



SAR Dog News

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The Voice of K-9 Search and Rescue @ n-sda.org

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CONTENTS

Article	page
NSDA Newsletter Editor	1
Camp Atterbury Conference	1
BOD Meeting Dates	1
First Responder Disaster Handlers	2
Mouse Poison	2
Testing expense rebates	2
New NSDA website	3
The Other End of the Leash	3
Open positions in NSDA	3
Kibbles and Bits, Shock Collars	4
Second Opinion	5
Robotics in Search and Rescue	6
NSDA Board training	5
Kibbles and Bits	6
Last Howl	8
Board of Directors list	9
The Other End of the Leash answers	10
Trainings & Seminars	14

NSDA NEWSLETTER EDITOR STILL NEEDED

My apologies to our readers for being late this month with our newsletter. If you have an interest in becoming our Editor, please contact me and let's talk.

Norma Snelling, President

2014 BOARD MEETING DATES

November 6
December 4

Contact Secretary, Julie Gibson by November 1 for the call-in number for the November meeting

FALL CAMP ATTERBURY SEMINAR SUCCESSFUL

Fifty-five people gathered on base in Indiana for NSDA for our conference at Camp Atterbury.

Those who attended traveled from

Alabama	Arkansas	Connecticut
Georgia	Illinois	Indiana
Kentucky	Mississippi	Missouri
Michigan	N. Carolina	Nebraska
Ohio	Pennsylvania	Tennessee
Texas	Washington	

Jan Meyer was on top of it as Seminar Chair even though within 10 days of the seminar she was told that the mess hall for all meals had closed down, everyone had been switched to one large dormitory and there were no subjects for the dogs.

A few other glitches came along but all were handled and did not stop the searchers from benefiting from some excellent instructors. My hat goes off to all of them and a special thank you for all of the donations to our silent action.

Norma Snelling

HEY MICHIGAN !

It was good to see so many of you at the conference. How about one in your area next year?

FIRST RESPONDER DISASTER HANDLERS

NSDA has a decision to make. Who is our customer? Is it the volunteer dog handler, law enforcement or the government? Or is it the victim?

In the Spring, we will be bringing out a First Responder Disaster certification for those on the ground, where it is happening. This is to teach the basics to those who would otherwise respond with their local team/ agency without any experience. It will also show a minimum amount of proficiency to your SAR coordinator or LE. This will be our Level III.

We will then bring out a test with a higher standard. The question is:

Do we exactly copy the FEMA test in order to be able to say we are just as good as . . . or

Do we keep in mind we are testing handlers who have no desire to be FEMA handlers but only want to be prepared at a much higher level in order to help their neighbors?

If we concentrate on training those at local team level, will there be any problem in "selling" ourselves to the local law enforcement that will deploy you or will they prefer to wait the 36 – 48 hours for FEMA to respond and just send in untrained foot searchers and air scent dogs?

What are your needs and how can we serve them? Please contact me with your thoughts or any board member. Snelling@n-sda.org.

MOUSE POISON CAUTION

Some mouse poison (D con) was put in our vehicle because mice were tearing up the upholstery. It seemed safe since the dogs could

not get into vehicle. The poison was picked up later after having killed a couple mice. Weeks later, I was shaking out a camp pad in the garage and saw what appeared to be green plastic bits fall from it. After a few minutes, I noticed that Stormy and Pepper were eating the stuff, so I looked closer at it and realized it was the mouse poison. I called the vet and he said to dose them with hydrogen peroxide. On doing this, both dogs vomited large amounts of greenish goo which seemed to purge their systems. They did not show any side effects after a day but the outcome could have been much different.

WARNING. Mouse poison is commonly carried by the mice to other places and cached where it could be accessible to your dogs. Do not use it under any circumstances.

A further note. D con has an antidote but some other new poisons do not.

Tom Ostercamp

NEW NSDA WEBSITE IS UP

Old address – new look. Go to www.n-sda.org and take a peek.

If you have any problems or can't locate what you are looking for, let me know. nsnelling@n-sda.org



TESTING REBATES

Apply for a \$300.00 refund to bring in a NSDA evaluator(s) for testing three or more handlers. While funds last, we are reimbursing teams or groups of handlers up to \$300. toward evaluator travel expenses. See our website Testing Information page @www.n-sda.org.

The Other End of the Leash For Land HRD Handlers

See the end of this newsletter for answers to last month's scenario problem.

November **Scenario:**

A dam was taken down, leaving a small river with large clay/sand banks of the previous lake. A human bone was found sticking out of the top layer of clay along the bank. The search day was sunny, low 70's, little wind. I worked my dog blind $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, following along the bank with no signs of interest. She entered an area of dry clay that had left $1\frac{1}{2}$ " - 2" cracks crisscrossing the surface. The fissures ranged from a few feet long to 20'-30' long and went at least 2' deep. My dog gave me her trained response while sticking her nose into an intersection of two cracks and pawing at it. She then alerted on a second site about 10' away. I was informed that her alerts were within 25' of where the bone had been located. This was an experienced, honest dog that had previously located disarticulated, buried bones that were 29 years old.

The agency in charge brought in a geologist who dug 3 holes, 4' x 4' and six feet deep. As he dug, he was very excited about watching the layers that had been laid down by the lake over the years but had no experience working with dogs. The dirt removed was sifted and nothing was located.

I trust my dog. As the handler and expert, what would you have done or recommended?

Write to me c/o the newsletter at snelling@n-sda.org and tell me what you would do and why. You may use your name or not, as you choose but please include your experience level and discipline.

OPEN POSITIONS IN NSDA

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

- Accept articles from contributors over the prior month and put them in a logical, presentable manner in the newsletter format.
- Be aware of new articles and information from SAR chat groups to include
- Have fun with contests, questions and answers, educational articles and your own imagination to keep it new and interesting.

COMPUTER TIME? WE HAVE PROJECTS

A few hours a week can accomplish a lot. Statistics need to be collected to use in our fundraising. Our Fundraising Chair could use some research done to locate likely places to apply for funding. We need information on state standards from all parts of the country. Collect locations and dates for statewide conferences so we can send representatives

ANY OTHER IDEAS ON HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE

KIBBLES & BITS

by Susan Bulanda

If anyone has questions please send them to me at susanb21@juno.com with NSDA in the subject line.

One of our readers asked me to comment on the topic of Shock collars based on my experience and on research. Here it is and thank you for the suggestion.

Shock collars

This is one topic that can generate a heated discussion in dog trainers as well as SAR dog handlers. No matter what you call them, E-Collars, Electronic Stimulation collars, Remote trainers, or whatever, the bottom line is that the collar delivers a painful shock to the dog. If there were no pain, they would not work.

Some collars can be set to vibrate or sound a beep which can be used in place of a clicker, or, in the case of deaf dogs, a vibration can signal the dog to do something that it was taught, such as a recall. This article does not refer to the non-shock type of application.

Studies have been conducted to determine the validity of shock collars and overall the results of the studies show that they have a negative effect on dogs.

Even the electronic containment systems, according to Polsky's study, showed that dogs can become extremely aggressive toward humans, far beyond their normal level of aggression.

While using a shock collar may seem like a good idea, the problem arises when and if the dog makes the wrong association with the shock. The dog could blame its environment, people or other animals for the pain instead of realizing that the pain is a result of crossing a barrier.

If the dog does escape, which many do, they learn that it is rewarding to endure the shock and that if

they escape that they do not feel more pain. The other down side to electronic containment systems is that the fear of a shock will often keep the dog from returning to his home.



The other risk with this type of containment system is that it does not protect the dog from intruders, animal or human. If there is an intruder the dog may feel trapped because he will not cross the boundary.

Systems that have a warning beep, either automatically or controlled by a human can cause a dog to fear similar sounding beeps, such as those from a microwave and stove timer. Many stoves give a beep when the temperature of the oven reaches the level it was set to.

There have been cases when the dog hears the beep they become frightened and will not enter the area where they heard the beep ever again. Or they associate the beep with whatever is near them at the time, including a family member.

Shock collars also cause stress and fear in many dogs, destroying their quality of life. Schalke conducted a study to which determined that the dog's stress is caused by the unknown, not understanding why and when the shock will come. Even weeks after the tests, the dogs showed a high level of stress when reintroduced to the test area.

The general conclusion from the studies shows that shock collars are not a good way to train dogs. Because the dog can and often does associate the pain with the environment, it makes using shock collars for SAR training an even greater risk. The last thing SAR dog handlers need is to have their dogs react fearfully or negatively to any search situation, environment or person, or class of people, i.e. children, men, women etc.

A Second Opinion

By Norma Snelling

Positive training methods can be frustrating for some people because these methods require a trainer or handler to plan their training in detail (and shouldn't we be doing that anyway?) and because the results can take longer.

However, the results are well worth the effort. Dogs love working with the positive methods and are generally more enthusiastic about doing a task. Positive methods are very forgiving of trainer or handler error whereas shock collars are not at all forgiving. You cannot undo a mistimed shock or an inappropriate shock.

Some people will claim that shock collar training works, and I have to agree that in some cases it does work. Different dogs have different tolerance levels for pain. But research also shows that even dogs who tolerate the pain, suffer from stress. The last thing we want as SAR dog handlers is for our dogs to associate negative stress with SAR work.

And lastly, it is important for SAR dogs to love what they do so that they are willing to work longer with positive results. Shock collars often introduce an element of fear and stress into the work that will hinder the dog's ability to focus on his job. A dog that is afraid of getting a shock for not giving an alert could be put in a position where he will give a false alert to avoid a shock. Think about it.

http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S15327604JAWS0304_6#.VBtAEZRdU18

<http://trainingwithgrace.com/2011/12/where-good-intentions-breed-animal-suffering-the-cruel-truth-of-electronic-shock-collars/>

<http://www.dogtrainingsingapore.org/dog-training-effects-of-corrections/>

<http://www.vetstreet.com/our-pet-experts/training-your-dog-why-rewards-work-better-than-punishment>

I learned more from Sue Bulanda over breakfast one day about the actions of one of my dogs than I had discovered on my own in the previous six months. I have the utmost respect for her knowledge.

Having said that, on this issue I feel compelled to disagree. My comments do not address containment fences or such things as anti-snake training. I also have never activated a collar when practicing SAR training. I try to set up deliberate situations during walks and free time.

I have used an electronic collar on six dogs over a 25 year period. Unfortunately, the collars have been given a bad rep by people who buy them, with the intention of shocking their dog into obedience by pain. When I purchased my first Tri-Tronics collar, I was strongly urged to take their eight hour course in its use.

My dog was turned loose in the yard until she was distracted. I was told to call her. If she came, Great! If she went on sniffing, I pushed the button on the lowest possible setting. If that caught her attention, Great! If not, she was allowed to go on sniffing for a moment while the button went to the next setting. I called again. This time it was just enough to distract her from her sniffing to listen and come. Lesson one.

Realize that different breeds, and dogs with different levels of drive, will not react the same to the same amount of input. My Shepherd sliced her nose open for 1½" and still kept going after her ball. My Golden had a different level. The urge to chase a doe in the spring that is willing to defend her fawn is greater than sniffing a smelly blade of grass. When a dog is in full chase mode at 200' away, it is difficult for him to want to hear you calling. I have never used the collar to punish but sometimes the greater the distraction or danger, the more distraction is required.

Every morning the collar was placed on my dog for 4 – 6 weeks before I ever intended to use it. She saw me each day with the control in my hand, every time we went out. She does not connect the buzzer with the control I am holding. I would suggest teaching basic obedience with exciting, positive rewards

and use the collar when working off leash and the distractions are just too much to bear. Think Distraction, not Punishment.

Start at the lowest setting, not the highest and use good sense, remembering that there will never be any substitute for positive, repetitive reinforcement

Robotics in Search and Rescue

By Larry Bulanda

High Tech Water Search

Probably one of the most challenging and frustrating types of searches is water search. Unlike land search it can involve a very finite, contained area such as a lake, quarry or pond but it can also involve swift moving bodies of water such as rain-swollen rivers that can carry bodies several miles from the PLS. Bodies of water are frequently murky, contain underwater debris and are prone to flooding, all of which add to the complexity and risk of searching. While we do not have to consider lost person behavior when conducting water search, we do have to understand the physiology of drowning and how a body reacts under various water conditions such as temperature and salinity, over time. Water current, underwater obstacles, hydraulics set up at the face of low-head dams and thermoclines must all be considered when determining how and where to apply search resources.

The good news is that there are many high tech devices out there that make the job somewhat easier. This article will focus on those technologies and devices but first let's consider the resources we had available to us in the past. Perhaps many of you can recall using pike poles to probe around logs, piers and underwater obstacles trying to snag a victim. Another method was "dragging" – pulling an array of oversized treble hooks along the bottom of the body of water in the hopes of snagging a body. Too often the drag technique resulted in getting hung up on roots, submerged branches and the occasional bicycle or shopping cart. Trolling boats along the surface with one or more observers were and are still used to visually locate a floating body although this is

better done from the air as reflections are reduced. These methods were frequently coupled with divers as more municipalities found the funding and trained personnel to support dive teams. Using divers was a big improvement over dragging however low visibility keeps divers limited to small areas going by feel rather than sight. Diving is also inherently dangerous and limited underwater time demands more divers, equipment and shore teams to support extended operations.

Enter the search dog. Operating out of boats and using land search grid techniques, it was found that search dogs could be used to locate human scent that broke the surface of the water. This method requires a fair amount of calculation and detective work as currents and wind direction must be considered when trying to determine the source of the scent and hence the body. The bottom line is that search dogs can localize and sometimes pinpoint the area that needs to be searched by divers. This saves time and reduces risk to the divers due to less time underwater.

Boats, divers and dogs are still the predominant set of tools for water search but there are some new devices that have changed the game by increasing the probability of success and reducing the time required to find a victim.

Platforms and Payloads

The new high tech tools used for water search can be broken down into two categories: the payloads or sensors that are used to detect drowning victims and the platforms that carry those payloads.

The first platform we will consider is the UAV.



As mentioned earlier, using observers in a boat to visually locate a floating or minimally submerged body is a method that is frequently used. It is an effective method only if the following are true: first, the water is clear and second, the body is at or near the surface of the water. When operating from a boat, the observer's eyes are at best a few feet above the surface of the water. The shallow look angle to the water's surface is such that reflections greatly limit visibility into the water. Being able to look from a higher vantage point helps to overcome reflections and allows observers to see below the surface. So unless the body is very close to the boat, observers have little chance of seeing a submerged body very far from the boat. Using helicopters to view the water surface is one method to get a good viewing angle but they are expensive and sometimes not readily available. An alternative is to use a VTOL UAV with a downward-looking video camera. Most of the UAVs in this class are battery powered and have a 20-30 minute flight time which does not sound like much but can provide a good deal of coverage over open areas of water. UAV operators usually carry spare batteries and a charger, which makes extended flight time possible.

The next platform is the Remotely Operated Vehicle or ROV.



The ROV is also known as an Unmanned Underwater Vehicle or UUV. An ROV is tethered, meaning that it is attached to a

“topside control station via a cable (tether or umbilical). The topside control station can be located on a boat or pier. The cable typically transmits control signals (steering, speed, sensor and illumination control) video output from the camera and power for lights, payloads and propulsion. There are UUVs that can operate untethered but those are not typically used in SAR. The ROV ranges in size from small vehicles weighing a few pounds to large vehicles used in oil exploration. Those large vehicles can weigh thousands of pounds. A small ROV has thrusters for propulsion/steering and a pair of skids under it. ROVs typically carry one or more cameras, a bank of lights, and depending on size, a sonar or a manipulator. The manipulator is a claw or gripper that can be used to grab items underwater. Some manipulators can be equipped with cutters or to other tools. ROVs can scoot around at about 2-6 mph, which is fast in still water but water currents that exceed 4-6mph will hold the ROV at a standstill or push it back even at full throttle. One other drawback is the tether itself. ROVs are sold with up to hundreds of feet of tether. Although the tether is neutrally or positively buoyant (it does not sink), the ROV needs to pull that cable behind it, which takes some effort. In addition, the tether can get caught on underwater obstacles. ROVs, like most underwater equipment, are rated to operate at certain maximum depths. Small ROVs used in SAR can be capable of working down to a few hundred feet. Many can only operate at shallower depths. Units that are capable of operating at deeper depths are more expensive.



Payloads for underwater SAR use include cameras and sonars. Video cameras are mounted on ROVs or can be attached to poles that can be dipped along piers or from boats to look for victims.

These cameras are limited in visibility when water is murky but many can operate in low light levels. They are typically deployed with a bank of lights to provide the illumination needed in dark, under water environments. A topside display is needed for the operator to view the video output.

Side scan sonar is a very good sensor system for viewing underwater objects. Operating on the same principles as “fishfinder” sonars, the side scans can be mounted on an ROV or they can be towed by a surface craft. When towed, the sonar is mounted in a torpedo-shaped body called a “tow fish.” The tow fish is connected to the boat via a tether, which provides power to the sonar and transmits the sonar output to a topside display.



The tow fish is held up to several meters off the river (or lake, etc.) bed and trolled in a grid pattern. The sonar sends out an acoustic signal that covers a fan pattern, which spreads out from underneath the fish to either side. The signal bounces off of the bottom and any underwater objects it encounters and returns to the sonar. The signal is processed and it appears on the display as an image. It takes a little practice to interpret the image but for the most part, it is very similar to a photographic image. Side scan sonars can be hard mounted to the hull of a boat but that limits the depth at which the sonar can operate. In addition, the motion of a boat and hence the sonar, affects the image quality. Side scan sonars are great tools that have come down in price to make them affordable by SAR organizations.

The next installment of this series will deal with ground robots used for searching in disaster situations.

THE LAST HOWL

By Sue Wolff



Opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of the National Search Dog Alliance.

Have you ever testified in court? Were you an expert witness? How did you think you did? How did you really do? Will you ever have to testify in court? Probably not but you need to be prepared...just in case.

As SAR dog handlers, we may have years of experience in the field but that does not necessarily transfer to being an effective witness in a trial. While you have control of what you do in the field, you no longer have that in a courtroom.

Your role in court is to teach and inform the jury (or judge) about K-9 search and rescue. How does a dog know for what they are looking? What method is used to train them? How many finds have they had? Are they certified and by whom? How many olfactory nerves does a dog have versus a human? Most people have no idea how canines work and think it is all magic. It is your job to teach them otherwise.

Depending on what they want to bring out, attorney's questions will either be aimed at showcasing your expertise or questioning your credibility. No matter which, your job is to keep your cool and be professional.

Direct examination will provide the attorney the opportunity to bring out your knowledge and expertise. If you are properly prepared, it should be a comfortable questioning and presentation by you.

Cross examination is another matter. It is this attorney's job to discredit you, your dog and your testimony. Here again proper preparation can ease the struggle.

Jonathan W. Hak, D.D. Dipl., B.Sc. LLB, LLM gives these seven rules for expert witnesses in the March 2014 issue of Law Enforcement Technology:

- * Control the pace and tone of your voice.
- * Give eye contact to the right people at the right time. Communicate with the jury so they understand the evidence.
- * Answer questions clearly and precisely.
- * Use hypothetical examples, analogies, demonstration and exhibits at the right time.
- * Cope with challenging cross examination.
- * Deal with mistakes made on the witness stand.

Several things that I have learned about testifying:

- * Master strategies for handling specific cross examination techniques.
- * Never volunteer information. Answer only the question that is asked with no embellishment..
- * Never ever have your dog do a demonstration in a court room or under any conditions that you do not control. No matter how good your dog is, stressful situations such as these (and your tense reaction to them) will probably cause your dog to err badly and there goes your status as an expert witness.

- * Always have your log books and certificates with you. If you don't have them and you have not been certified as an expert witness by both the prosecution and defense, your credentials will be under scrutiny. Having stacks of books and folders of certificates and training records readily available is a deterrent to that happening.

Bottom line is be prepared, keep your cool, don't volunteer information and be professional. If you follow this advice, you'll be a good quality expert witness.

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Answers to the October The Other End of the Leash

SCENARIO: Dog locates scent in a tree downwind of source and will not leave

Response #1

Your problem is a typical scent trap, but incomplete. Your problem description is incomplete to solve:

a) type of placement of source in relationship to scent trap created by pine tree....i.e. if you placed a high with sun, chances are the scent may not have dropped to the ground in the 20 minutes you allowed but was kept aloft by a thermal. 20 minutes is not a real life search, but plenty of time for scent migration to start.

b) was the sun shining on the source during problem which will cause the scent to rise away from the source? Try working a dog on a single tooth on asphalt in the sun with cool ambient air. Unless the dog is visual, it can only solve by nose placement directly over source plume and drawing down to source.

c) what is the type of source: live human where breathing is a major source of scent, tissue/decomp related, or skeletal only? All of these source types can cause a scent trap, but diffusion rates will vary. If HRD, some people will set out a frozen tissue source expecting it to thaw in time to work. Temperature of source in relation to environment is a factor.

d) winds are actually very gentle in your scenario. I typically work problems with winds in excess of 20 mph where scent traps are common.

What would I do in this situation? My intent at this age of dog is to teach it problem solving. I would not reward or correct the dog. It found scent, this is a good thing. On HRD, I would not have a recall as many times finding the source once is hard enough, let alone having to find the handler, and then find the source again. On live, scent source is a spewing chimney of scent, so issue is teaching the dog the trap dynamics.

I would restart the dog upwind of the original source to allow it to find the source from upwind. Reward at the source then restart from there to see if the dog now recognizes the scent trap is being fed by the source upwind. If you work a lot of identical sources, i.e. placenta placenta placenta... all of the same decomposition window, then the dog could still be confused. Overlap problems should be part of the foundation prior to this style of problem.

Pine trees can cause scent to climb with sun on the needles, but the shady side can also cause the scent to drop down in a trap situation which would simulate someone or something up in the tree. The dog needs to experience the scent flow from source to trap to begin to understand the concept. And, yes, the dogs can understand the concept.

My experience level, currently working a NAPWDA certified HRD dog. This is my third working dog in HRD only. My dogs get a skeletal/dental foundation before ever working tissue to teach them diffusion of scent. I have taught at seminars many times over my nearly 20 years of doing this. I tend to teach handlers scent theory as well as handling so that they can predict what their dog does before it works the problem. If the dog solves the problem differently, then they need to understand why.

Jim Delbridge Mustang, Oklahoma

Response #2 I choose #4 (Take the dog to the source and shown her)

Trey Todd 4 yrs experience with Messi Rue, Area live and HRD.

Response #3

Answer #5. Praised the dog and return back to work

The scent obviously is trapped in the smaller tree close to the large tree where the source exists. It no doubt got blown to the adjacent tree by existing wind conditions or chimney to the tree. Regardless, the dog needs to be praised for finding the scent and asked to continue to search in the up wind direction. If the pup will not move up wind by command, the dog needs to be lead out of scent, then released to locate the source scent and told to go in the correct direction. Insure that you are far enough from the trapped scent so the pup will not go back to the original area. It would be best if she is released in an area well away from the trapped scent so she will continue to work for scent in the proper direction. This shows the importance of the dog understanding your command on what area to search. If she/he cannot work an area by command, then he/she must be taken to the correct area so they are in scent when released and will follow the scent cone to the source!

If this does not work, the one must do #4. Take the dog to the source and shown her, then praise her for the find!

Len Troman 9 years, SAR TECH II & K-9 SARTECK for Air Scent & HRD.

Response #4

Not knowing the terrain it is hard to say what the scent had done. But was someone, perhaps a long time ago buried by the tree?

I would praise the dog -- not full reward but pets and verbal. walk it away upwind of the tree and then put it back to work to find the source you put out. this is where it would get its full reward. I would very very seldom punish a dog who is working -- nothing stronger than an ERRRR sound or 'leave it' . You don't know what is there (even if you think you do) and work should be fun and searching for the reward. If you punish a dog you could be teaching it to not be independent and only alert on things your body language says is right -- not good if source totally unknown.

Marsha Falco
Mark-9 handler for 10 years.

Response #5 Number 7, My choice.

Terrain features such as trees, rock walls, even plowed fields can be scent catchers causing scent to eddy and swirl around them. Gusting winds cause scent to move in many different directions. The source is up wind from the tree and the tree has caught the eddying scent. The young dog picked up the strongest scent in the tree and then she got stuck in it.

Since this is TRAINING and you know where the source is located, utilize the situation to TRAIN your pup to keep moving forward. Don't scold her and don't reward her. This is a great training

opportunity. Train a command like "keep looking" encouraging the dog to keep hunting. The handler gets the dog to move out of the scent pool by using their own body language, moving away from the tree, encouraging the dog to keep looking. This should be done in a positive manner. You can use this experience to teach a very valuable lesson to both yourself and the dog. Work her out of the scent she is stuck in, encourage her to keep working and when she makes the find have a huge party with her. Scent movement can be tricky but learning how terrain, temperatures and objects affect scent will help. Read your dog and then use your knowledge to help your dog work effectively. Remember, the dog has the nose and you have the brain.

Cat Best, Walla Walla County Sheriff SAR, K9 Team Lead
5 years Exp.~ K9 Izzy, Certified HRD
K9 Aimee, Detection, In training

Response #6

Since I know the location of the source, I think I would ask the dog to search the tree as high as reachable, then ask the dog to do fine searching around the area perhaps in a "+" pattern with the tree at center. I would not want to take the dog directly to the location but allow the dog to locate on its own, with some guidance/support from me. Then after rewarding the dog, I'd take the dog away and let some rest time happen for 5-10 minutes. Then I'd take the dog back to the same location and hope that the dog would go directly to the source. I might even repeat that process again.

Karen Paquette
K-9 SAR 10 years
K-9 SAR handler in Tucson, AZ for 8 years

Response #7

This appears to be a case of the chimney effect (the chimney effect occurs when air in contact with a vertical dark surface is heated, becomes lighter, and rises) although more information would be needed to assess the problem. For example, what time of day, was the sun shining, was the tree isolated. Assuming the sun was shining on the somewhat dark surface of the pine tree, I would expect the air and scent in the immediate vicinity of the tree to rise. Since the source was upwind of the tree the air movement would bring the scent to the tree and the chimney effect would cause it to rise along the tree trunk and through the branches. In this situation the dogs seem to be convinced that the source is up in the tree and try to access it there even jumping up and trying to climb the tree. When this occurs, given the stated conditions, I would work my dog upwind and try to locate the scent there. This is one of those problems that the dog cannot solve by themselves. The handler has to recognize the scent dynamics and the dog's actions, step in, and help the dog solve the problem.

Also, with no wind, I would work my dog in concentric circles out from the tree to find the source. I cover the problem in my scent dynamics class for cadaver dogs.

Tom Ostercamp

Response #8

The dog is not the problem here, the inexperienced handler is. In this case the handler knows the source is not in the tree. The dog is giving extremely valuable information. There IS scent on the tree.

It is my, the handler's, part of the partnership to read the conditions, breeze, terrain and dogs consistency even though young and fairly inexperienced. I will thank the dog for the good information and tell the dog 'let's check this way'. Praise to the dog for good work and enthusiasm. No reward!!!!!! The dog has not found the source. But positive comments to show the dog it's on the right track are extremely important.

As the team works a broad pattern into the breeze more than likely the dog will catch the stronger source scent and work it out nicely. S/he has already identified the scent, now it just needs to find the strongest place of it.

In my experience I've evaluated a dog in a test situation who would not leave the tree. Because of the handler's inexperience she too would not leave the area even though the dog was not pinpointing.

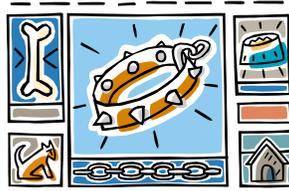
The subject was over a hundred yards away on a hill that was the same height and upwind, as the tree which had gathered scent. When we left scent hill/tree the dog got low between the two hills. It searched more methodically in the direction of the subject hill. At the foot of that hill the dog became animated scaled the hill to make the find.

I took the teaching moment and pointed out to the handler that directly across, as the breeze was blowing, was the tree with all the scent. It was a great lesson for all of us.

When the dog is 'barking up the wrong tree' so to speak. Analyze where the breeze is coming from and continue the search in a positive manner into the breeze. The dog will soon learn to be comfortable with leaving the tree scent and go with the handler who is wisely positioning the dog to complete the task of making the find.

Nancy Acebo

K-9 handler, 20 years in California



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Contact Temporary Editor Norma Snelling at snelling@olypen.com

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