

## **WORKING-DOG.CO.UK**

Reprinted with kind permission of Sporting Shooter magazine

Author: Jackie Drakeford

This is the time of year when people who have ignored you for months become friendly. That is because they have rabbits in their gardens. Even though you told them last year (and the year before) that high summer is not the time you can do much useful in the way of rabbiting, they are adamant that there have been no rabbits until now. Oh, except for the baby one (one??) that they found in the woodpile. These are the people you told to get their gardens rabbit-fenced, only they thought it would spoil the view, or they had it done but on the cheap, so that laughing rabbits are pinging over and tunnelling under without hindrance. These are the people who drive out leaving the ruddy gates open, so that rabbits can make their unhurried way from the surrounding fields into the gardens without negotiating the fence at all. You have tried to get them to use a professional Pester, but unfortunately they have heard about the good jobs you did for Mr X and Mrs Y, both of whom have proper rabbit fencing and make getting to grips with the resident lagomorphs easy for you. Both Mr. X and Mrs. Y are sporting types, and don't mind the carnage that two lurchers can create in formal gardens when in pursuit of coney; also they don't have cats, dogs or children, so you can set traps.

The gardener is a nice chap, and he has been sent to persuade you. What is more, he is offering money, and you are easily bought. You ask if the rabbits are coming in from outside, and he assures you they are not. You ask about the rabbit fencing, and he says they can't get through it, except where they have. He offers the opinion that unless rabbits are living in next-door's garden (and how likely is that?), he cannot see that they are coming in from there. Right then, they must have been beamed down from the Mothership, and those long things they have at the sides of their heads,

## WORKING-DOG.CO.UK

Reprinted with kind permission of Sporting Shooter magazine

Author: Jackie Drakeford

they'd be antennae. Come to think of it, there have been bright lights over that part of the village some nights.

Having run out of excuses, you take two lurchers and go for a recce. You have to pick a time when the children are at school, assure the gardener that the dogs won't even look at the cat, and meet him by the tradesman's entrance because he has the key and they won't let you have one. The dogs are noses-down immediately, there are rabbit runs, scrapes and droppings on the lawn, and mindful of a reputation to keep up, they flush a rabbit from the shrubbery. There is a great crashing and spraying of tender foliage, and you hold your breath waiting for the yelp, but luckily the gods are with you and they pin the rabbit by the conservatory. As you are necking it, you look up to see a small sprog watching you out of the window. Oopsie.

You check the wilder part of the garden and find a blessed great badger sett. It seems disused, but there are laws about this sort of thing and no, you won't be ferreting it. The gardener thinks it is where the rabbits are living. You explain about traps and the regular visiting of, and you are assured that the family is going on holiday shortly, and could you trap the rabbits while they are away? They cannot let you have a key to the garden door, but the gardener is so keen to get rid of the pesky fluffies that he will meet you every day and let you in. Damn.

Coming back into the formal garden, you see a small cortege of children carrying the recently deceased rabbit in a box. There is a bunch of flowers in every chubby fist, and nanny is digging a hole under the apple tree.

.....

'Let sleeping dogs lie' is very true, and so many people get bitten, especially youngsters, from ignoring this. A dog should be able to sleep in peace, free from fear

## **WORKING-DOG.CO.UK**

Reprinted with kind permission of Sporting Shooter magazine

Author: Jackie Drakeford

of disturbance of animal or human origins. If you must rouse a sleeping dog, and sometimes it is necessary, do not touch the dog, but speak to it until it awakens. If the dog's hearing is not so good, gently tap on the floor so that the vibrations disturb it. Some dogs sleep more deeply than others, so allow for this, and do not take any risks, for the nicest of dogs goes to another place in its sleep, and is a wolf when suddenly awakened.