

The K9 Chronicle

AUGUST 15th, 2016

Dedicated to the Working Dog & Handler

Top Mistakes Handlers Make

by Travis Walthall
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PROGRESSIVE EXPOSURE

"The more you challenge your K9, the better they will be when you need it the most."- Paul Ludwig



Finding the correct balance and maintaining it while you expose the K9 to new environmental challenges is KEY to the success and performance of your K9 Partner.

Too many trainers and handlers go from A to Z too quickly, while others begin way below what their K9's can handle.

While training and exposing your K9 to new environmental challenges, focus on the K9's success, not tactics, until they establish their confidence.

Always consider your venues: where you work and the surrounding agencies you may get called to assist. Think about noises and ultimate hiding places that are prominent in those areas; subway stations, airports, escalators, elevators, drainage tunnels, sewers...etc. If you had to find a suspect bedded down near a train track and your

K9 never has been exposed to a passing locomotive you may be in for a sad surprise.

Progressively expose, by taking small steps during exercises and training, to build their confidence.

For instance, if you want to expose your K9 to metal grate stairs, work on that first. Let them get the exposure and climb a few times before you set up a barricade of boxes to have them push through or start firing a gun as they try to ascend the stairs. Work on multiple exposures ONLY AFTER they have had gunfire, stairs, and barricades. Not all at the same time when they first are sent out. Push the limits of what they can handle, then back off and *keep it positive*.

Water: I do not know of many places where water exposure will not happen. Please do not misunderstand me, I Do

Not condone sending a K9 into water to have them drowned by a suspect. But when you have seen in person, a K9 in pursuit of a suspect that crosses a creek, then the K9 stops dead in his tracks at the edge of the creek (which is less than a foot deep) and the suspect runs away never to be caught, it is infuriating.

While the officer scratches their head and thinks, "What in the world just happened?", the suspect is headed to the next county. Build on their exposure of water so that if it ever happens, the K9 will not fail.

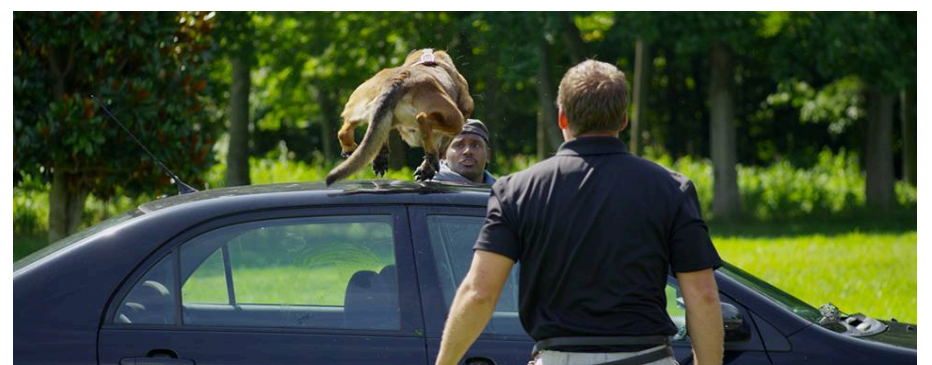
Gunfire: Train the K9 to be gunfire *Neutral*. NOT to go after gunfire, but *develop target acquisition during gunfire*. Again, incremental steps to success. Start at a distance and with a whip/.209 primer/ starter pistol/ 38 rounds, while having the handler working on obedience. Move in closer as you fire. If the K9 reacts negatively to the gunfire, correct the behavior by giving them the command to "Heel". *Keep them moving and make sure you praise them when they are following your command* and start realizing that gunfire is just another

noise. Short sessions, only for a few minutes at a time. After a few sessions, you will see the difference.

Muzzle Work: Not just muzzling when its Vet visit time or muzzle fighting time. *Muzzle Neutral* is what you want. I suggest putting the muzzle on for any reason, for a few minutes at a time, obedience, riding in the car for short periods, agility, etc...

Once the K9 cares less and less about the muzzle, then you can progress into advanced training. The "Z" part of this training is when my K9s, while wearing a muzzle, will strike on command a decoy wearing nothing but his undergarments and continue punching in on the decoy until commanded otherwise. *They will apprehend without the help of equipment drawing them in*. We have found that this is also a fantastic way to teach the beginnings of a verbal out command.

Stressors / Distractions: Train under stress, have officers yell commands like they would during an arrest, have them run up and go hands on, onto the decoy while the K9 is engaged. (Slowly bring in the officers to crowd the K9



PROGRESSIVE EXPOSURE

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while on the decoy, remember the A-Z applies to everything). Judge the comfort of the K9 by their "Floating Eyes". If they are on an apprehension on a decoy, and as the handler and other officers approach, if the K9 is moving his rear away from approaching units, and you can see the K9's eyes floating around and looking at everyone, back off a little until you see the K9 relax. Move officers in and out little by little. Slowly put hands on and bump the K9 and slap hands on the decoy until the K9 realizes that the back ups are part of "Their Team". After a few sessions, the K9 will become more relaxed and there will be less of a chance of a transfer bite onto another part of the decoy, or back up officer. Add specific details to your training, smoke to a car jacking bail out scenario, let the dog experience it like it is really happening. Many times during small apartment searches, a total ruckus is going on in the neighboring apartments, which can break the attention and distract your K9. Make sure to add distractions such as a crying baby, barking dogs, people yelling and moving around. Train for article searches in the dog park where the



dogs' elimination area is, so your K9 gets used to searching for evidence where there are tons of scent and keep them on task.

I have found with what I have mentioned above, if you train this way, and expose your partner progressively to as much as possible, you will have a higher success rate in the REAL world. 🐾



This article was written Exclusively for the K9 Chronicle by U.S.P.C.A Certified K9 Trainer, Paul Ludwig

About The Author:

Paul Ludwig is not just another "Dog Trainer". He is a District of Columbia Council of Governments K9 SWAT integration Trainer, Fairfax County Virginia.

In 2011 Paul received the Meritorious Service award for the K9 apprehension of a suspect wanted for Assault on a Police Officer in which the suspect disarmed the officer of his weapon and was in possession of two additional handguns. Paul Ludwig is a second generation Law Enforcement Officer that embarked on a mission to make the streets of the Washington D.C Metropolitan area safer and his dedication could not go unnoticed, Paul was honored with the Meritorious Service Awards in 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2011 Paul has also received commendations from the A.T.F. for aiding in the recovery of dozens of stolen handguns after a

local gun store burglary. The District of Columbia's U.S. Attorney's Office awarded Paul with commendation for apprehending three Attempted Murder / serial sexual assault suspects. Paul and his K9 Partner received commendations from Prince Georges County Police Department for utilizing his patrol canine to locate / recover a handgun which was used in the attempted murder of a Prince Georges County Police Officer. Paul has since retired after 25 years as a Law Enforcement Officer and now teaches K9 handlers how to prepare themselves and their dog for the REAL Streets of America. You can visit: www.IrondogK9.com to read more about Paul Ludwig and his K9 Partners. Pick up a copy of Paul's video "K9 Guardians" and find out how the night of December 9th, 1999 changed his life and the way he trains K9s forever.



The BATTLE of the BREEDS

Who is your K9 Partner and Do you know why?

The world around us is full of stereotypes and the ongoing battle of “My breed of choice is better than your Breed of choice”.

Unfortunately, this mentality has slowly found its way into the working dog world, creating *The Battle of the Breeds*.

The American Kennel Club currently registers 189 dog breeds which is just a drop in the “Breed Bucket” when compared to the United Kennel Club which is an international registry that currently recognizes over 300 separate dog breeds. When it comes to choosing our K9 partner(s) we need to be honest with ourselves and think about a few things before looking at dogs: What is going to be the Dog’s main area of expertise (Detection/Dual Purpose, Tracking, Search and Rescue...etc), The area in which you work, Your level of knowledge and expertise in dog handling in your profession (If this is going to be your first K9 partner an imported Belgian Malinois or extreme working line German Shepherd might not be for you.)

“My personal experience has taught me there is no such thing as the Best working Dog Breed!” says Retired U.S Naval Chief Master At Arms/Kennel Master Ron Barton. “Yes, there are basic



Ron Barton with MWD Tarzan (DDD) and Ray Barton with MWD Robie (EDD)

‘breed specific’ characteristics to go by when determining which breed you want for your specific mission, but there is always an exception to the rule. Not every single pure bred German Shephard or Belgian Malinois is going to be suited for Law Enforcement or Military work. For example: If you come from a long line of fire fighters, it does not mean that you have got what it takes to be one yourself!

We, of course cannot forget about the cross breeds or mutts! Pedigree is important in certain aspects, but for me what’s important is what’s in the dog. Not what he/she is.” Barton has trained hundreds of dogs during his military career and has guarded some of the Nation’s highest ranking officials with the help of his K9 partners.

“I, like most people, do have my favorite breed; the German Shepherd Dog, but it is my personal preference. However,

I will not dismiss a dog’s possibility just because of its breed or pedigree (or lack of). Many have fallen into “the working dog of the era” fad and will only use a specific breed with a particular line or pedigree, no matter how good your argument is. I have always held true to the saying, ‘It’s not the dog in the fight, it’s the fight in the dog!’” Barton has trained, handled and used on the real world streets several different types of dogs; he was candid enough to share stories about some of his most unusual K9 Partners. “While in Guam we had one of the best DDD (Drug Detection Dog) it was a Cairn Terrier. When he found the odor, he would work it back to its source and sit. He was so sure that you could pull him around on a slick surface while he maintained his ‘alert’. He would not break that sit response, until he got his reward. He was good for small ships, subs, and

other restrictive areas. Yet most departments (the military included) prefer a dual purpose dog. This way you get the detection and the patrol side in one dog, unfortunately small dogs are not very intimidating as a patrol dog. One story that defines the guide lines of “breed abilities and stereotypes”, is while I was stationed in Puerto Rico we were able to acquire an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) wash out and bring her into the U.S. Navy for an EDD (Explosive Detection Dog). One of the ‘breed stereotypes’ a lot of people go by is that ‘if you are going to have just a straight detector dog, use a hunting breed. They have better noses, this why they are used as hunting dogs.’ While I do not disagree with this, it is not a hard fast rule. This particular dog was a German Shorthair Pointer with an outstanding nose. Ginger was washed out of FAA, because they could not get her to go against her instinctual genetics, and ignore the birds. When she found the source of the odor she would respond with her infamous ‘bird dog point’ instead of the passive sit response that was required. We worked diligently with her and soon enough desensitized

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her to the distraction of the birds. Now when she would get distracted by the birds, her handler could get her to refocus back on her task. And as far as the infamous 'bird dog point', we got with our MWD (military working dog) LEPS Team (Law Enforcement Physical Security, K9 team certifying officials) and certified her as an EDD. Her final response was the infamous 'bird dog point'. We had an excess of EDD's and LEPS had a slot on the west coast where her area of expertise was needed. Ginger went on to become the #1 EDD on the west coast for the U.S. Navy." Barton had more than 21 years handling and training dogs in the U.S Navy, before he retired and started his 13+ year career as a Law Enforcement K9 Trainer and Handler. "My personal favorite is the German Shepherd. They are in general an intelligent breed, and one of the most versatile in their ability to be trained for a wide variety of jobs. Although, I am not closed minded to the notion that German Shepherds are the best, and/or only breed for the job. One of my very favorite past K9 partners was a solid black Czech Shepherd, named Bond. He was sleek, beautiful, even tempered with a built in switch to go back and forth between his work mode and off duty mode with just a command. He was a DDD/PD and the perfect



K9 Gabriel (DDD/PD) a Black Russian Terrier/Belgian Malinois cross

partner. My current partner in training is to be a DDD/PD, a male Black Russian Terrier/Belgian Malinois; Gabriel is confident with a great stable temperament, observant, energetic and courageous, only to top it all off with a great nose. He is the first of this type of cross for me and I am enjoying what both breeds brought to the table for this working combination." Barton also points out that Russia developed the Black Russian Terrier breed for use as military/working dogs in the 1940's. During his time in the U.S Military Barton worked and studied with many world renowned animal behaviorists and psychologists. "If you were to ask what breed is the best for tracking/trailing, most thoughts would turn to the breed with the most notorious nose, and of course I am speaking of the

Bloodhound! They do, as a general rule, have the best 'nose'. However that does not mean they all do. I was privy to an off the books experiment just for K9 fun. A Bloodhound competed against a German Shepherd in a tracking exercise. Needless to say the German Shepherd put that particular Bloodhound to shame. His tracking pace was also quite a bit quicker. In the same respect I have also seen German Shepherds that could not smell a pound of hamburger at nose level if they walked right past it." Barton also tells us that one of the first recorded attempts to use dogs to aid



Law Enforcement in the apprehension of a criminal was made in 1869 by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police of London, Sir Charles Warren. The Commissioner had repeatedly failed at identifying and locating the legendary serial killer "Jack the Ripper", he had even been denounced for not using bloodhounds to track the notorious killer. The commissioner quickly acquired two bloodhounds that had proven performance of simple tracking from the scene of another killer's crimes to his location. However, the results were far from satisfactory for the Commissioner, with one of the hounds biting him and both dogs later running off, requiring a Law Enforcement area search to find them. Barton uses this story to teach people that choosing our K9 partner should be a lengthy process. Testing and evaluating the dog properly should be the first priority, along with making sure YOU will be able to work TOGETHER as a TEAM. "Choose the right dog for the job and never set your 4 legged partner up for failure. Continually and proficiently train and never stop learning. That is how you will be successful on the real streets."- Ron Barton

Retired U.S Navy Military Working Dog
Kennel Master and Master Trainer,
Ron Barton & MWD Marco (DDD)

Top Mistakes Handlers Make

Written by Travis Walthall,
N.A.P.W.D.A Master Trainer.



After being asked to write an article concerning the top 10 mistakes handlers make, I immediately thought of handling/training skills, which are obviously important to our success in the field. I will address some of the mistakes that I make myself and that I see other handlers make. However, there are mistakes made off the training field and streets that adversely affect our training and street skills. These mistakes must be addressed first if we are to succeed in training and real world applications. The first mistake is something that happens in every police department/agency I have ever spoken to about their K-9 program. Handlers make a mistake when they believe that their command staff and peers think of them as the elite unit they truly are. In other words, you are not appreciated for what you bring to the table, nor will

you ever be. That is a fact that will not ever change. Learn to function effectively within that world. I have never seen a K-9 program that was successful in which the handlers, trainers, K-9 supervisors did not have to fight tooth and nail for everything they had. Those that are not willing to do that, will not be successful. They may continue to exist, but they will never see true success. That is the mistake/problem. How do we solve it?

The answer to that question somewhat depends on your personality type. I have dealt with this problem since I started handling my first dog 17 years ago. My personality is kind of, "Here it is, deal with it." I basically told them the way things needed to be if they wanted to succeed. They may not have liked that approach, but I backed up what I said with facts. Whether you choose to be forceful or

more polite does not matter. What matters is you do your research before making your approach to staff about your needs. Educate yourself. Then educate them. Understand that when you lay things out there, you must be willing to live up to that standard. The work falls upon you. I will address this topic throughout the rest of this article.

In my experience, and that of handlers I have spoken with, the top things K-9 handlers have to fight for is training time. Again, the key is to educate yourself and then educate those that dictate the time you get to train. The first thing you must understand is that the overwhelming majority of staff members have never been K-9 handlers. Their thought process is something like, "SWAT only trains once a month." They believe SWAT is an elite unit within the department and they may be. What they are failing to understand is the fact that K-9 behavior is dictated by four things; genetics, chemistry, early experience, and adult learning (Mackenzie 2015) (not these mysterious things we

"drives", but that is a whole other topic). Once we have a somewhat mature dog that we can start training, we really can not do much about the first three. Our selection process, if done correctly, will have taken care of those things. But, we can have a huge impact on the last thing, adult learning. That means training. Dogs learn by repetition and reinforcement, whether positive or negative. All of that means we must have the time to repeat exercises over and over again, just like SWAT. But things are different with people than they are with dogs, the learning process is much different, as you know. The problem is "they" do not know that or understand it. It is up to you to educate "them" on the subject. Obviously, SWAT members can be shown a new exercise or tactic once or twice and they "get" the general concept. Dogs don't learn that way. They must be shown something again and again and again. The best example is aggression. You all understand that I can not just let my young dog watch a veteran dog release on command once or twice then expect him to do the same. Building a good, dependable "out" is a long, sometimes difficult, process. You must



*Certified N.A.P.W.D.A
Master Trainer
Travis Walthall & Ziva*

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educate your staff on such things. My best advice on training time, and many other K-9 topics, is to become a member of Terry Fleck's website. Terry is considered one of the foremost legal experts on K-9 matters. I don't work for Terry or get any "kickbacks" from him, but I am a member of his informational website and I have found it to be very helpful for many situations. More information on that can be found at k9fleck.org. Remember though, I said earlier that once you lay out the standard for training time, which is a minimum of 16 hours per month industry wide, you have to live up to that standard. It is all too common to see K-9 handlers and training groups that become lazy and don't use their training time for what it is intended, training. We have a tendency to unconsciously abuse our training time. We take 1 ½ hours for lunch, eating at sit down restaurants and shooting the breeze long after the meal is over. We take entirely too long between exercises. We tend to cut-out early because our patrol teams are not missing us anyway. All of these things are pitfalls that must be avoided at all costs. Whether you think

so or not, word will eventually get back to staff that K-9 training time is not being used for training time. Quickly training time will be cut and you may find some lieutenant that does not know anything about dogs dictating when you can and can not train. Not a good place to be, so do not allow yourself to be put there. Train, train, train. All that other stuff can wait for another time. Besides, what is more fun than dog training? Our next topic also involves training. Are you seeing a trend yet? Once we get staff to agree to a proper amount of training time, we start training more and everything is great. But soon, we fall prey to our habits and our way of training. We never take the time to reach out to other agencies and groups that also have K-9s and training going on. That severely limits our knowledge base. I have spent 17 years immersed in "dog".



Travis Walthall & K9 Takoa

About 10 years ago I began the greatest professional journey I have ever been on. I began what was basically a 7 year apprenticeship to become a certified trainer then master trainer through the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA). It was shortly into that process that I realized just how much I had learned in the past 10 years and just how much I still had to learn. After making MT, I realize that the learning should never and will never stop. If you're only training within a set group of handlers/trainers week in and week out, you are cheating yourself, your dog, your department, the citizens you serve, and your fellow officers. If you are only hearing from one trainer, you're not learning everything you should be learning. No matter how good your trainer is, no one person can possibly know everything about K-9 training. That isn't a job to them. It's just a fact. Reach out to other handlers, trainers, and groups. I used to believe that this problem had everything to do with egos. I have come to realize that it does, but for different reasons than I first thought. I used to believe that handlers and trainers looked at others as inferior and they didn't

want to take the time to train with people that didn't meet their standards, which is nonsense. If you're not making others better then you're wasting your time and you don't understand why we are in this business to begin with. But, that's not really the issue, in most cases. The real reason "we" don't want to reach out is because we don't want others to see the issues we have. **Get over it!** Everyone that handles a dog has issues. No team is perfect. You won't get any better by only training within a set group. I'll move off my soapbox now and get into some mechanical things I see handlers and trainers doing that could be improved. The first two things kind of go hand-in-hand. Really they open up an entire plethora of problem areas. Lead control and presentation are something I see as a weakness in a good number of handlers. Lead control is much more difficult than the average person realizes. We watch veteran handlers move with their dogs, whether doing a narcotic/explosive search, tracking, or obedience, and it seems like it is an effortless endeavor, if they have spent the necessary time training. The problem is many handlers don't. It seems to me that handlers, for

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whatever reason, work on lead in basic handler's school until they start to learn the skill and their dogs begin to "get" their job. Then handlers cut the dogs off lead and rarely train or deploy on lead again, only doing it when safety is a concern. This is probably because their trainers have told them again and again to cut the dog off lead and "get out its way." I get that concept and agree with it, to an extent. The problem arises when handlers must leash their dogs and they haven't trained for it since the beginning of handler's school.

We all have experienced times when our leads get tangled in the dog's legs, around their heads, and in the brush we're tracking through. Many times, even the most experience handler can't help getting tangled up, but training on lead sure does improve your chances of not distracting our dogs by stopping to untangle them. The next issue stems from not training on lead. We finish basic handler's school. Our dogs have a good grasp on what we expect from them during a search, so we cut them off lead and let them do their thing. The problem with that is that many handlers step away and expect their dogs to complete the

search on their own.

Working dogs have to have independence. We don't want them to depend on us for everything. However, we can take that too far and expect them to do all the work. One of my mentor's, NAPWDA MT Bill Faus, loves to proclaim, "*You're a team. Your job is to present. Your dog's job is to sniff and alert. You get him in the area. He tells you where it is.*" Bill is 100% correct! As much as I love training dogs, not everything is training. We train for real world deployments. We can't control everything in the real world like we can in training, which is a somewhat "*sterile*" environment. Most of the time, in training, we know where the training aid is, whether it's narcotics, cadaver, explosive, etc. We obviously don't know that in the real world. We can't control our environments, air currents, amount of aids, or other outside stimulus. In the real world, our dogs may being search great, but they aren't getting into odor. Let them free search for a few moments then step in and uphold your end of the arrangement. Another mentor of mine, Bob Thueurer, always says, "*Dogs are dogs and they do dog stuff.*" Be a pack leader and do pack leader stuff. This brings us to our next

topic, which is related to lead control and presentation. We're back at handler's school and everything is going great. Our trainer is doing a great job teaching lead control, presentation, and rewarding. We leave handler's school and hit the streets. We start training in our group (hopefully not alone), the world is ours. Then our enemy, apathy, starts to creep into our training. Pretty soon, we stop doing anything on lead, ever. Then we stop presenting areas for our dogs to search, next, when our dog does find something and alerts, we walk-up to them and hand them their reward, pat them, say "good boy" in the most pathetic tone possible and then move on to the next training search. After a while, we notice that our dog's scratch or sit and stare has diminished to a non-existent state. Even worse, the dog stops wanting to search or work at all. We, being the intelligent humans we are, blame the dog and tell everyone he has gotten lazy and doesn't want to work anymore. We offer every reason and excuse we can think of for our dog's poor performance, except the truth. The truth is we, the handler, are the problem. It isn't our dogs that has gotten lazy and doesn't want to work anymore. It's us!

We stop training lead control, we start cutting the dog off lead all of the time, we stop presenting, we stop interacting and partnering with our dogs, we stop doing primary rewards, if we ever did. Basically, we crapped out on our dogs. But, we don't want to admit that to ourselves or anyone else. One of the things we are looking for when selecting a dog is a strong hunting behavior. We want dogs that will hunt until they find their prey or drop from exhaustion trying to find it, only to later train the dog that their prey really isn't hiding in the woods, the school locker, the suspect's car, or the luggage on the bus. It's really in our pocket, the same pocket day in and day out. Once the dog gets in odor, all we expect is for him to give some indication, and we walk up to him, take the prey out of our pocket, and hand it to him. What I'm saying is, *train the dog naturally*. When a wolf is out hunting for food for his pack, he watches the rabbit run into a thicket and he starts digging through the brush to get to the rabbit. The pack leader doesn't show up and hand him another rabbit. That isn't the way it works. The wolf digs through the brush until the rabbit has no choice but to pop out and attempt escape or he sits and stares at the thicket waiting for the

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rabbit to pop out again. When he reaches the rabbit or it pops out and runs, the wolf attacks and kills the rabbit. Our dog training should be no different. Put the reward with the source. Proof the dog from the reward by hiding rewards without source. If the dog indicates on the reward without odor, give a verbal correction and move on. When the dog alerts on the reward with odor, make it a game of sit and stare (focus) on the source. When the dog's focus is on the source and is intense, whether sitting and staring or scratching, remove the barrier and pop the reward from source just like that rabbit in the thicket. I promise that you will see your dog's hunt and focus intensify like never before. I see handlers try all kinds of things to avoid allowing their dogs see them giving the dog their reward. They contort their bodies, move all over the room, and have a second person throw the reward. Dogs aren't stupid. It didn't take them long to figure out that you were taking their reward from your pocket and that you were the one clumsily throwing it, hoping they wouldn't see you. Dogs have a much wider peripheral range than humans. They see you. So, we give the toy to another person to throw. It isn't long before the dog

sits and stares at the second person. So, we give it to a third person and so on. Before long we have to have five people at our training sessions and the dog is staring at every one of them when it gets into odor. Cut all of that stuff out and start training with primary rewards. You don't have to do it all of the time, but it should be the rule and not the exception. Voice tone is extremely important. Most of the handlers I'm around are cops, male cops. That means they're tough. The only emotion they ever express is the joy when telling a story about thumping some mope that needed it. Their eyes light up and their veins pop out when relating one of these stories. Don't get me wrong. I'm a male cop. I have my own stories and I love telling them. But, I'm not afraid to get excited around my dog either. When my dog accomplishes a task we have spent years training for, I don't say, "good boy" like a grumpy, old, tough cop. I yell, "GOOD BOY!" in the most little girl like voice I can muster. He just tracked and apprehended the burglar. He just found the pound of weed, or the ¼ gram baggy. I don't care what it was. I asked him to do something we have spent countless hours training on and he nailed it. I'm not going to


say, "good boy" in a gruff tone and move on. I may as well punch him in the face. *Get happy! Make a fool out of yourself. Look like an idiot. Who cares?* If you're as tough as you want everyone to think you are, you won't care what they think of your behavior anyway. I have heard some trainers say that pack leaders in the wild wouldn't act that way. They say it is childish and weak of a pack leader to display such behavior. All I know is my dog loves it. He gets excited. When I do it, he plays along and is ready to repeat the behavior he thinks led to this fun game. So, I'll stick to it. The last topic I'll talk about is just a few general things we do in training. A lot of the times, training is just plain and generic. We have stuff going on in life. We are busy. We get to training and we might be exhausted. We might have any number of issues we are dealing with outside of dog training. Don't get me started on interdepartmental politics within police work. That's another topic altogether. Anyway, for whatever reason, sometimes we just don't feel like doing much. We have to avoid that feeling. We are training for real world deployments. That means we must actually train for real world deployments. We can't just train for certification and expect to succeed on the street.

NAPWDA, and any other reputable certifying body, will readily admit that their certification standards are minimum standards. The hope is that K-9 teams will meet minimum standard as a start, then they will only get better from there. So, we have to do more scenario training. It really isn't difficult. It takes more effort than simply putting out a few aids, running a short track, eating a two hour lunch, doing O.B. and going home. But, that isn't real world training. One of my constant problems as the trainer for my group is that not every dog and handler are at the same level. That's an issue for every training group. I'm guilty of thinking that I need to bring this dog up or that handler up before we can all train with scenarios. That's really just me being lazy and making excuses. The truth is, scenarios can be adjusted for the skill level of each dog and handler. There really are no good excuses for not taking our training to the next level, no matter what level you're currently at, unless you're one of those that can't get any better. I've met a few of those guys. I'm not worthy. Train in scenario mode. Throw whatever you can think of at your training group and let them do the same to you, within reason. With that comes getting away from

Top Mistakes Handlers Make

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sleeves all of the time. All we're doing is training our dogs to only engage arms. We have all seen or heard about the dog that will run along beside a real suspect and not bite him if he raises his arms high. That isn't the dogs fault. He has been praised for that over and over again if you're only using sleeves. *It's your fault.* Sleeves are Ok if that's all you have or you're working a young, inexperienced dog, or working a problem that requires it. Otherwise, man-up and put on a suit. Teach the dog that it is ok to bite anywhere on the body. If you don't have a good decoy, find one, or become one yourself and teach others. With that in mind, if you think a good decoy is that guy who is tough and wants to prove it by "working" dogs, you could not be more wrong. That type of "decoy" needs to find some other way to prove what a bad dude he is. *Decoying is about helping the dog become better and stronger, not proving how tough you are.* If you are looking for a good source on decoying, I suggest the book I referenced earlier in this article, "K9 Decoys and Aggression" by Stephen A. Mackenzie. It all comes down to us. WE are responsible for our training.

WE are responsible for our mistakes. WE are responsible for our improvement. *"If it is to be, it's up to me."* You can be as good as you want to be. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Any handler/trainer worth anything will tell you that we all have issues to work on and they will help you work on yours. **TRAIN FOR LIFE! Yours may depend on it...** 



Travis Walthall & K9 Takoa

*This Article was written
Exclusively for
The K9 Chronicle
by
N.A.P.W.D.A Master Trainer,
Travis Walthall*

Travis Walthall is a long time K9 Unit Supervisor, Trainer and Handler with a City Police Department Located in Southwestern Missouri.

*If you are interested in Decoy Classes, Training Videos, K9 Problem Solving Seminars...etc please visit:
www.PatriotK9Training.com*

PATRIOT K-9 TRAINING



At Patriot K-9 Training and Consulting dog training is our passion. We are dedicated to serving the police K-9 industry through Communication, Education, and Effective Training.

We are devoted to placing high quality, professionally trained police canines on the streets in order to assist in making your community safer for citizens and officers. Our canines are guaranteed to be well trained, healthy, and social. We also offer classes in the training of personnel within your department that may be assisting your canine handlers after they leave our basic handler's course.

Our consulting service is designed to assist administrators in establishing and maintaining a proficient canine program through education concerning issues such as handler selection, legal issues, budgets, community relations, canine program expectations, and program needs and requirements.

Narcotic Detection-*The belief that positive reinforcement is the proper way to teach continues in narcotic detection training. Our canines are taught illegal narcotic detection through the play/reward concept. Training is kept fun and positive for the canines and the handlers as their skills are built from basic imprinting to vehicle, building, locker, luggage and area narcotic searches. Our canines can be taught aggressive response (scratching at source) or passive response (sitting at source) depending on your department's needs.*

Obedience-*We believe that obedience is the foundation for every discipline our dogs perform. We believe that positive reinforcement is more dependable than compulsion (pain). Handlers will learn how to properly conduct positive reinforcement and how to properly use compulsion, if necessary.*

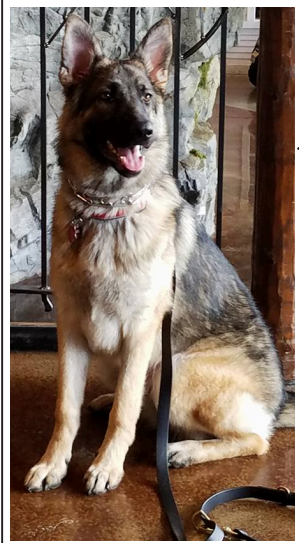
Tracking-*Once again, positive reinforcement and instinctual training is used to enhance genetically based behaviors which our dogs were selected for. Handlers in our course will see, first-hand, the techniques used to train their canines to man-track.*

Aggression Control-*We believe that the foundation for each discipline is obedience. Handlers will conduct obedience with their canines with a decoy wearing a full bite suit from the beginning of class. Canines will be taught that how the decoy is acting determines whether or not the canine is allowed to engage the decoy, not what the decoy is wearing.*

Building Search-*Handlers will observe and experience the techniques used to train their canine partners in this discipline as well. We also focus on handler's tactics while enhancing the canines searching behaviors.*

AND MORE...





Cover Photo
Meet Terin.

Age: 1 year

Hobbies: Swimming, Hiking, Playing Tug and Visiting the area's Outdoor Stores

Terin was adopted from Midwest Animal Resque when she was 7 months old. Her biggest aspiration in life is to graduate from the world famous Tom Rose School and become a Working Dog.



PHANTOM K9

Phantom K9 has more than 50 years combined military, law enforcement, and canine experience working along side numerous international, federal, state, and local authorities. We are an innovative company that specializes in the deployment of highly trained canine teams to unconventional areas. Our highly trained teams are experienced in high threat areas as well as low profile operations. Phantom K9 takes pride in being flexible and meeting the specialized needs of each client.

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Phantom K9 is very versatile when it comes to working in the canine industry. In addition to the above services, Phantom K9 offers our explosive and narcotic services to all business's and schools. If you do not see a service listed, please email us to discuss what we can do to meet your needs.

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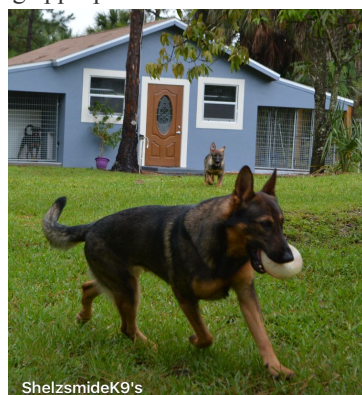
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PREPARE FOR EVERYTHING & FEAR NOTHING

IRONDOG K9 INTERNATIONAL is a Nonprofit Organization created to raise money for the provision of real life training and best quality equipment for Police and Military K9s. In 2016, more Law Enforcement K9s were killed in the first month than the total of any previous year.

After almost losing his life when a K9 failed on the street Paul Ludwig (a 25 year veteran K9 Police officer) changed the way he trained working dogs forever. We currently provide advanced K9 training and equipment to handlers and their K9s to better prepare them for the extreme dangers in today's world. However, many handlers and their K9s are put on the streets with very minimum training because departments do not have the appropriate funds to provide it. Limited training and improper equipment can lead to dangerous encounters that cost lives. Your generous donations will provide K9 handlers all over the United States of America with first-hand knowledge of what the real world has in store for them, plus the proper equipment badly needed for their K9s to perform their duties safely and skillfully to protect citizens and their communities. To get a job done, you have to have the right tools. Crime is constantly evolving so we need these teams to have the latest tools to prevail. We have traveled and worked with K9 Teams from around the world. Our goal is to expand the opportunity to provide real life tactical training to these handlers, build upon the skills of their K9s to get the job done, AND bring them home to their families. With your help, we will be able to do just that. Please consider donating now. We can't do it without you. www.IronDogK9.com






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K9 GUARDIANS

The K9 Guardians film is an 86 minute documentary following two of the best police and military dog trainers and the animals they produce! Paul, a K9 police officer and handler himself, has over 20 years of experience working with these dedicated animals.

Sam, a decoy/handler/trainer hybrid has been taking bites on the arms and legs while learning from the best of the best over the last 10 years. Together Sam and Paul want to shed light on an unsettling situation: most working dogs are extremely ill-prepared and under-trained. The film will focus on the efforts of these two individuals to make sure that no working dog fails in the field. A situation that has led to canine and officer deaths in the past. We will also talk to several other K9 officers, hear their stories, meet their pups, and follow their dogs through the training process and back into the streets to protect our communities. This film is an eye-opening look into a very misunderstood world. We have completed production and the film is available now. To purchase the K9 Guardians Film as an HD Digital Download, please visit www.vimeo.com/ondemand/k9guardians.



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