

Scotland's Best Dog: New TV show shines spotlight on Fife Labradors

By **Gayle Ritchie** November 27 2021, 10.15am



Darcey, a fox-red Labrador from Tayport in Fife features on Scotland's Best Dog.

Gayle Ritchie chats to the Fife-based owners of two Labradors featured on new TV series Scotland's Best Dog.

With many of us spending more time at home over the past 18 months than we ever have before, the bond between humans and "man's best friend" has grown even stronger.

Those of us who dreamed of hanging out more with our canine friends – taking them walks at lunchtime, feeding them treats under the home office desk, or simply getting more cuddles to help de-stress – have been able to do so.

Last month, [findings from Dogs Trust's inaugural National Dog Survey](#), the largest ever study of dogs and their owners, revealed the depths of our affection for our furry family members.

According to the initial data (covering more than 231,000 owners and 308,000 dogs) almost half of us (47%) share a bed with our dogs and seven in 10 take our furry friends on our human holidays (70%).

And when it comes to the festive season, apparently 73% of us give our dogs a Christmas present while 63% love to celebrate their birthdays.

The survey also reported that more than a quarter (26%) of the nation claim to take their dogs everywhere they go – but it turns out the Scots are the most attached of us all, for whom this figure rises to 30%.

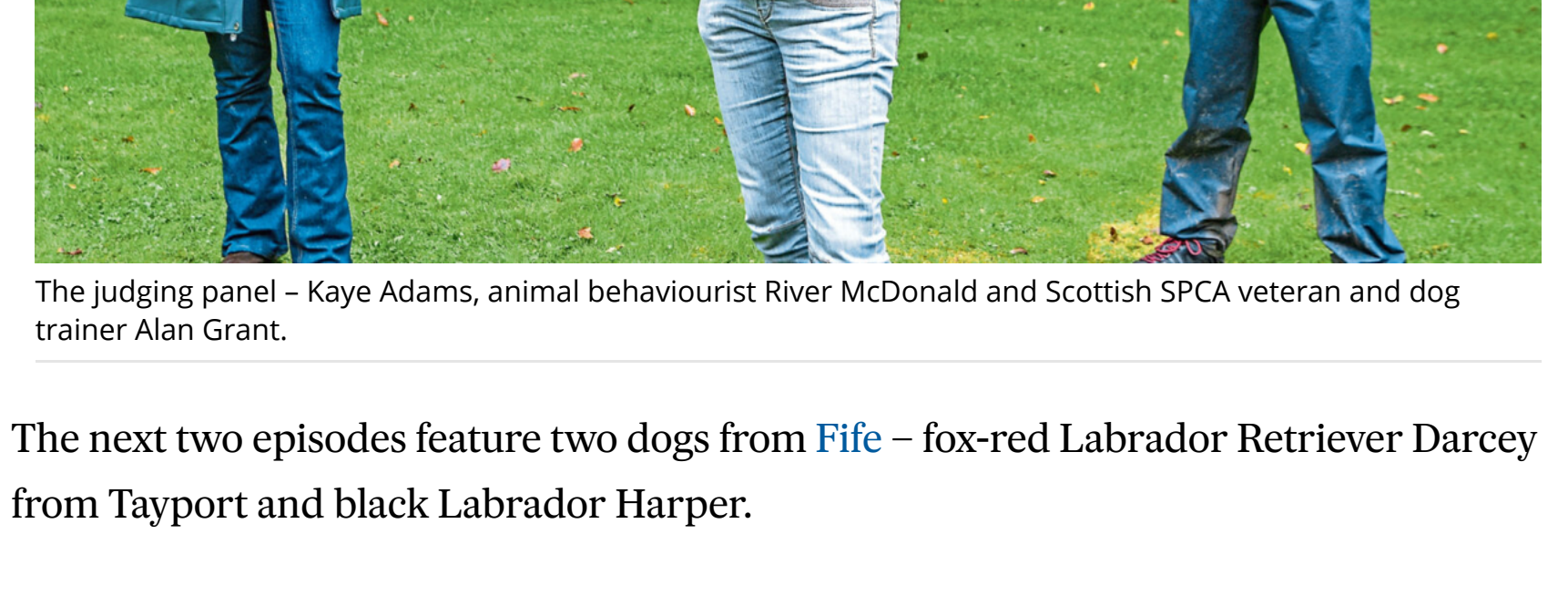


Hot on the heels of the report, new [BBC show Scotland's Best Dog](#) is on a quest to find canine characters who have strong, heart-warming bonds with their owners.

The six-part series, which launched on November 18, sees proud pet owners and their hopeful hounds compete for the coveted Golden Bone trophy.

These dogs are more than just pets – they're the life and soul of their families.

Along with their humans, each week three pooches are tested on three key challenges – recall, agility and bond – before judges Kaye Adams, animal behaviourist River McDonald and Scottish SPCA veteran and dog trainer, Alan Grant.



The judging panel – Kaye Adams, animal behaviourist River McDonald and Scottish SPCA veteran and dog trainer Alan Grant.

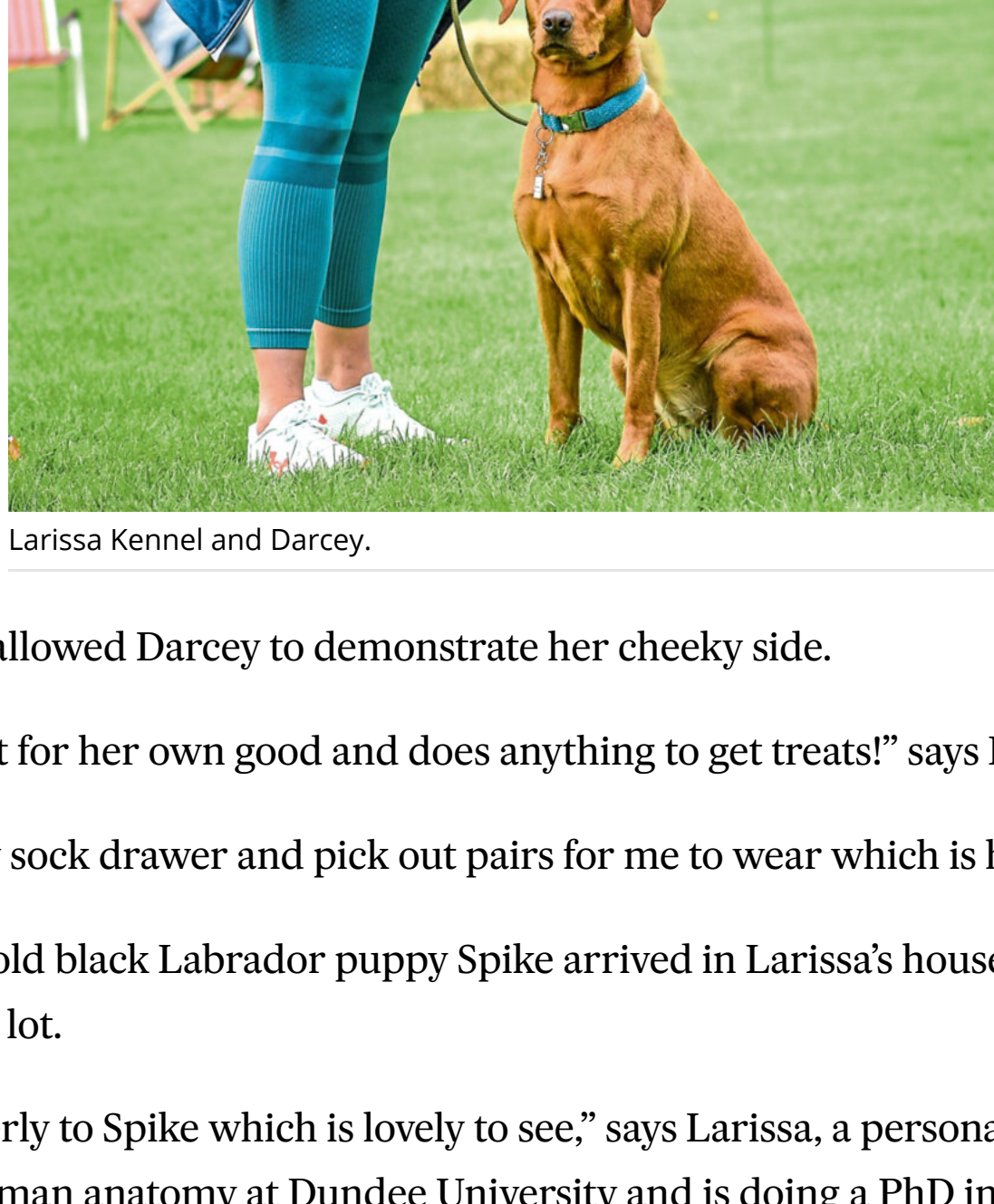
The next two episodes feature two dogs from [Fife](#) – fox-red Labrador Retriever Darcey from Tayport and black Labrador Harper.

Darcey

Darcey, who is well-trained and obedient but also has a mischievous side and loves to steal socks, is competing to be crowned Scotland's Best Dog 2021 in the December 2 show.

Her owner Larissa Kennel (yes, that IS her real surname!), says: "Darcey is a young dog, under 18 months old, and enjoys training at [Little Freuchie Gundogs](#) in Fife.

"She's so enthusiastic and enjoys life. I thought the show would be a good challenge for her, to expose her to a bit of pressure, and also a lot of fun. It's been really great in terms of teaching her calmness and steadiness."



Larissa Kennel and Darcey.

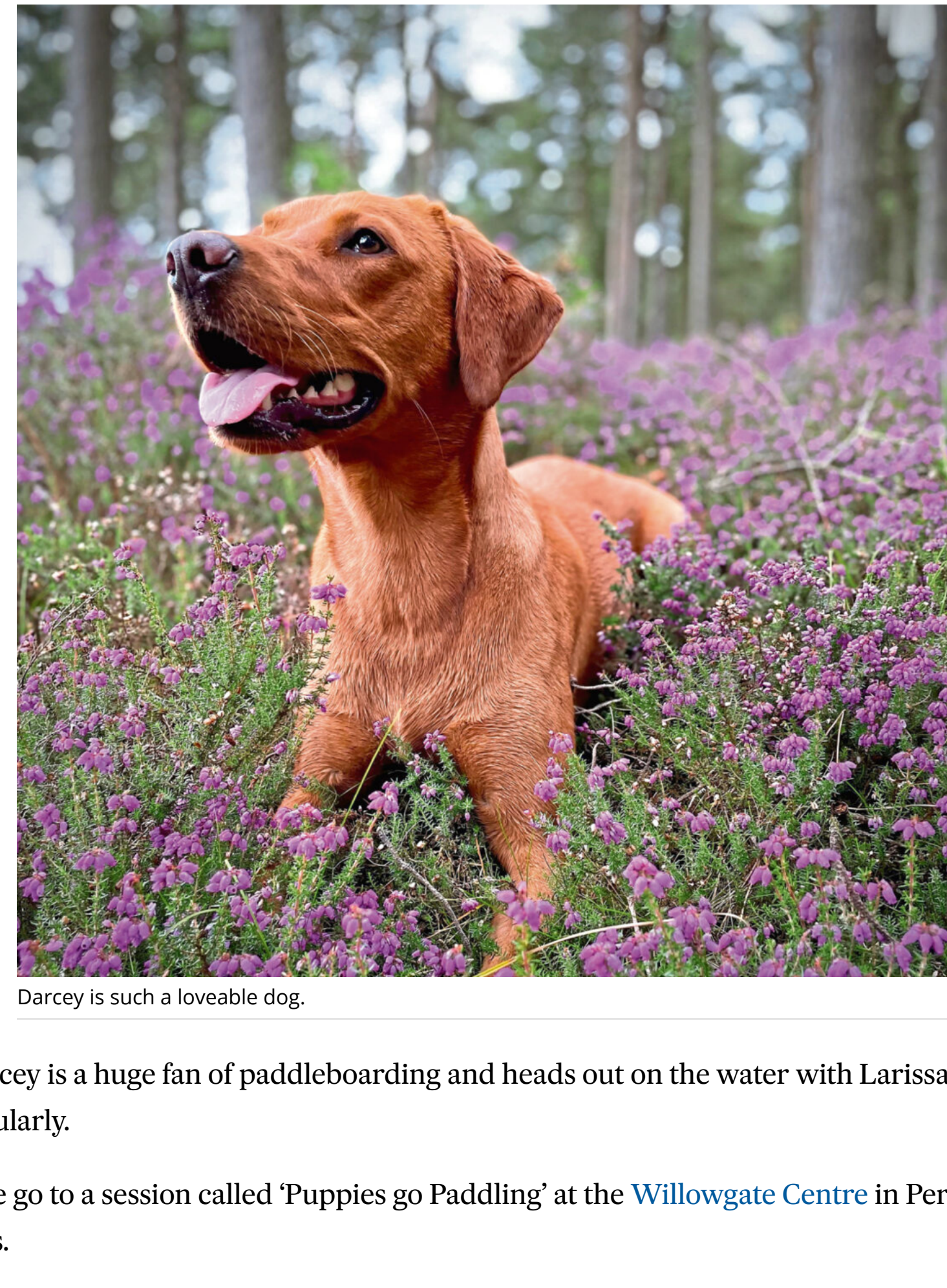
The show also allowed Darcey to demonstrate her cheeky side.

"She's too smart for her own good and does anything to get treats!" says Larissa.

"She'll open my sock drawer and pick out pairs for me to wear which is hilarious!"

Since 10-week-old black Labrador puppy Spike arrived in Larissa's household, Darcey has grown up a lot.

"She's so motherly to Spike which is lovely to see," says Larissa, a personal trainer who also teaches human anatomy at Dundee University and is doing a PhD in sport and exercise science.



"She really is the sweetest dog ever, and I'm such a big fan of Labs in general.

"I've always loved the breed and have grown up with them in all colours – black, yellow, brown and now fox-red.

"I love how clingy they are. I love getting cuddles from them.

"I also love how Darcey, and most Labs, seem to want to work with you – like a team."

Darcey is such a loveable dog.

Darcey is a huge fan of paddleboarding and heads out on the water with Larissa, 28, regularly.

"We go to a session called 'Puppies go Paddling' at the [Willowgate Centre](#) in Perth," she says.

"The dogs or puppies get to try different watersports with their owners, whether kayaking, canoeing or paddleboarding. Darcey loves a bit of water retrieving too!"

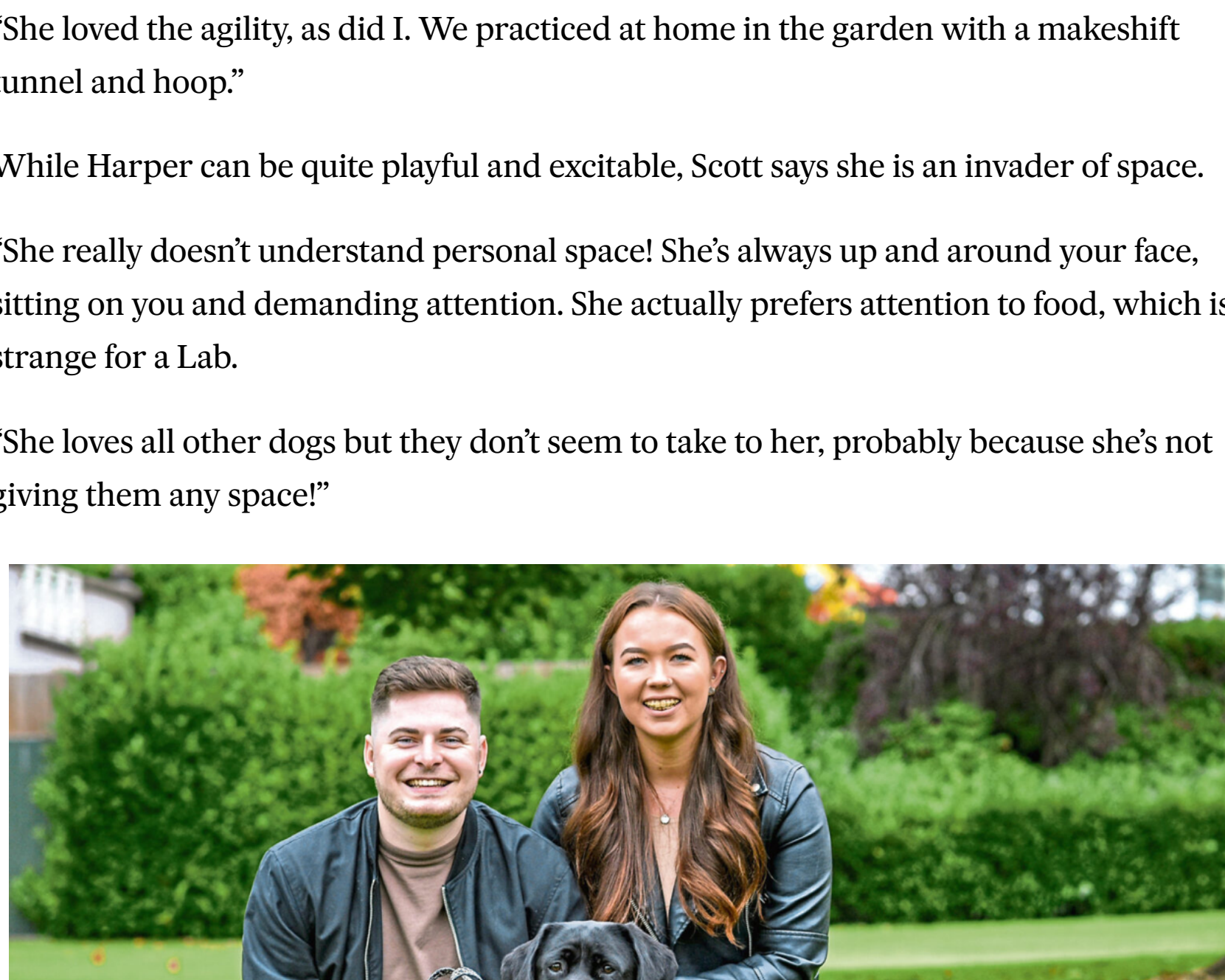
Harper

The December 9 show will feature 18-month-old Black Labrador Harper and her owners Scott McKinlay, 23, and Leyla Price, 24, from Rosyth.

"Filming for the show was such a great experience," says Scott.

"It was all about demonstrating the bond we have with Harper. When she was a pup, I was the one who took her most of the walks and took her out in the depths of winter! We spent a lot of time together.

"We've got a really strong relationship and when it comes to training, I'm the one who has to tell her off! But I think she really trusts me."



Scott and Harper from Rosyth feature on Scotland's Best Dog.

Scott, who works in the banking industry, says competing on the show taught both him and Harper a lot of useful training techniques.

"She loved the agility, as did I. We practiced at home in the garden with a makeshift tunnel and hoop."

While Harper can be quite playful and excitable, Scott says she is an invader of space.

"She really doesn't understand personal space! She's always up and around your face, sitting on you and demanding attention. She actually prefers attention to food, which is strange for a Lab.

"She loves all other dogs but they don't seem to take to her, probably because she's not giving them any space!"



Kaye Adams is a huge dog lover.

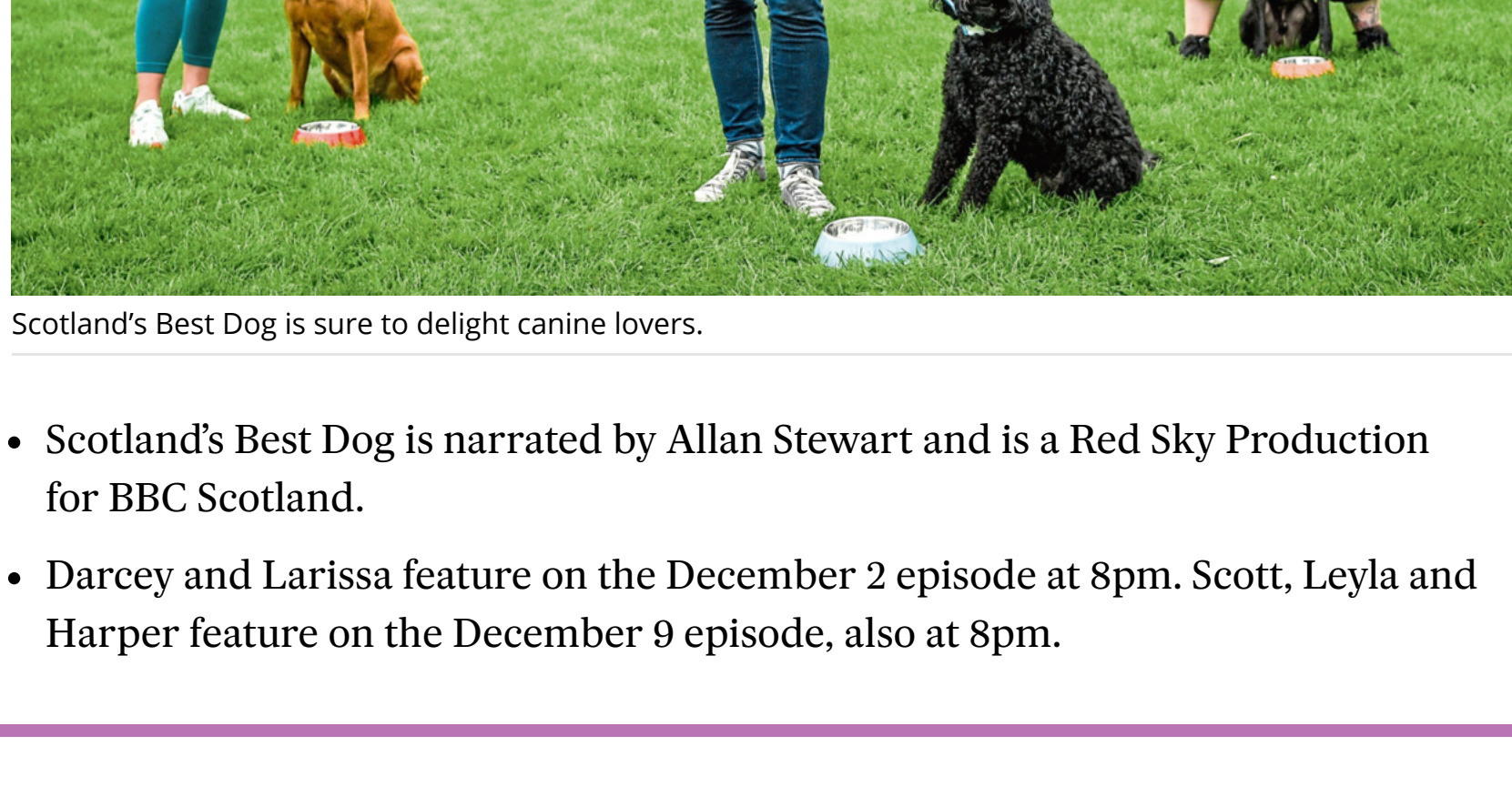
The first episode of the new show featured a deaf Dalmation from Edinburgh, a mixed breed rescue dog from Glasgow and a Husky Pomerian cross from Aberdeenshire.

The challenges all the dogs face were designed to showcase a happy, healthy relationship with our furry friends.

Dog lover Kaye Adams had a wonderful time being on the judging panel.

"It was truly joyful to see such a diverse range of dogs interacting with their humans in such a positive way," she says.

"If viewers enjoy it half as much as I did, it will be the highlight of their week."



Scotland's Best Dog is sure to delight canine lovers.

- Scotland's Best Dog is narrated by Allan Stewart and is a Red Sky Production for BBC Scotland.
- Darcey and Larissa feature on the December 2 episode at 8pm. Scott, Leyla and Harper feature on the December 9 episode, also at 8pm.