

The Rottweiler and Search and Rescue, Part 2



By Jack Fields *It's not about winning or losing, but about living and dying" Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi*

www.k9development.com

admin@k9development.com

Jack Fields lives in Central California with his wife Amy, daughter Bryanna, and their 4 Rottweilers. He has been a professional dog trainer for the better part of 24 years. He has trained dogs for a variety of roles from Schutzhund to AKC performance. Jack is a certified Wheel Chair Assistance Dog instructor, and also oversees the training of Animal Assisted Therapy dogs. Over the last 8 years he has been involved in Search and Rescue. He has trained and or consulted for numerous State and County agencies at the current time he is training his young Rottweiler, Java vom Fields Haus, with the California Rescue Dog Association.



Dogs are four legged sniffing machines

Search and Rescue is a life style. Like many dog training venues, it can be quite consuming. The difference as I see it is that in SAR, you are training hard for the betterment of someone else. As the motto goes, "So that others may live". SAR work is fun, and you will meet many great people and dogs in your journey; but, in the back of your mind, you always realize this is serious stuff. You could very well be the X factor in helping to bring the lost person home. You could be putting yourself, as well as your dog, at risk. It takes the kind of person who is willing to go the extra mile for a stranger. While it is a huge commitment, the reward of knowing you are out there making a difference in people's lives makes it all worth it. There are not many things that equal the sound of that pager going off in the wee hours of the morning. You grab your gear and your dog starts to circle and pace with excitement. Soon, you will be in that strange place filled with a small army of rescue personnel, law enforcement, noisy equipment, radios and bright lights. It is a very surreal moment arriving at Base Camp. You'll get a briefing (sometimes several), then you're assigned to a Search Team and given a search assignment. Then it's check your gear (for the 10th time), go over your assignment, and get your dog ready. The dogs are fired up as they know the

ritual: like it's always been since time primordial, the hunt is about to start!

Dogs have assisted humans for as long as anyone can remember. One of the oldest works of human art is taken from a cave painting in Africa.



Jack Fields with Java vom Fields Haus

It is a depiction of a man in a loin cloth, armed with a spear and two hunting dogs. We have taken advantage of dogs' unique abilities and used them to aid us in a multitude of tasks. Canines have always been with us, it seems, and from the start, we fostered a unique working relationship with this most special of animals.

We have used dog's olfactory abilities from the start; whether it was used to alert us of the presence of predators, or to detect the presence of game while hunting. Search and Rescue continues in this ancient tradition of using the dog's nose to help detect the presence of scent; therefore, helping us to locate what we are looking for.



Amy deploys Inca vom Fields Haus

Air scenting dogs can trace their foundations to the famous dogs of the St. Bernard and other Alpine passes. In general, most Search Dog foundations can be traced back to the Ambulance Dogs; these dogs were trained to differentiate between the dead and wounded and to alert their handlers of the presence of the wounded. During the American Civil War, both the North and South used tracking dogs. By the early 1900's, dogs were a common sight at prisons or guarding work camps, taking the lessons learned earlier from working on Southern plantations tracking down run-a-way slaves. Disaster Search Dogs got their start during the Air Raids of WW2. In London, the Civil Defense units used rescue dogs to search the rubble of collapsed buildings. In 1974, New York State Police had the first specialized Cadaver Dog.

We have come a long way from those early days when man was a hunter - gatherer and relied on dog's unique abilities for survival. Today, we have systems for training, and breeding programs to foster the kind of temperaments we desire for our training and deployment needs.

Search and Rescue can be broken down into specific disciplines. As I mentioned in part 1 of this article, (Issue 1 of 2008, pages 110-113), SAR dogs can either be single-discipline or multi-discipline. This will be dictated by the agency you deploy with. It is important to find what interests you and your dog because you will be spending a lot of time, money and energy in the pursuit of becoming a Mission Ready Team. Research the different disciplines and origins and look for the right fit.

The Disciplines



Java trails a subject into the woods

The Trailing Dog is Scent Specific. This dog is started with a Scent Article (something belonging to the lost person which contains their unique scent). Trailing dogs work urban and rural, as well as wilderness settings. The Trailing Dog typically works on lead (but not always). These dogs are usually deployed from a PLS (place last seen). This dog follows a series of clues that will lead to the subject.

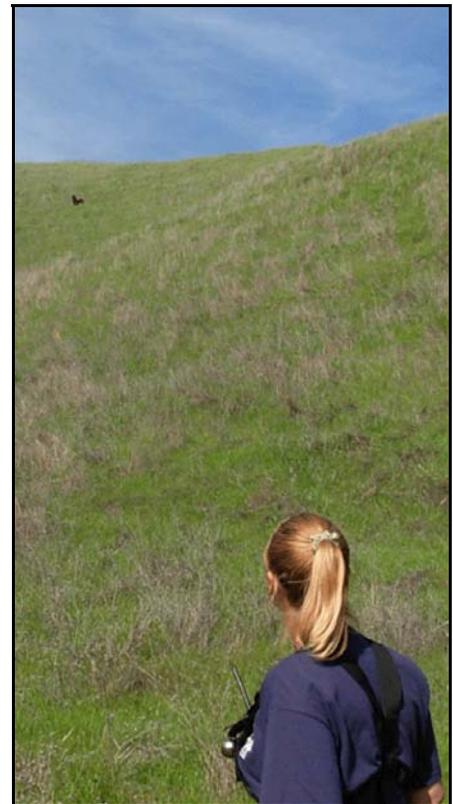
This is usually the kind of dog we think about when we think of a SAR dog. Trailing is very similar to Tracking, yet instead of the slow methodical deep nose behavior we like to see in Schutzhund or other tracking sport venues, the Trailing Dog will tend to work with a higher head, and move at a much faster pace. This dog may work Ground Scent (the odor left from crushed vegetation); but, is more often working the Subject's unique scent. Working ground scent may prove difficult as the subject is usually many hours ahead of searchers and search areas have been contaminated by

other searchers in the area. This dog puts together the scent picture and leads the way in solving the complex riddle of "Which way did they go?" Trailing Dogs can be utilized in a multitude of very useful roles, such as acquiring the direction the subject headed off in. Something I find rather cool is the Positive/Negative Trail Head I.D. This is used in determining direction of travel by determining where the subject has not been! For instance, we know the subject was last seen in a large park with several exits. The Trailing Dog will work the exits and determine by the Trail Head I.D. whether they left the park through a known exit or are still in the park. This aids the Search Base in determining a Search Strategy. A good friend of mine is working on a project in Lassen, CA, for using Trailing Dogs to help Cave Rescue Teams determine which cave a subject is in or is not in, therefore conserving ever-valuable life saving time.

A larger Rottweiler can be suited for this work, but we still need to consider physical capabilities. The Trailing Dog must be in good shape, and so must the handler who will be following it. It is a huge brain game for both dog and human. If you or your dog likes puzzles, this may be your calling, and if you like tracking, I'll bet you'll love trailing!

Area Dog

This dog is trained to cover a large area with the goal of finding any human scent. This may be hikers, hunters or whomever. It is important to note that anybody you find could be a potential witness and help give you clues to the whereabouts of your target/subject. These dogs are usually "non-scent discriminating", but, there has also been some talk and application of scent specific/discriminating area dogs. If there is someone out there, the dog is supposed to find them. You may end up covering an area as small as 20 acres or as large as hundreds of acres. These dogs are typically worked off leash, and many times are working out of your immediate sight. I like to think of these dogs working more free-style; there is much more freedom of movement and decision making on the dogs' part as well as the handlers' part. The handler's role is to make sure there are no holes (areas the dog has not checked) in your search area and to help get the dog into scent based on weather and terrain conditions.



Area dogs can range great distances. The black spec on the ridge is Inca.

The Area Dog handler should be self-motivated and have a high level of independence and in good physical condition. You

should be comfortable in the back country. For this work, we need a Rottweiler of medium to light build with excellent stamina, as they will be covering a lot of ground for extended periods of time.

As the handler, you should be accustomed to carrying a medium to heavy pack and be self sufficient, as there are times where you may be in the back country for long periods of time in all weather conditions.



Jack & Java deploy into the back country

Disaster Search Dog



Sheila McKee & Bliss training in Texas

When disaster strikes, these dog and handler teams deploy, be it to a tornado, earthquake, or an act of terrorism (such as the World Trade Center). These teams deploy nationally and even internationally. These dogs are trained to find subjects buried under piles of rubble, or whatever is left in the wake of catastrophe. These dogs work in a similar fashion to an Area Dog as far as being off leash and are trained to locate any live scent. These dogs must have excellent agility skills and be able to work in environments with unsure footing. They are deployed without wearing gear as it is easy for the dog to get

hung up in the debris. When these dogs locate the scent of a live subject they are required to bark at the site of the scent to alert their handlers that they have found someone.

This is very demanding work for both the handler and the dog. These dogs are deployed in very high stress situations and many times are sent into locations considered too dangerous to send a human.

Any size Rottweiler can do this work; but, it is our opinion the medium sized dogs work best. We even really like a rangy dog as we believe it helps with the agility task. No matter the discipline of SAR you engage in, an athletic dog with great endurance will be best. The handler should be the kind of person who is willing to head towards danger and handle stress well as you will be deploying in one of the toughest of SAR environments.

Cadaver Dog

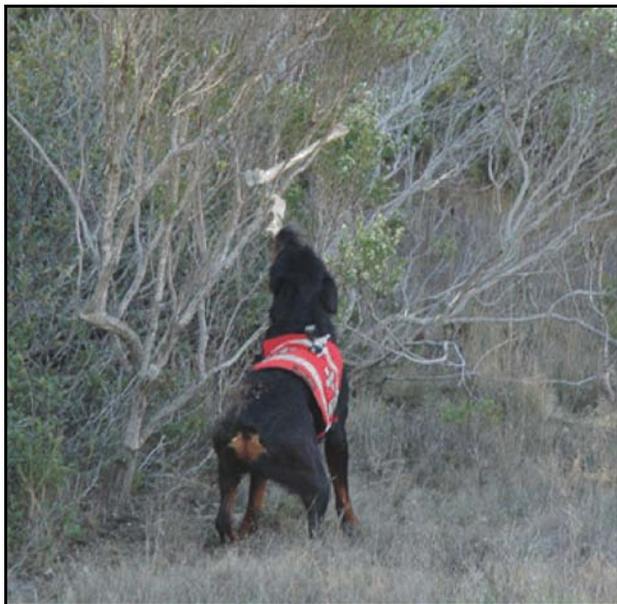


Fisty vom Fields Haus alerts on a bag containing human remains

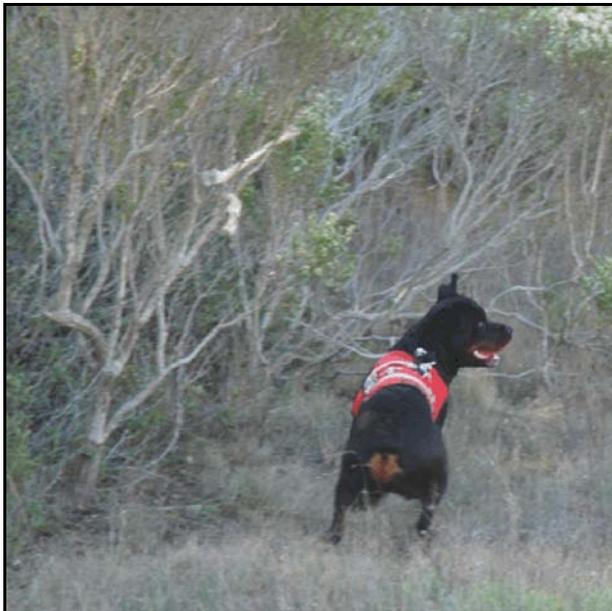
This is a rather broad range description of dogs trained in several similar disciplines. They work in a fashion similar to an Area Dog. This dog is off leash (typically). Many times you will see Area Dogs cross trained in Cadaver Detection as standard training. Due to the nature of SAR missions, many deployments end up being recovery missions. So it becomes vital that our dogs will alert on live or deceased subjects. A cross trained Area Dog will be trained to detect a large source, such as a whole body, or portions thereof.

We can further break our category of Cadaver Dog down into the HRD Dog (Human Remains Detection Dog). These dogs are trained to find very small sources of Human Remains, such as teeth or a drop of blood) these dogs search small areas in a very methodical fashion. It requires precession to find these small sources of scent. We can also take our HRD search to another level with the Historical Human Remains Detection Dog. These dogs search for very old remains, working old grave sites, or very old cold case files assisting law enforcement. It is such a new way of working dogs that we are still discovering ways to use them. One thing that we do know is these dogs must be the most methodical and accurate, as it requires a very focused nose to pick up the minute odor of such old scent. The Water Recovery Dog would also fall into the general category of Cadaver Dog. This is a specialty dog that is trained to detect the presence of cadaver while searching from a boat. They are used to recover targets submerged underwater. The Cadaster Dog also falls into the Cadaver category. This dog is similar to the Disaster dog and is required to work a similar mission, yet it is a specialty dog trained to work the disaster after a period of time that no survivors are expected. They will work rubble piles, and the debris moved from the disaster site with the mission of recovering any remains missed in the initial search.

Cadaver Dog handlers should be patient as this work can be slow and tedious. Physical requirements are not as stringent;



Inca locates cadaver hanging in brush



After locating the target, she is off to alert her handler.



Remi alerts Shirley Hammond to an unmarked grave site.

but, something that still needs consideration . Most types of Rottweilers can do this work, and it is a good job for older dogs and humans as it is not as physically demanding, but Cadaver Detection is

still full of challenges. For the handler who loves the C.S.I. television show, this may be your calling!

While Cadaver training isn't for everyone, it is a growing discipline with many unique training and deployment opportunities. Unfortunately, you will not be saving lives, but helping to put closure to tragic events and assisting Law Enforcement will give you a sense of accomplishment.

Avalanche Dog



Zeuger with recovered subject.

This is very similar to the Disaster Dog, except instead of working rubble piles and wreckage, you'll deploy in snow. This dog is trained to locate a subject who is covered in several feet of snow. The alert is similar to a Disaster Dog, as the dog will stay at the location of the detected human scent and bark, but also dig. This will draw the rescuers to the spot and also starts the excavation process.

In the winter landscape, the Rottweiler can really excel. Any size Rottweiler can do well with this work; but, having a good undercoat is a plus. The handler should be accustomed to being in the snow!

These are the top five disciplines when it comes to Search and Rescue. As our industry evolves, we are finding new ways to train and deploy our dogs. There is much more to it than I have space to write about, so please, if I've sparked an interest, do your research and discover how you, too, can become a part of the tradition of saving lives!



Java as usual gives 120%

