Riggs Rideout: Dog Model

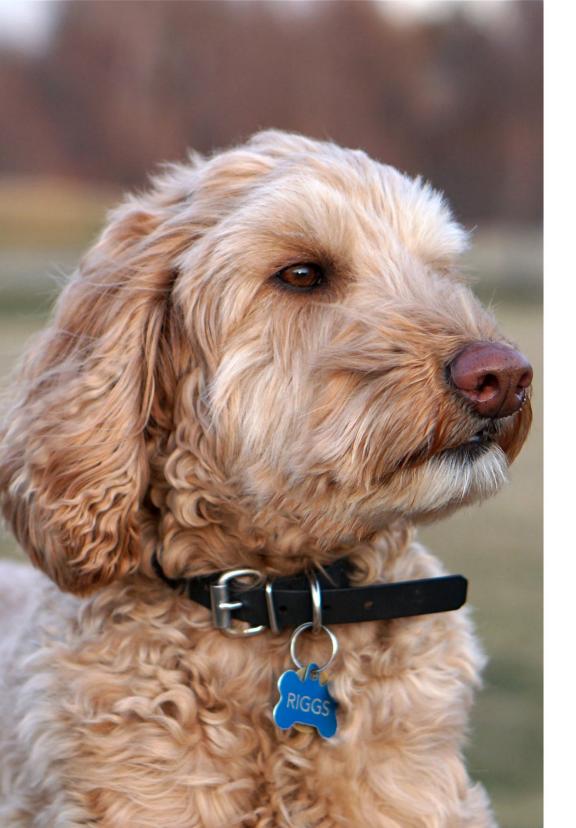
The Exclusive Interview





Born in a small town in Ontario, Riggs Rideout had a rocky start with a first time dog owner - a self-confessed cat lady. It wasn't until he turned three that he found his footing in the dog-eat-dog world of adventure modelling. Today, he can typically be found on the trails of Toronto's urban ravine system, where he conceived his popular dog-on-a-log photo series.

To catch up with this professional poser, visit www.sandyrideout.com.



As an up-and-coming dog model, Riggs Rideout is constantly on the move and rarely has time to take questions. In fact, this is the first authorized interview with the celebrity canine. Finally, he's bowed to pressure from fans to share the inside story of his journey, and set the record straight regarding some common misconceptions about dog modelling - and his own notoriety.

Welcome, Riggs! Thanks for joining us to talk about your meteoric rise in dog modelling.

I'm glad to help. It's a great opportunity to correct some public misconceptions about me, and attract attention for an under-appreciated group of dogs that are providing a valuable community service.

Did you always want to be a dog model?

Not at all. I mean, I sensed I was destined for something big, but my agent - who insists on calling herself "Mom" - didn't see my potential. No one did. People said I was too skinny, that my muzzle was too long, and my eyes too small. They even criticized my personality: I didn't wag enough, gaze enough, or try hard enough to please. Although I put on a brave front, my self-esteem took a hit. Luckily, this underdog is finally getting his day.



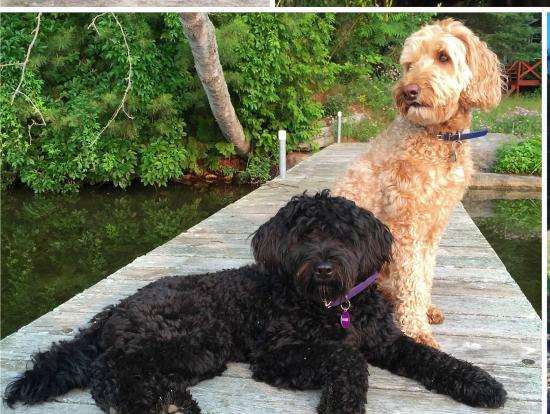
How were you discovered?

I owe my discovery to the "little sister" I never wanted: Mabel. There are very few quality photos of me as a pup because Mom had an antiquated phone and was too cheap to upgrade. Then Mabel arrived, and she's basically a black blob with no eyes in photographs. So Mom got a new phone and then a real camera just to make Mabel look better. I think we know who the family favourite is.

Obviously, it was never about me. But I kept faith, posing hard in the background. After months of toiling in obscurity, Mom finally noticed how the lens loved me and a lightbulb went off in her head.









How did life change after that?

It was a complete turnaround. Suddenly the old girl was on her knees in the dirt, the sand, the snow, even in the water, taking pictures of *me*. The treats started flowing. At last, I got some appreciation.

Now, she's constantly on the lookout for good backdrops. That means more car rides and adventures. Instead of hitting the same old trails, we try new ones. We've even gone downtown on the subway a few times. I'm like a therapy dog, only without the tiresome training and the silly vest.









Doodles are a dime a dozen these days. What makes you special?

I get my elegance and nice build from the poodle. I glide, I prance, and I canter like a show horse. I'm fast on my feet so I give great action shots. With the right grooming, I'd say I'm a very striking doodle.

As a model, you learn to exploit what nature gave you. The long snout that people once disparaged has become my trademark. (Pert little doodle noses are so done!) My eyes may not be huge, but my eyebrows waggle independently and expand my range of expression.

Beauty is only half of the modelling equation. The other half is personality, which I have in spades. In my opinion, the typical doodle looks sweet and dopey most of the time. I can go from happy-go-lucky to pensive in a flash, and I can do intense like nobody's business.

Intensity seems rare in a doodle. What's your secret?

Prey drive. Most doodles don't have it. I'm an efficient killing machine when I get the chance.



Who are your biggest influences?

I never look at other dog models. I want to be sure my work comes from a really authentic place. What you see in my photos is the essential Riggs. As far as human mentors go, I've learned a lot from the great Derek Zoolander. Like him, I developed several signature looks. Ultimately, I think I've surpassed Zoolander in range, and possibly in I.Q. But he was a real inspiration in my early days.



Foreprey



Fur Regal

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What do you love most about the job?

It's going to sound cheesy, but I love working with my Mom. When Mabel came along I felt demoted. I spent months trying to kill her, and when that didn't work, I settled for outshining her. It's clear Mabel doesn't have what it takes to be a great dog model so I know this is something special Mom and I will always share. We've tried everything from obedience classes to agility and this is the most fun ever.

Adventure modelling isn't for everyone, but I think I'd find studio and runway work boring.

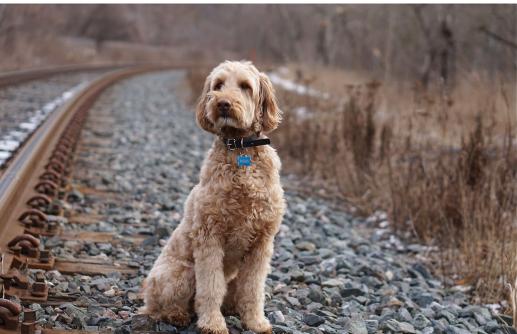


What are the downsides?

When you're as good as I am, it's all work work work. I'm on call 24/7. If Mom wants to see the effects of sunrise on my fur, I have to get up before dawn. It's hard to just be a dog now. The stakes are much higher. If I roll in dead things, there are histrionics, and a tangle with burrs is an epic tragedy. The brushing seems endless; when you're famous, you have to keep up appearances.

On top of that, Mom's cut off access to dried sweet potato. It's my kryptonite. I'd get so excited that she'd either have to adjust angles or edit my privates. What can I say, I'm a dog.







What would you like people to know about dog models?

The job isn't as easy as it looks, and it's not for dim-witted or difficult dogs. I take direction well: if I'm told to run up a tree, I don't hesitate (unless there is a coyote nearby). I hold any pose until Mom is satisfied, and then offer a new one. All she has to do is point to a stump or a rock and I'm on it - literally. If I need to turn around on a small platform to catch the light, I do it. All for a small liver treat!

Good dog models are patient and willing to please. GREAT dog models have the ability to see what their photographers want and offer it before they even have to ask.

Dog models may not save lives, but we have the power to put a smile on people's faces. That's a responsibility, an honour and a privilege.





What advice would you give to aspiring dog models?

- 1. Get a good handle. Mom named me Riggins after the hot bad boy character in *Friday Night Lights* and I do my best to live up to that honour. The biggest models in every field have a distinctive moniker.
- 2. Develop a persona. Better to be an ass than be boring. I'm a rogue and the camera loves it.
- 3. Be daring. Go where other dogs wouldn't. If others are dialing it up to 10, you need to take it to 11.







- 4. Fake it until you make it, and take failure in stride.
- 5. Find a schtick and exploit it. Any dog can loll around the couch. Get out there and let Mother Nature inspire you.
- 6. Work with the weather and the seasons. Good photos aren't always about pretty: they're about personality.



- 7. Take it seriously but not TOO seriously. Fun sells, and I'm the funnest dog model around.
- 8. Run it out. You can't channel the force until you've let off steam.
- 9. Aim high, but accept your limitations. I have to really dig deep for "sweet." I'm not the model for every job.







- 10. Know your best angles. I like to tilt into the wind as I catch an elusive scent. It adds an air of mystery and depth.
- 11. Never say never. I've balked at a few things, likes bridges and water play. But when you're a pro, you must face down your fears.
- 12. Make peace with the brush it may smooth the way to corporate endorsements.







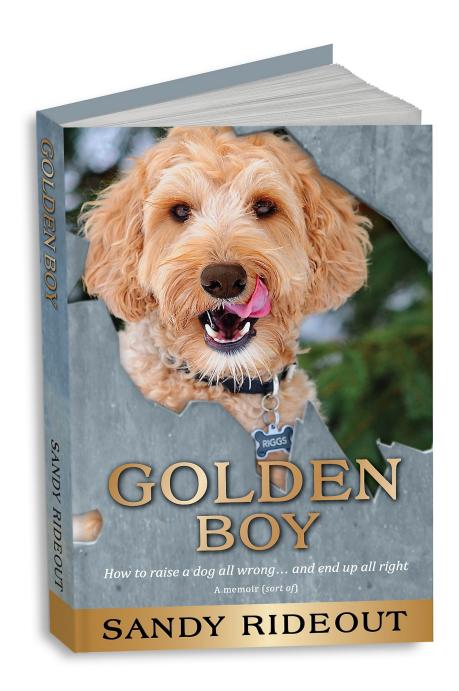
- 13. Never be upstaged. But know when a foil can work to your advantage.
- 14. Manage your manager. Use an intermittent reward system. One good photo out of thirty will keep her motivated and in the field working for you.
- 15. Be iconic. You don't actually need to think big thoughts... just look like you are.



What do you really want people to know about Riggs Rideout?

That I'm a good dog. It's that simple. I think Mom regrets publishing that slanderous tell-all, "Golden Boy", but the damage is done. It made me look despicable, when everyone knows the owner is ALWAYS the problem. Luckily, any publicity is good publicity, and gold doesn't tarnish.

Also, I am tired of having to apologize for my lack of depth. I'm easy on the eyes and I make people laugh. What could be wrong with that? I don't fit the cliche of the perfect dog, sitting adoringly at Mom's feet and reading her like a mood ring. Sensitivity is not really my thing. Tough love is my thing. I get her sorry butt onto the trails. Exercise! Fresh air! Distraction! Managing my burgeoning career has given her a new leash on life.



What are your long-term career aspirations?

Endorsements! Plus I'd really like my own reality TV show, and with my charisma, I don't think that's a huge stretch. Basically, I want Mom available to wait on me hand and foot 24/7 and I'm willing to pose as hard as necessary to make that happen.

And final words?

If you can't be a model dog, be a dog model. Just don't pee on my grass.









Riggs Rideout, Dog Model, is owned and operated by Sandy Rideout, a Toronto writer. A total dog novice, Sandy freely acknowledges that she overlooked Riggs' great potential in his formative years. Grateful that he stuck with her through a bumpy climb, Sandy now calls Riggs the canine love of her life. While making sure Riggs' days are filled with fun, she also shamelessly exploits his exploits when she gets the chance. Her tell-all is "Golden Boy: How to raise a dog all wrong and end up all right."

Learn more at www.sandyrideout.com

