

HEAVY PETTING: OUR FURRY/SCALY/FEATHERED FRIENDS

## Two paws down for this canine adventure

LISAN JUTRAS  
NOVEMBER 20, 2007

This week, dogs, we apes bring you something we think you will really dig. It's a video. I know some of you can watch tennis and so forth on television - I've seen videos of it on YouTube. Maybe you have, too.

So check this out. We made a movie just for you. Because sometimes our useless primate legs are just too tired to take you for a good long walk at the end of the day.

You can stay at home and feel as if you're going for a stroll while we go to work to earn money to buy you more cool stuff.



We thoughtfully shot it at dog's-eye level and we got over our hang-ups about needing a narrative arc.

**Print Edition - Section Front**



[Enlarge Image](#)

### More Arts Stories

- [The celebrity outsider](#)
- [A man bedevilled by God](#)
- [Men in Trees won't leave B.C., says creator](#)
- [Perez picked the wrong fight this time](#) 
- [A wee primer on the lost art of complaining](#) 
- [Go to the Arts section](#)



There are a few DVDs in the *Your Dog Companion* series, created by dog behaviourist Stanley Coren as a "defence against 'the look.' " You know, that sad-eyed thing you do when we leave you alone all day.

But, trust us, there's nothing like some good TV to banish the blues. *Dog Farm Adventure* is supposed to help dogs who have "separation anxiety, loneliness and boredom."

We think it's just like a visit to the farm - you know, in the same way that watching *Friends* is like having friends.

Over the weekend, I elected a few dogs to watch the DVD, or "watch," as the case may be. Our panel consists of Sadie, Millie and Sam, three dogs who (not so coincidentally) grew up in the tropics, and two city dogs, Rocky and Alvin.

The dogs were not impressed by the beginning of *Dog Farm Adventure*, in which an eerily faceless man escorts the viewer into a car. All felt that the chickens - a few minutes into the video - would have been a good way to kick off the movie.

Gamefowl scatters at your approach - hurrah! The clucking and flapping drove one subject (okay, my dog) to the window, where she vigilantly scanned the city streets for roosters.

Sam fixated on the speaker. The city dogs made us feel like chumps for being more interested in the video than they were. Millie was the only dog who actually saw the chickens.

She jumped up and walked over to the TV. Having concluded that the chickens were not, in fact, edible, she leaped back onto the sofa and waited for the next highlight.

Which was horses. Millie watched with great interest, nostrils furiously working at the air. Satisfied that the whinnying and galloping had no olfactory component, she began nibbling on a stick.

The city dogs were, by this point, worrying that the TV was drawing attention away from them (the overly sentimental humans were pointing and cooing at the colts) and began petitioning for belly rubs.

Sam barked at the speaker in bafflement. My dog's gaze slid around the room in a glazed, pre-nap stupor.

The later footage, of turtles and frogs, was of no interest to anyone, to say nothing of the simulated forest walk, in which a woman hiked through a forest with her dog, the camera following its butt.

Which is not to say that the butt in itself wasn't a thoughtful touch for our canine friends. Like I said, we try. But consider: We have about 5 million smell receptors in our noses. Dogs have about 200 million. I definitely detected a whiff of disappointment from the canine audience.

We are smart enough to know that our dogs are lonely at home, smart enough to craft this very thoughtful DVD that takes into consideration dogs' interests and point of view, but we miss two crucial points.

One: a movie of a walk does not a walk make. Are there people out there who think the DVD will prevent their dogs from feeling lonely? I wish the answer were no.

Two: the technology. For this idea to fly, we need a smell component, or "smellovision," as it is known to scientists.

The smellovision shows could have names such as "Woodland Trail (with Assorted Droppings)" or "Litter-Box Raid (with Cat Turds You Can Practically Taste!)" or "Seaside Walk (with Bloated Drowned Gull You Can Practically Roll In!)"

We're not quite there yet, dogs, but don't give up on us. I understand that an automated Kong-dispensing machine for latchkey dogs is on the market so you can snack while you watch TV.

They don't call us great apes for nothing.

*Writer and editor Lisan Jutras has two cats, a Puerto Rican street dog and many garments covered in pet hair.*

© Copyright 2007 CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.

CTVglobemedia

globeandmail.com and The Globe and Mail are divisions of CTVglobemedia Publishing Inc., 444 Front St. W., Toronto, ON Canada M5V 2S9  
Phillip Crawley, Publisher