A USER’S GUIDE TO CADAVER DOG TEAMS

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Terminology

Cadaver Dog
Vs.
Human Remains Detection (HRD) Dog
Vs.
Victim Recovery Canine
Industry Standards and Cadaver Dog Team Capabilities
WHO DETERMINES THE INDUSTRY STANDARD?

• National Canine Certification Agencies
  • National Association for Search & Rescue (NASAR)
  • North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA)
  • United States Police Canine Association (USPCA)
• Regional or State Associations
  • New England State Police Association (NESPA)
  • North Carolina Search and Rescue Advisory Council
THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE STANDARD

• Training
  • Initial training 200 to 400 hours
  • Maintenance 16 hours per month
• Certification
  • LE requires yearly certification
  • SAR requires every other year
• Reliability
  • 90% + as determined through certification and training
INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES

- Set forth by the Scientific Working Group for Dog and Orthogonal detector Guidelines (SWGDOG)
- Human Remains Detection or Cadaver Dogs classified as Substance Detector Dogs
- Approved in 2009
WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?

• Odor recognition by the canine.
• Trained response given from the canine without prompt.
• Ability of the handler to recognize the canine’s behavior.
• Ability of the handler to articulate where the material is located.
CAPABILITIES SET FORTH BY CERTIFICATION – ODOR RECOGNITION

- Human blood fresh and old
- Human decomposition material consisting of tissue, adipocere, wet and dry bone, and decompositional fluid.
- Burned human tissue and bone.
CAPABILITIES SET FORTH BY CERTIFICATION - PLACEMENT

• Ground surface
• Elevated
• Buried
• Submerged
CAPABILITIES SET FORTH BY CERTIFICATION – ENVIRONMENTS

• Wilderness and Urban search areas of a minimum of 1 acre to be completed in 30 minutes.
• Building search of a minimum of 1000 sq. ft. in 30 minutes.
• Vehicle search of 3 to 6 vehicles with a minimum of 3 minutes per vehicle.
• Disaster area.
• Water to include both lakes and moving water.
Limitations and Current Issues
TRAINING

• Minimal access to material.
• Lack of training time.
• Lack of experience.
• The search is beyond their scope of training.
ENVIRONMENTAL

• Temperature
• Time of day relative to position of the sun
• Soil types
  • Clay
  • Sand
• Water
CURRENT ISSUES

• No reliable trained final response.
• Incomplete or no training records.
• No certification of the capabilities of the cadaver dog team, or more importantly no outside agency certification.
  • Florida v Harris
  • United States v Cedano-Arellano
• Unqualified individuals serving as handlers.
RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS
BEST PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

• Determine your cadaver dog resources before you need them.
• Ensure that they are maintaining certification and training records.
• Be careful of attention seekers, media hounds, or those boastful in their claims.
• Utilize multiple dogs and multiple handlers if possible.
• Watch for over handling or excessive directing of the dog, which could lead to cuing or false alerts by the cadaver dog.
BEST PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

• Areas should be searched during early morning hours or early evening hours, the heat of day will limit effectiveness.

• Areas should not be freshly mowed or so overgrown that the dogs can not move freely throughout the area.

• Excessive ground water seems to diffuse odor making it harder for the dogs to pinpoint.

• Searches should occur over several hours or days versus utilizing multiple dogs at the same time within the same area.
BEST PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

• Utilize cadaver dogs that are routinely trained on a wide spectrum of human decomposition odor.

• Request teams to provide reports and maps of their results.

• Handlers need to mark or notate areas of interest, body language changes, as well as areas of trained final response.
Western Carolina University
Human Identification Lab
Response
BACKGROUND

• Lassiter et al. called for the establishment of “sanctioned dog training facilities”
  • “Cadaver Dog and Handler Team Capabilities in the Recovery of Buried Human Remains in the Southeastern United States.”
• Establishment of the Forensic Osteology Research Station (FOREST)
  • Conduct human decomposition research
  • Provide training opportunities for cadaver dog teams.
• Offered informal opportunities to local cadaver dog teams to expose the dogs to full decomposing bodies.
BASIC WORKSHOP MODEL

• Combines traditional field training and classroom
• Field exercise included exposure to
  • SWGDOG recommended training aids and search environments.
  • full remains within the FOREST under controlled conditions under the direction of a qualified cadaver dog handler instructor to maximize experience.
• Classroom presentations on the role of forensic anthropology, the decomposition process, human vs. non-human bone identification, documentation, etc.
THE CADAVER DOG TRAINING PROGRAM AT WCU

- Developed into 2 distinct programs Level 1 and Level 2.
- Level 2 is differentiated with a scenario based exercise, historic grave detection with Ground Penetrating Radar demonstration, and guest presenters on odor research and canine case law.
- Seven Level 1 classes have been offered with a total of 210 participants from 38 different states and Canada.
- Two Level 2 classes have been offered with a total of 90 participants.
- Spring 2015 Target for Level 3 class.
REFERENCES


