

Feeling Lost

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Dawn was approaching and the rain had stopped. I knew my way home from the warren, and I set off, looking forward to a rapturous welcome and a good breakfast. I scratched at the back door, barked a bit, and looked up appealingly. After what seemed like an age, the door opened. It was Mary – my master's wife. She took one look at me: wet, filthy and bedraggled.

'No way' she said. 'Out!'

And with that the door slammed in my face. I would miss the regular meals and the comfy chair by the fire, but I'd always hankered for the open countryside and the right to roam. I set off with a spring in my step.

I headed back to the sandy heath and jumped about a bit in the springy heather: pouncing at this and that and enjoying the interesting smells and surprises. After a while I found the stream, and this time I was free to follow it for miles. I pressed on through the undergrowth and into new territory beyond the realm of the known world.

I've never had any sense of direction, and I have no notion of time passing, especially not when I'm having fun, but my carefree abandonment was about to come to a sudden end. The sky darkened as the clouds scudded in. I sniffed the air. From experience I knew there was a storm brewing. What now? I had nowhere to go. I wondered if I was lost. Dogs do go missing, but if I had no home to go to then I couldn't be lost. I was where I was, and that was that. Even so, I didn't like the idea of getting drenched and I hate thunder.

Maybe life in the wild was not all that it was cracked up to be. I looked around and saw a fence with a small space below. I figured I could get under the gap and discover what lay beyond. After a bit of effort I found myself in a rather tidy garden, complete with an open fronted log store and a shed. I made for the store which proved to be an excellent place in which to shelter from the rain.

I must have gone to sleep for the next thing I saw was a small girl staring right at me. I gave a pathetic whimper and looked up at her, appealingly. She smiled back and ran off to the house. 'Mummy, mummy, come and look. I've found dog'

The little girl came back with a bowl of food and some water, and a few days later I was on the sofa. I was given a new name: not 'Scamp', as I was before, but 'Muffin'. I know enough about the world to know that this is the name of a mule, not a dog. I should have taken this as a sign and made a run for it there and then, but the food was delicious and at the time I had no idea what lay ahead.

It didn't take long for the 'rules' to be enforced. No digging in the flower beds. No chance of exploring upstairs. No jumping up. No barking every time someone comes to the door. No time off the lead during my enforced exercise regime. Ok, I was comfortable enough, and smarter than ever before. I was combed and groomed and made to wear a fancy collar with 'Muffin' inscribed on a metal tag, but the routine was stifling. I longed for the freedom that I had lost.

I wondered about making an escape. I'm not all that clever, but eventually I remembered how I'd got into the garden in the first place. If I could get in, I could also get out. Of course, I'd be back in the wilds again, and I'd have no home. Millie (that's the little girl) might be upset for a while, but on the plus side, I'd be able to scamper about in the heather and the damp bracken and no one, but no one could stop me.

One day, after a so-called 'walk', I decided I'd had enough. I was allowed out in the garden from time to time, and on one of these occasions I inspected the perimeter fence. I was a bit fatter than before, but there was still space to squeeze under if I held my breath. So that's what I did.

Yipee, hooray and oh for the open road. That was me and I was away. Or so I thought. Little did I know that my new-found owners had already been alerted by the app: 'Virtual fence broken' pinged up on Millie's mother's phone the moment I made a break for it.

Fortunately for me, Millie's mother was chatting to a friend, and she didn't see the message straight away. But when she did, she could follow my route out of the garden. The spot on the screen (that was me) kept moving, and after a while I heard her running after me, 'Muffin, Muffin, come back, I'm here'.

I was absolutely furious. It must be the collar. And it was. Unknown to me, I was wearing a 'smart collar', made by a company called Tractive. It's an expensive device that offers a host of features including:

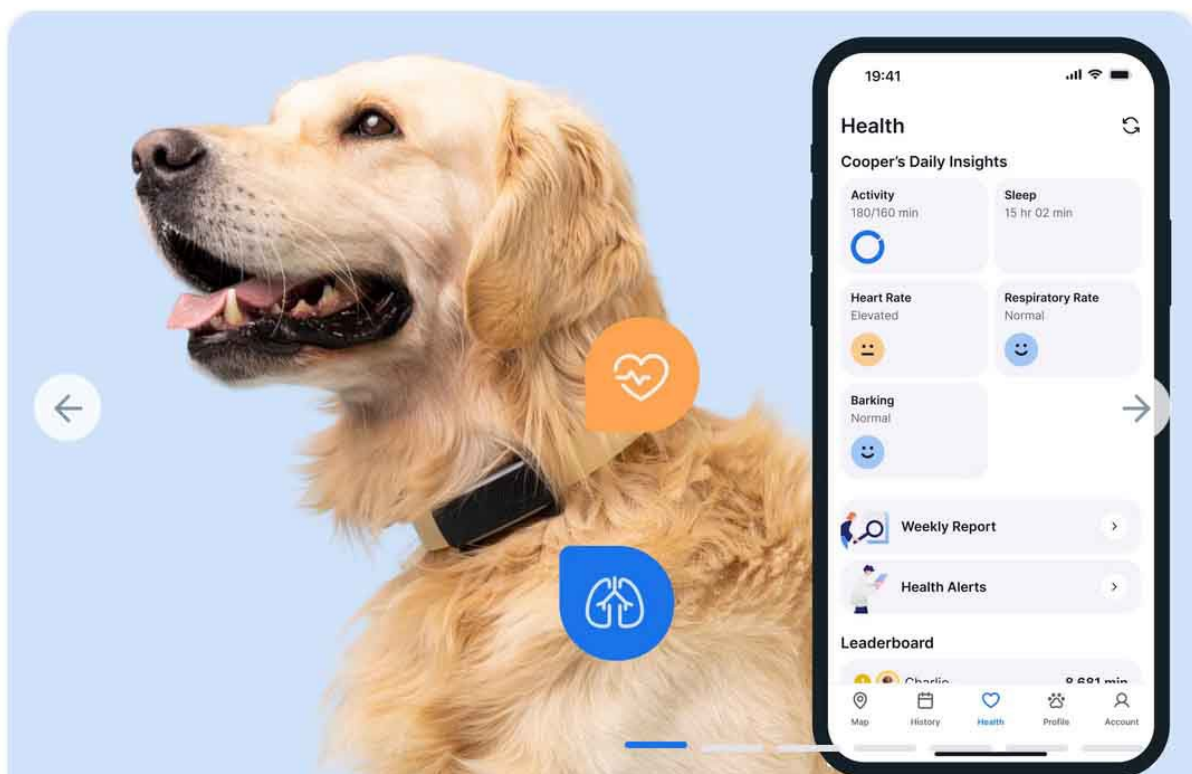
- Location updates in real-time.
- Virtual Fences
- Escape alerts
- Location History
- Sleep monitoring
- Heart rate monitoring
- Bark monitoring

To name but a few.

Note: image for illustrative purposes only. As you know, I am a terrier.



Tractive for Dogs Tractive for Cats



Talk about an invasion of privacy! As we dogs say, this really takes the biscuit. If you check the Tractive web site (see the link below), you will learn that my every bark was being noted, and my every heartbeat recorded. I was outraged. I'd not done anything wrong: no murder, no robbery (or not much), no sex offending (not since I was castrated), and no fraud, but no question about it, I was in prison.

Millie's mother had me cornered. I know they call it 'a dog's life', but I had no idea it would be like this, tagged and pampered and never, underline never, lost again. If I had my way, these tracker devices would be banned. Simple as that. End of story.

Further reading

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d4ab62ae5274a5400791505/Location_monitoring_-_Victims_Leaflet_Print.pdf on monitoring offenders.

https://tractive.com/en/pd/gps-tracker-dog?google30&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=17850642633&gclid=Cj0KCQjw953DBhCyARIsANhIZoYQvHovKIS5dli28w_5S1oS3PetXDBgh8yHF_Rc7KPu8ZP76--cC14aAkQ0EALw_wcB – on monitoring dogs.