES SALLY HARDING



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FAR LEFT: Dusty the kelpie keeps an eye on things from her owner's stock truck.
LEFT: A pair of golden labradors on a shopping trip.



I LOVE it when a carload of city friends arrives at the farm. Almost always there's a dog or two – lovely, well-mannered dogs; clean, groomed dogs; dogs who know the ways of the civilised world, who know their macchiatos from their cappuccinos, who come when they're called and offer a dainty paw as a greeting.

Swooped on, overwhelmed with rustic enthusiasm by our team, greeted with yipping, wheel-pissing delight, these urbane and refined creatures of the cosmopolitan world, not unreasonably, tuck their tails and retreat behind their owners' legs. But not for long: a rambunctious, irreverent farm welcome wins every time. Our uncouth canine hosts cut through snobby conformism and, before long, genteel white-haired lap dogs and workaholic kelpies are doing fly-pasts together with stupid grins on their faces. While humans more quietly break down cultural barriers with a glass of red at sunset, these vulgar rurals teach their city mates that rolling in fresh manure and rotting carcasses cuts the language divide superbly, and gets a fantastic reaction from the audience.

A day without a dog would be bleak. There's one on the back of my quad bike, or at my feet while I write, a tail flapping encouragingly as I talk through sentences out loud. The kitchen on a winter's day has dogs warming paws in front of the wood stove. Under the pine trees, the working dog waits to be summoned.

A dog with country genes was my companion during my single days in the city. Bred to muster sheep, she adapted well to suburbia – charming pies from the baker and sausages from the butcher while I was at work. She then taught me the joys of country living when farming became my new life. When our fox-hunting, rat-catching, hooligan terriers have occasionally had city holidays, we notice how they adopt the reverential, eye-flapping gestures of cultured society. Astonishingly, they sit quietly beneath the café table and lap politely at the communal water bowl.

That's the wonderful thing about dogs. They are versatile, happy to do and be whatever we want of them. But at their heart they are all just dogs, and pleased to have us as their pack leaders.

Edited extract from City Dog Country Dog, by Sally Harding, Wakefield Press, \$24.95



ABOVE: Toddler Kelly Hooper gets to know Tju-Tju, a camp dog originally from Central Australia.
FAR LEFT: Scott Maney takes a break from work to spend time with Turbo, an American Staffordshire bull terrier.
LEFT: Knockabout terriers Tally and Spud wait for their master.