

From Woof to Wow!

Transform Your Pet Photos with 10 Expert Tips



Michelle Wrighton - Three Red Ponies Pet Photography

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As a professional pet photographer at Three Red Ponies studio, I often get asked by pet owners for tips on how they can take better photos of their fur babies.

Whether you have a camera or just your smartphone, there are some simple tips and tricks you can use to capture your pet's unique personality and character.

1. Lighting

The word 'photography' literally means 'drawing with light'. Good lighting is the most important aspect of photography and this is especially true when it comes to photographing pets.

Using natural light by taking your photos outside or in a room with plenty of windows with your pet facing the light is your best option.



For the best results, outdoor natural light photographs should be taken early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the sun is low on the horizon (the quality of the light in the hour after sunrise and the hour before sunset are preferred by professional photographers.)

Overcast days with full cloud cover are good for taking photos as the light is very even and you have more options for how you position your pet.

Take photos when the sun is lower on the horizon



If you are taking photos in the middle of the day with bright sunlight, position your pet in open shade or directly in the sun parallel to the camera to avoid harsh dark shadows.

Keeping your back to the sun to help with this, particularly for horses, but you may find dogs and other small animals will squint their eyes if they are looking directly at the sun.

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**Overcast days
provide even light
without casting
harsh shadows**

**Position your pet in
open shade where the
light is even (not
dappled)**



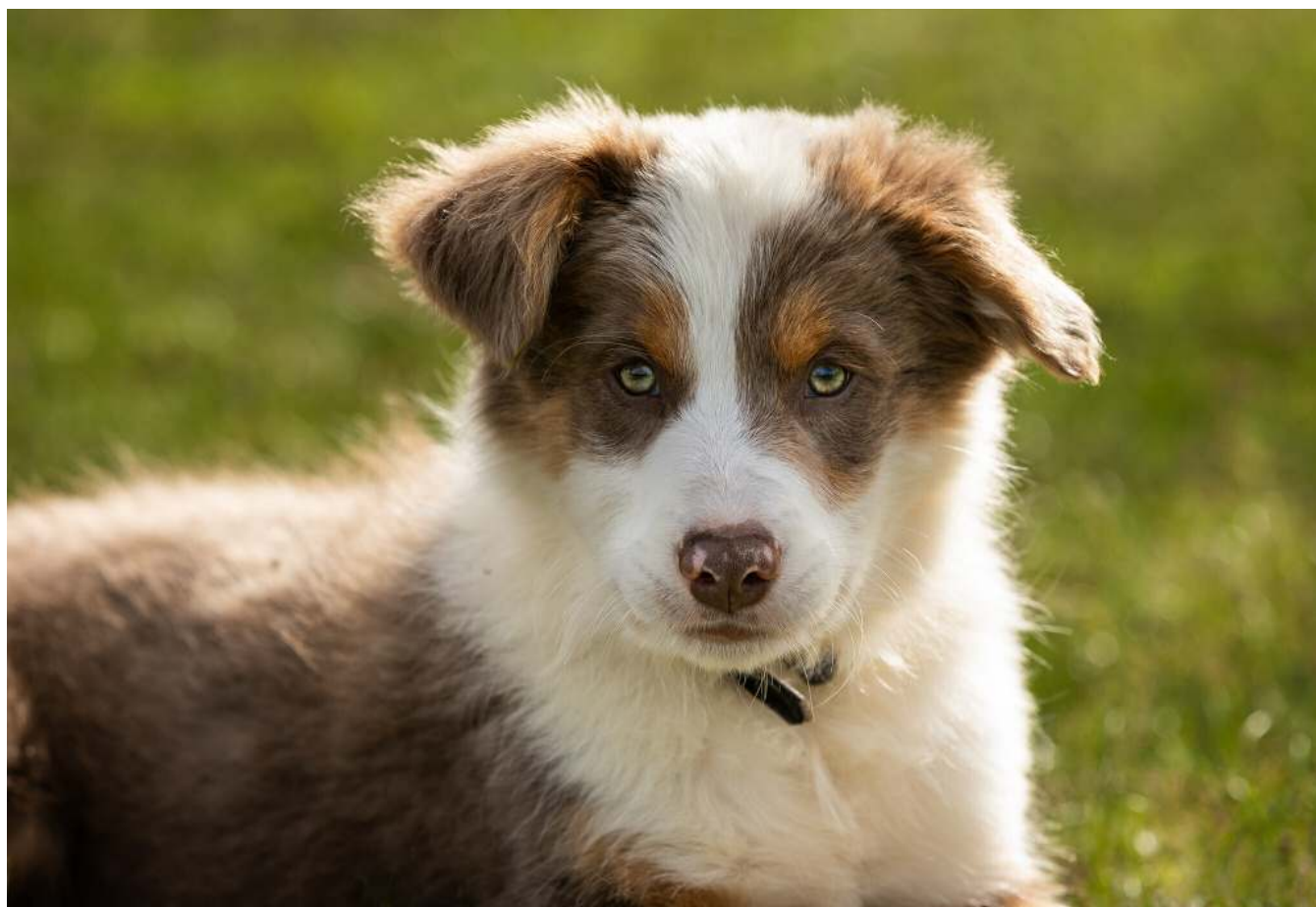
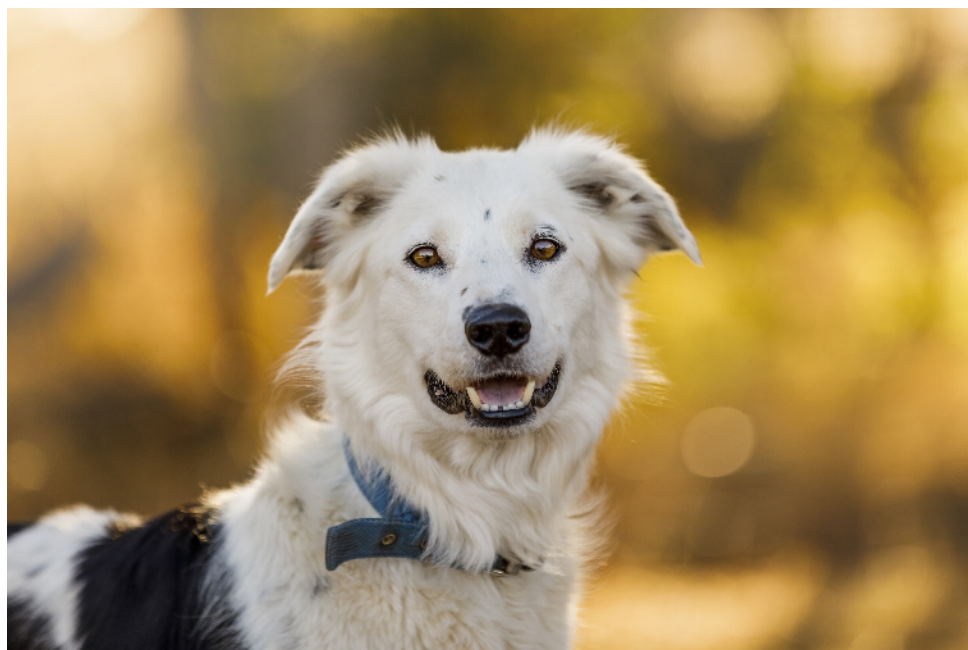
Unless you have a full studio lighting set-up to create flattering and dramatic light, its best to avoid using your camera or smartphone flash as it will create harsh shadows and make your pet's eyes look unnatural.

**Studio lighting
produces stunning
and dramatic fine
art portraits**



While there are techniques such as shooting backlit subjects that result in very beautiful photographs, these are more advanced techniques so to start with it's better take photos with the sunlight directly behind you so that your pet is evenly lit, then progress to more advanced techniques in the future.

Backlighting is a beautiful technique



2. Get down to your pet's level

One of the best things you can do to take better photos of your pet is to get down to their level. For dogs, cats and other small animals, this means lying down on the ground or finding a low surface to take your photos from. By doing this, you'll be able to capture your pet's face and eyes at the same level, creating a more engaging and intimate photo.





3. Capture their personality

The best pet photos are the ones that capture their unique personality and charm. Try to take photos of your pet doing something they love, whether that's playing with a favourite toy, lounging in their favorite spot or going for a walk at the park.



These types of photos will not only be more interesting, but they'll also serve as a wonderful reminder of your pet's personality for years to come.



4. Keep it simple

When it comes to pet photography, less is often more. Try to keep the background simple and uncluttered so that your pet is the main focus of the photo. This will help your pet stand out and create a more striking image.

You can move around or crop in closer to remove unsightly background clutter. Some phone cameras have a portrait setting that will allow you to blur the background.

Its not always 100% and will often blur out parts of the pet, but if will only view the photo on your phone and not printing it can be better than a messy background.



Achieving blurred backgrounds with a camera is a more advanced technique that requires wider apertures, increased distance from the background and focus precision.

5. Be patient

Patience is key when it comes to pet photography. Unlike human models, pets don't always do what we want them to do, and it can take some time and effort to get the perfect shot.

Be patient with your pet, and don't be afraid to take multiple shots to get the one you want.

Here at Three Red Ponies I have a Patience Policy that ensures your pet remain happy and stress free for their session, as that is the only way to create portraits that reflect their true personality and character.



6. Camera angle and height

The angle and height you choose to take your photos from will have a big impact on the final result.

Experiment with different angles and heights to find the ones that's most flattering for your pet. For example, taking a photo from above and looking down at a small pet can create a fun and playful effect while taking a photo from below can make your pet look more alert and engaged.



The type of camera lens as well as the shape and size of your pet will also play a part in the success of your photos taken from different angles, so you will need to experiment and see what works for you.



7. Distortion

Distortion occurs when using wide angle or phone camera lenses, using different angles or being too close to your pet which can result in a distorted or stretched out image, making parts of the body close to the camera look bigger than the rest of it.

Sometimes this distortion can look cute with small animals and can be a stylistic choice, but in many cases (particularly for horses) it can be unflattering and is something you may want to know how to avoid.

Pet size, camera equipment and your distance from your pet will affect this so it is something that you will need to experiment with yourself.



To avoid distortion, try to use a camera with a normal or telephoto lens and position yourself further away from your pet if you're using a wide angle lens or phone camera.

If you are using a phone camera to photograph a horse in particular, position your horse perfectly parallel lengthways, not too close to your horse and holding the phone sideways in landscape orientation and at chest height will help limit distortion.



This angle and distortion in the above photo is very unflattering to poor Jackson.

Simply moving my feet to a different position created a much nicer photo.



The wide angle lens in phone cameras and lens any wider than 100mm are notorious for creating distortion in horses.

This is why professional horse photographers use telephoto lenses like the 70-200mm and increase the distance between them and the horse to create compression and limit distortion.

8. Take multiple shots

When it comes to pet photography, especially if you are using a phone or entry level camera, it's a good idea to take 3-4 shots before moving on to the next pose.

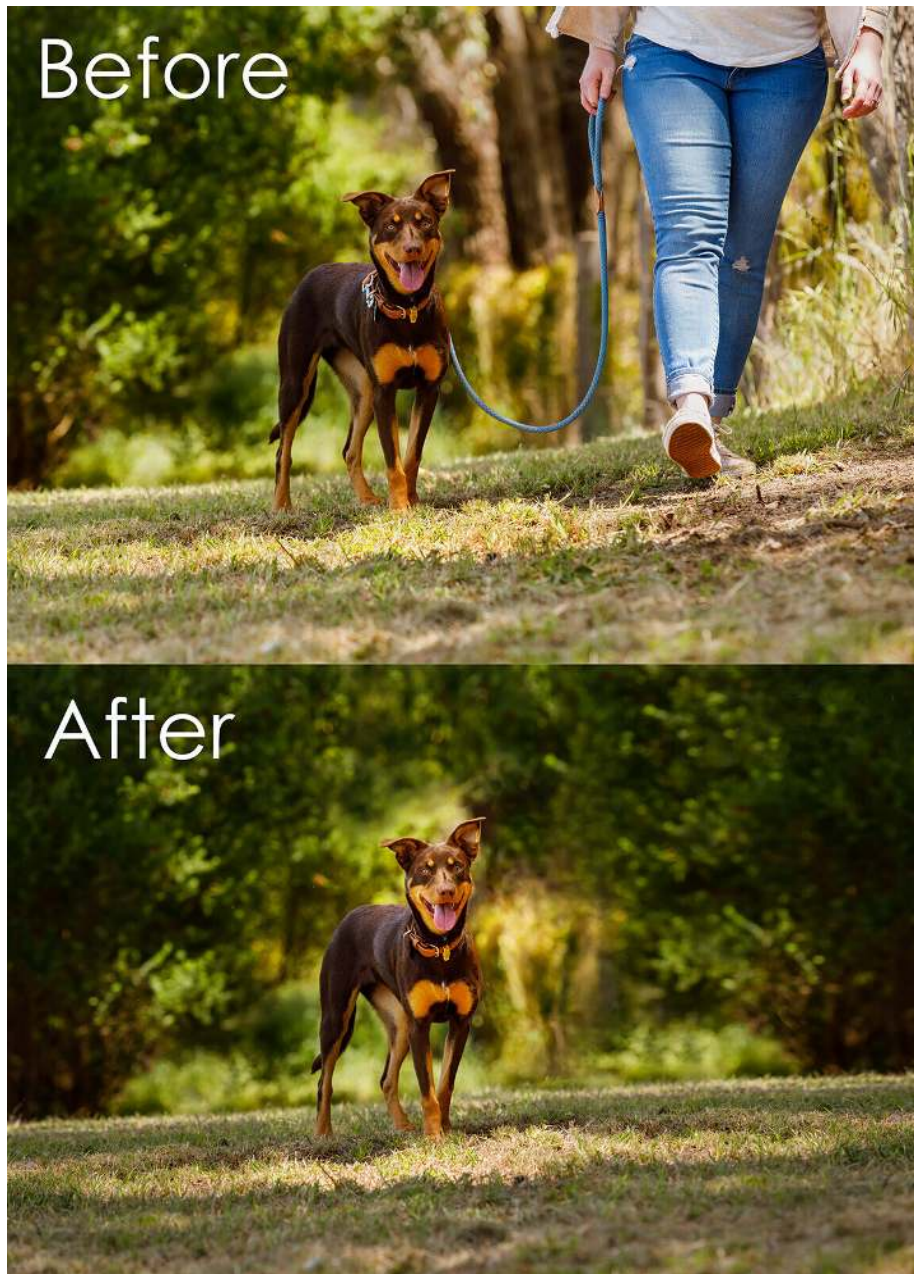
Pets move quickly and without warning, plus they blink their eyes, so taking more than one shot will increase your chances of getting the perfect one, and also give you a range to choose from so you can select the one you like most. The beauty of digital is that you can just delete the ones that don't work out!

9. Learn how to edit

Editing your photos can really help you to enhance their quality and make them more visually appealing, as well as let you express your artistic flair!

There are a range of editing tools available, both free and paid, that can help you to adjust things like brightness, contrast, sharpness and saturation.

No amount of editing a bad photo beats getting it right in camera, and learning how to edit photos well is a very time consuming process, so its always worth taking the time with your shot rather than trying to save it afterwards.





10. Enlist the help of a friend

Sometimes it can be difficult to get your pet to stay still or look at the camera.

Enlisting the help of a friend can make the process easier and more fun for both you and your pet. They can help to keep your pet in position, get their attention and even hold props or toys to create a more engaging photo.



BONUS TIPS

- If you are using a phone camera, tap on the screen where you want to set the focus.
- Use attention getters like squeaky toys, treats or crinkly bags to get your pets attention.

Thanks for reading, I hope this guide will help you take better photos of your beloved pet!

If you have any questions let me know and I'd love to see what you create!

For more tips or to book your own professional photo session to create beautiful artwork for your home, visit my website <https://www.threeredponies.com.au>

Happy snapping!

PS The time with our fur babies passes so quickly, no matter how you feel about having your own photo taken, don't miss the opportunity to capture some treasured memories of the special bond you share by having your photo taken with you pet.

About



Michelle Wrighton of Three Red Ponies is a pet photographer from the south west region of Western Australia.

As a baby she was raised alongside a German Shepherd puppy and an orphan foal - not surprisingly, dogs and horses have been a major part of her life and the inspiration for her art ever since.

First picking up a camera in 1985, Michelle has been a professional pet portrait artist since 2002. Her career started with traditional paintings which laid the foundation for her signature up close and personal style that reflects the personality, character and spirit of each animal in intimate detail. Painting commissions were often commemorative so Michelle quickly exchanged paintbrush for camera and the joy of meeting her subjects in person to celebrate the love and happiness they brought their families.

While pets are always the main focus, capturing special moments that define the unique bond between pets and their people also features in the work Michelle creates. Michelle's studio on her family farm in picturesque Boyup Brook is the only one of its kind in Western Australia.

With four high energy border collies and six horses in her own family, Michelle naturally specialises in dogs and horses, however her unique and fun 'best of both worlds' studio and outdoor photography experience caters for pets of all species and sizes.