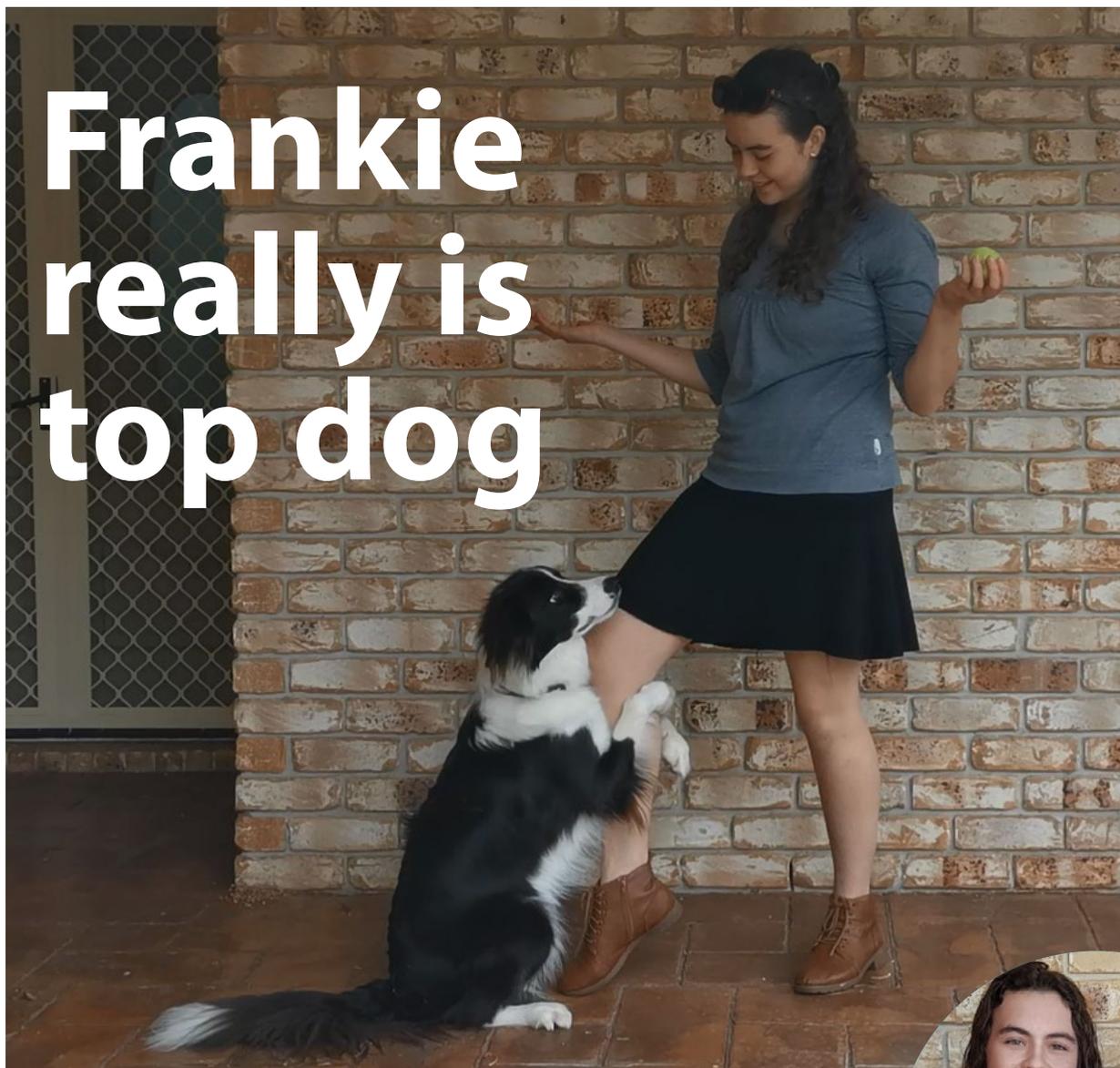


Frankie really is top dog



Charlotte's safety message song:

Pat before you chat

Talk to the owner

Don't stare into their eyes

Pat under, not over

three basic principles of child safety around dogs.

"That last two are so important because staring into a dog's eyes can be threatening behaviour to them and when they see a hand coming at them and they can see it as a threat and react out of fear," she says. "Whether it's your dog or someone's else dog, you should always pat under – bring your hand in under their chin and then pat. It shows the dog you're not going to hurt them."

Every year in Australia, about 13,000 people head to hospital emergency departments for dog bite injuries and, of those, children under the age of five are most at risk. Charlotte, who has a certificate in dog psychology, behaviour and training, wants to reduce the number of children being bitten each year.

"Education is the best way," she says. "When children know how to approach a dog, they reduce their chance of being bitten or nipped."

The Chat Before You Pat program also educates parents on how to prevent children being hurt, how to read dogs, how to identify situations when children should not approach dogs and how to be safe around familiar dogs. Charlotte said while a dog may look friendly, it's vital you always ask for permission to pat.

"I insist that people don't just run up to Frankie and pat him. Even though I know he's super-friendly, he can be a bit scared around strangers," she says.

With Frankie's large repertoire of tricks, Charlotte said he is hoping to make it big in Hollywood with his acting skills one day. She has been training 18-month-old Frankie since he arrived into her care as a tiny pup and this year he became a certified advanced trick dog so he can officially have the letters 'ATD' after his name.

"He completed the four levels in just one week because he already knew all the tricks that he had to achieve," Charlotte says.

His favourite trick?

"Skateboarding has got to be his favourite trick, or maybe it's my favourite," she laughs. "He loves skateboarding. And he can freeze like a statue. Frankie also loves the side step, which not many dogs can do, and he's also learning to paint with a paint brush but it's going take a while – he still just wants to chew on the paint brush."

"Trust is key to dog training, and positivity, because if you're positive and play games your dog will want to be around you so that really helps with the obedience. So positive reinforcement, tricks and toys and things will make your dog much more likely to come when called."

Throughout the COVID lockdown, her one-on-one dog training sessions came to a sudden halt, so she developed an online training service free of charge, organised the Sunshine Coast Dog Awards that attracted 150 entries, and she has been posting regular blogs with helpful tips on her website. For more, go to pawsclawstails.com.au. 🐾

by MICHELE STERNBERG

Sunny Coast dog trainer Charlotte Bryan and her best mate Frankie are a busy pair. In between her university studies and training dogs, Charlotte has helped Frankie – the charismatic black and white border collie – become a certified advanced trick dog, canine model and the star of his own children's book, *Learning with Frankie*.

Frankie is also somewhat of a social media star with his own Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts @BorderCollieFrankie. He's also the poster boy for the Chat Before You Pat campaign, designed to teach Prep to Year 4 students the dos and don'ts of meeting a dog for the first time. The program helps children read a dog's body language, know how to approach a dog correctly, when not to approach a dog and what to do if the dog starts off happy and suddenly becomes scared or angry.

"I don't take Frankie into the schools with me because some children have a genuine fear of dogs. Instead, I take soft toys that look like Frankie for the children to practise with," 19-year-old Charlotte says. "I really just want to teach safety around dogs because there are reasons why dogs will bite and if the children can see the signs that a dog is scared or angry, they will know not to approach it. Dogs can't speak but they can show you through other ways how they're feeling. It's important for young children to look for the signs."

Charlotte takes along stickers and colouring sheets with her easy-to-remember song on the back. The rhyme covers



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