



Dr Roger Mugford and pit bull patient, a former fighting dog he is battling to rehabilitate. Photograph by David Mansell

The first lesson was to introduce him to other dogs on the farm, keeping him under control with a leash and nylon halter. As soon as he went for Sammy, Dr Mugford's red setter, the dog was pushed to the ground while the high-pitched whistle was set off. The reaction was an instantaneous look of terror.

The same thing happened with the second dog he was introduced to, a lurcher bitch. But by the third dog, Flint had learned his lesson.

Dr Mugford said: 'By forcing him to the ground I am humiliating him and that is far more potent than physical punishment. All the evidence is that pain exacerbates aggression.'

After learning to behave himself with the dogs, Flint met the other animals on the farm, including an African Ebu cow, a herd of sheep and Albert, a turkey who is more than a match for most dogs. Albert pecked Flint on the nose.

He said: 'Banning certain breeds because they're supposedly dangerous is not the answer and would lead to a lot of bizarre anomalies. Some of the worst bites I've seen were inflicted by a chihuahua and it would probably also mean banning cocker spaniels.'

corgis and the polar bears in Bristol Zoo. His clinics are conducted from a Portakabin at the picture-postcard Hardwick Court Farm in Chertsey, Surrey.

On the couch last Friday was Flint, a three-year-old weimeraner, a German gun dog, from Romsey, Hampshire. Flint's owners, Joe and Rosemary Wilson, realised they had a serious problem when the dog bit a neighbour's knee as she tried to pat it.

Earlier, he had sprung at the neighbour's seven-year-old daughter and attacked other dogs. Training classes and other attempts to keep him under control had all failed.

Dr Mugford established that Flint was not only highly strung and snappy, but also a cowardly dog who ran away after every attack. Armed with an aerosol whistle similar to an anti-mugging device, he took Flint out into a field.

the owner's name and address, or inject it with a miniature coded microchip, which could be read electronically.

Last Friday, Battersea Dogs Home decided to elect a 'tag' all the 12,000 animals that leave the home annually in an attempt to stop them straying again and, if they do, track down the owner.

But they will not include either rottweilers or the even more notorious pit bull terriers as the Home refuses to find those dogs new owners because they are too dangerous to be treated as pets.

Both the Kennel Club and the RSPCA agree there should be stricter controls on dog breeders who operate virtually unregulated. The only reaction by the Home Office to increasing public and political concern is to look at the possibility of increasing the penalties on owners who fail to keep their dogs under control.

In 1980, around 2,000 new rottweilers were registered with the Kennel Club; probably as many again were not. Dog fashions change and the popularity of powerful 'macho' breeds has led to a dramatic increase in the number of pet rottweilers.

Last year alone, there were just under 10,000 new

from the London School of Economics in support of its campaign for a self-financing dog registration scheme. The registration fee, the organisation claims, would also pay for a nationwide network of dog wardens.

The total includes £50 million for road accidents caused by dogs, £7 million on hospital treatment for bites, £2.2 million for boarding strays and £1 million for death or injury to farm animals.

Provision for a dog registration scheme was incorporated in the Local Government Act 1988 which abolished the 3/p dog licence. It was inserted into the Act by the House of Lords against the wishes of the Government.

But although the machinery is there, neither the Home Office nor the Department of the Environment have any intention of putting it into motion.

Canine opinion is divided. The Kennel Club and many dog experts think that the answer is to penalise irresponsible owners through the courts rather than making it more costly and complicated to keep a dog. The RSPCA has coined a name for the dangerous new breed of dog-owner: FIDO — Fecless and Irre-

around because the dog will sense it. If this doesn't work you have a serious problem and Mr Grant can't help you, especially if there are two or more animals: then the pack instinct takes over.

The recent attacks by rottweilers, which can grow to 15 stone and have powerful heads and jaws, have led to renewed calls for strict controls on owners as well as their animals.

Joseph Flynn, the Birmingham market trader whose three rottweilers savaged a five-year-old boy last week, did neither any favours last week. By driving off after the attack, apparently unconcerned and without checking how the child was, he gave credence to the dog lobby's argument that the danger is caused by problem owners rather than problem dogs.

Last week's newspapers were full of horror stories of dogs attacking people and other animals, from another rottweiler that put an old age pensioner in hospital and killed her pet terrier, to an American pit bull that savaged and seriously injured a pony in Leeds. In April, 11-year-old Kelly Lynch was killed by two rottweilers as she walked them along a beach in Dunoon, Strathclyde, the most hor-