

# **A USER'S GUIDE TO CADAVER DOG TEAMS**

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# Terminology

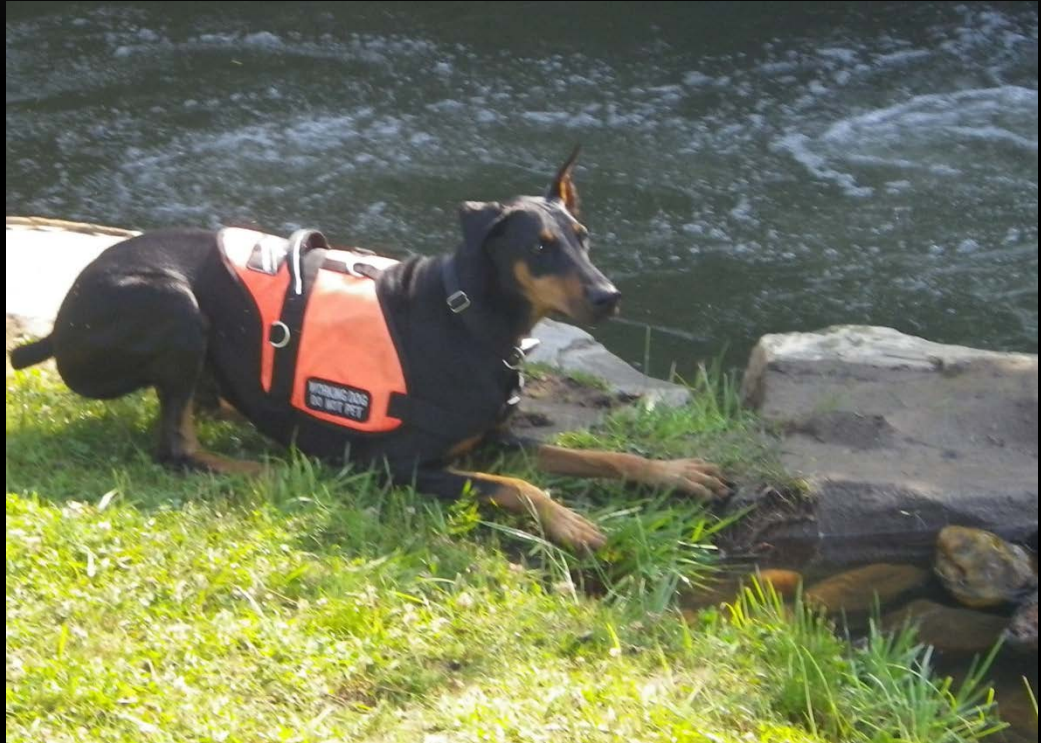
Cadaver Dog

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
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# 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
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# 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



THE PRIMARY  
LIMITATION

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TRAINING

# 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.
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# 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

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- Rebmann A, David E, Sorg M. The Cadaver Dog Handbook: Forensic Training and Tactics in the Recovery of Human Remains. London: CRC Press 2000.
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