

Visiting etiquette

With colder weather approaching, **Anna Webb** is determined to get Prudence ready for company.

As the days get shorter, Prudence's autumn routine ticks along with indoor activities, like visiting friends, but her visiting etiquette isn't as advanced as I'd like it to be.

Our 'sabbatical' in the shires is partly to blame. Apart from visiting my mum in the care home, we were like Billy no-mates in the shires — and after Prudence's accidental collision with the sandwich trolley, she became *persona non grata* at the care home.

Back in London, I've made her visiting skills a priority, as they must improve by Christmas.

I eagerly accepted an invite from Natural Instinct's MD, Michelle (Mish) Machin-Jeffries, to join in some filming for the dog food manufacturer's website.

After a two-hour drive, we arrived. Prudence was already in fifth gear, and Mish's home and farm location provided a sensory overload. We were greeted by our host and her four dogs, but it was 10-month-old Labradoodle, Belle, who made a beeline for Prudence.

Going with the flow, I unclipped Pru's lead and smiled confidently as my stomach churned. What could go wrong? Prudence and Belle were perfect playmates, and struck up an immediate friendship.

But, after 30 minutes of high-speed chase games, Prudence began to self-combust. She strutted indoors, panting like a train, covered in twigs and mud, and stinking of eau de fox, shattering the aura of calm in the conservatory.

Within a nanosecond, there was a catastrophe. Nobody had noticed Mish's farm cat, Black-Cat, sneak back inside. As Little Miss Nosey (Pru) was checking out the downstairs perimeter, there was a whoosh of movement and a yowling.

Black-Cat propelled himself onto the kitchen counter, smashing a dozen eggs and landing on a lit candle. Mish grabbed him before his tail caught alight, but took a left hook to her face as he lashed out in shock. I wanted the floor to open up and swallow me whole.

Prudence caught my eye. She was frozen in mortification and disbelief as the scene unfolded.

Thankfully, neither Mish nor Black-cat was seriously injured, and we have since been invited back.

But such 'bull in a china shop' moments are par for the course. Pru curbs her natural terrier instincts with my cat, Gremlin, but other cats are the enemy.

When out pavement walking, I know Prudence is on the scent. Her deep breathing,

straight back, and jaunty walk are the giveaways.

While her heelwork isn't too bad for a Mini Bull, distractions like cats encourage illicit horizontal bungee-jumping. This means that she often trips up joggers, and makes cyclists wobble like jelly.

Speaking of cyclists, the narrow towpath on the way to Hackney Marshes has become a cyclist commuter cut-through. There's growing animosity between dog

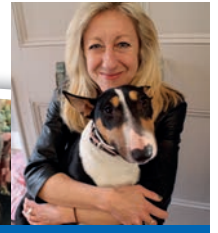
owners and such cyclists. One of these 'speedos' missed Prudence (who was walking in a straight line) by half a millimetre, but my vocal rant fell on deaf ears.

Prudence will be 'Tangoed' in an orange Equafleece this winter, so cyclists will have no excuse but to slow down, or politely ring their bells.

I've chosen matching wellies just to make a point. It never hurts to brighten up a dull winter walk!



Prudence and Gremlin get along well.



ABOUT ANNA

Dog and cat lover Anna Webb is the co-presenter of BBC London's 'The Barking Hour'. She also appeared regularly on 'The Alan Titchmarsh Show'. Find out more at www.annawebb.co.uk



Anna and Pru head out in their matching gear.