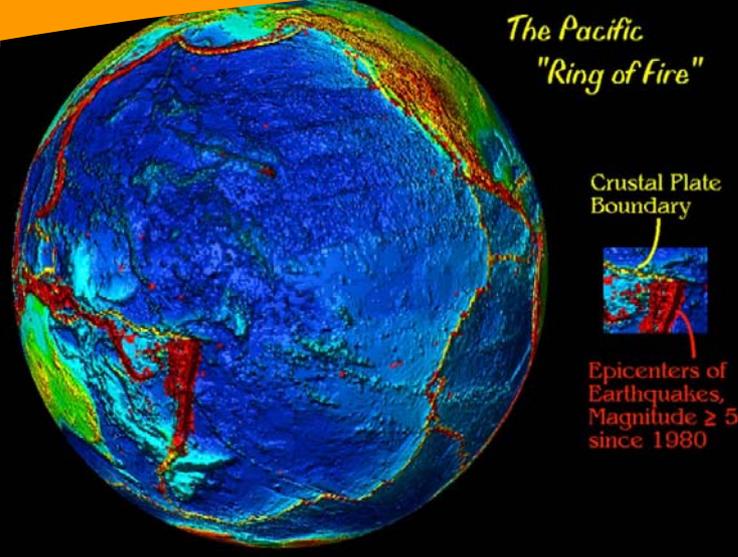




Newsletter of the NZ USAR Search Dog Association

PawPrint

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Up Coming Events

- Operational Assessment
29 May Christchurch
- Southern Regional Training
19—20 June Christchurch
- Foundation Training Week-
end
2-4 July Christchurch
- July AGM
By Video Conference
Date to be confirmed

There is that old saying "there are only two certain things in life; death and taxes". I have been reflecting on the uncertainties of life. Most of the time things are very predictable but that can change in an instant during a natural disaster. For most in Port au Prince, Haiti, it will be a long time until life returns to the pre-quake normal.

New Zealand straddles the Australian and Pacific tectonic plates; part of the Pacific Ring of Fire around the Pacific plate boundary and home to the accompanying volcanoes and earthquakes (red in the image above).

Preparation is a key aspect of dealing with any type of disaster.

Recently, I was privileged to visit our National Crisis Management Centre in the Beehive base-ment with delegates to the annual conference of the NZ Society for Earthquake Engineering.

This is the Civil Defense Coordination centre in a disaster. The building itself a model of being prepared, with its own independent water supply, power supply, telecommunications, IT and air conditioning systems. All in an building designed for a Modified Mercalli intensity 10 earthquake.

Transferring the same preparedness to the USAR Search Dog Association highlights training as the key to being ready for action. As we learn more

about search situations, we can prepare better scenarios for training.

At the recent Operational Handlers weekend in Christchurch, I noticed Brenda training the dogs to pick up scent of someone buried in a drain. It was almost amusing watching the handlers looking around the freight containers on the surface. But the dogs were right on the scent, barking with their noses pressed to an area of bare concrete.

We are all responsible for being prepared for a disaster on many levels, as individuals, family units and as USAR SDA responders.

Fay Deam
USAR SDA Coordinator



The National Crisis Management Centre

Northern Regional Training Weekend

Regional's – Auckland, January 2010

The Auckland Regional's were held at the end of January 2010 with our three operational dog teams and several training dog teams. We also had Brenda and Janelle up from Christchurch with their dogs. And, in what is probably a recent first, we put on some reasonable weather – clouds but no torrential downpours!!

We were very fortunate to have access to the tunnels in the old navy camp at the end of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula for our first day of searching. We started the day out with some agility and directionals in the camp area. Perhaps it was the sea air, or the copious rabbit droppings, but a lot of the dogs were quite distracted in the early part of the morning. This resulted in a brainstorming session later that gave us some good ideas for our training plans this year.

As the morning went on, we took all the dogs down into the tunnels for us to familiarise ourselves with the layout and let the dogs have a play around in the dark.

Then we put three subjects into the tunnels, along with some clothing distractions discarded by previous tunnel visitors, and no doubt some lovely rat smells for the dogs. The operational dogs were put through their paces, with trainee handlers observing. While the dogs generally had no problems with the pitch black in the tunnels, it was a highly worthwhile experience for the handlers working in more or less total darkness. Despite headlamps, it's still quite easy to get disorientated in that kind of setting and just adds another dimension to the search, ensuring that the handler covers all of the areas that require searching and avoids doubling up on their search areas.

After the operational dogs, the trainee dogs went through and they all went pretty well given their various levels of experience. The dogs had a lovely time on the muddy floors of the tunnels anyway!

Following lunch, Janelle organised a second tunnel search encompassing a wider area, including the land adjacent to the tunnel entrance. Again, a great exercise for keeping the teams on their toes by combining the two different types of terrain in the one search.

By the end of the day we were all pretty windswept, sunburnt (oops) and weary, so we headed home to rest up for the following day.

Sunday training was at Western Aggregates and Soil. As usual Randolph, the owner and Lance, the live in digger/machinery operator had pulled out all the stops and made hides for us in their rubble pile.

For the main search there were 3 subjects with distractions (food and dead things) on the pile. The dogs/handlers each went through individually with Brenda and Janelle observing. We also had a guest observer, Chris Martin. Chris is an ex Australian police dog handler and current New Zealand LandSAR assessor.

The exercise that followed was interesting, as told by Nikki Smith.

"Brendon was hidden in a "cave" deep under the rubble, his scent was permeating to the surface where one of the dogs alerted, the others pursued the scent to it's source before alerting. The handlers, on hands and knees had to follow the dogs as they disappeared out of sight "underground" to find him. The "cave" was completely dark inside, by this time my helmet light had given up the ghost and so I ventured in completely "blind", a very strange feeling as I groped around the walls and floor trying to avoid bumping into things. I followed the barking and on the way my head discovered a wall where

I needed to make a left turn, oh well thank goodness for safety helmets! I eventually located the barking and found Vader with Brendon. I'm not sure who, either Brenda or Brendon, turned on their helmet light so I didn't have to bump into any walls on the way out as well. "

At the conclusion of the weekend Brenda had a look at a couple of new prospects. Nikki (another one) and Blue, a blue heeler and Donna and Benny, a golden Labrador. Nikki and Blue were unsuccessful on the day. Brenda is going to see Donna and Benny again on the 16th May. Good luck to Donna on the day.

Finally we would like to thank all who helped and attended the weekend, especially our fantastic subjects Alana and Steve (who normally do LandSAR), Mike, Joanna, Dharini, Sheryl, Tiffany, Mooks and Phil and the site owners, NZ Navy and Western Soil and Aggregates. We all had a ball. A huge thanks also to Brenda and Janelle for their time, patience and knowledge.

Briar English and Nikki Smith

Operational Handlers Weekend 5th to 7th February 2010

Over the years it has been found that there is a need for a training weekend for operational teams to give them more technical searches and to work in an environment closer to an operational situation. Brenda Woolley as National trainer, Brendon and the Christchurch team who didn't have operational dogs, together with support from TF2 spent a considerable amount of time and effort setting up scenarios for the inaugural operational handlers weekend.

The weekend started with the Christchurch handlers Linda, Janelle and I being told to meet at Woolston Training Centre, TF2 base at 1700 hrs on the Friday evening, the other handlers, Nikki, Sara and Tania were flying in from Auckland and would meet us later.

On arrival at Woolston we were told to set up the tent in the car park ready to use for the next two nights, originally the intention was for the three Christchurch handlers to set up everything but we ended up getting the audience involved because the wind was strong enough to cause problems getting the roof secured.

The Auckland team arrived and were all deployed to the dog shelter and farm to look for missing people. The Auckland team searched around the dog shelter buildings and the Christchurch team searched the farm buildings.

A good exercise with residual scent resulting in dogs alerting and because of the wind some dogs showing interest but not barking.

We were then sent back to Woolston to have something to eat and drink and told to wait for another task. We decided to get some sleep but because we knew we would be called out during the night none of us slept very well and we were finally called at 0345 hrs and tasked to go back to the Metro recycling yard. We were split into teams and given areas to search.

With a strong wind blowing and many distractions the dogs had problems finding the subject on a large pile of green vegetation, there was also a misunderstanding about access to buildings with one subject on a roof area with stair access.

We returned to Woolston for breakfast and were then split into two groups. One group went out to the house removals yard not

far from the airport and the other group were tasked to wait outside the Rolleston Prison.

I was part of the group who searched the houses. With four subjects to find in 10 minutes it was always going to be interesting. A situation where it was better to put the dogs on lead between houses to limit them searching around the yard.

We were then tasked to join the other teams who had been redirected to a new rubble pile at the Tempelton shingle site. This was a new site for everyone.

It transpired that there were seven subjects hidden on the pile some close together. The exercise highlighted the fact that missed subjects were often found by the dog but the handler had missed indications and even called the dog away. The dogs were getting tired and it showed.

Our next tasking was to the old Islington Freezing works. We had lunch and were then sent to search an area two dogs at a time. We were reminded that asking questions before you go on site is one thing, not taking into account the answers is another, being told that the gas hadn't been turned off and walking past a gas meter showed that the concentration levels were slipping.

The searching emphasised control of the dog and making sure the areas were searched and again watching and taking clues from your dog even before you set the dog off.

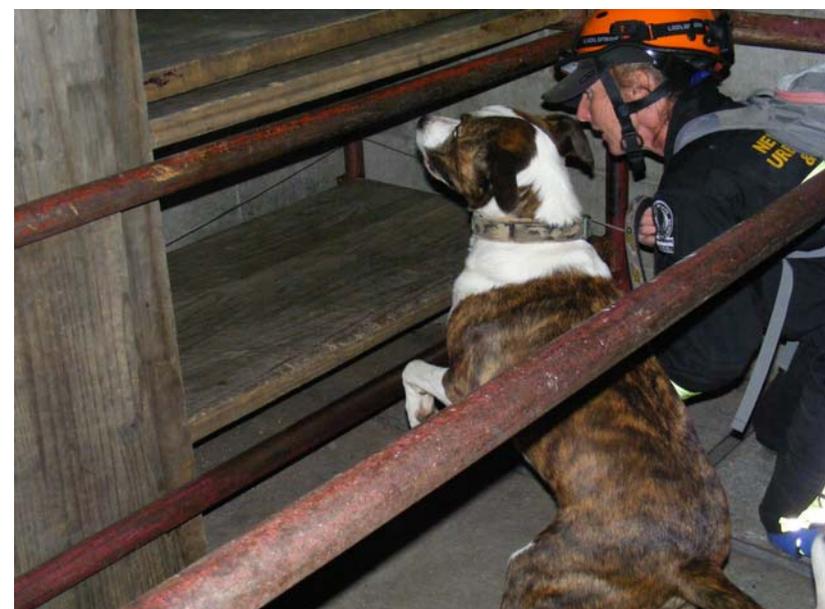
We were stood down until the following morning and returned to Woolston for showers and an evening meal.

The Sunday was much easier on the dogs, going through the training tower at Woolston Fire Station and having a good play in the metro box that simulated a pancake collapse.

An excellent weekend that probably put more pressure on the handlers than the dogs although both were very tired by the end of the weekend.

This weekend was probably the equivalent of two or three advanced assessments in one weekend, as those of us who have organised training weekends know there is a tremendous amount of organisation that goes into making these sort of weekends a success, obviously a huge thank you must go to Brenda and everyone else who helped make the weekend flow so well.

Graham Joseph



National Training Weekend

5 - 7 March 2010

After arriving in Auckland on Thursday afternoon we made our way to Pukekohe, where we were to be based for the weekend.

We all arrived at the Pukekohe Fire Station at around 0800 on the Friday for a briefing after which we headed off to our first site of the weekend the Old St Stephens Boarding School in Bombay.

It had been arranged that a combined training session with Taskforce 3 would take place.

The group set up the agility gear on a large grassed area out the front of the school and a number of us put the dogs over the equipment.

The rest of the day involved two separate searches, introducing some of the younger dogs to lifting harnesses and a rescue exercise taken by Janelle.

One of the searches involved a steep external stair well going up to a second story where the first subject was, then past a screeching bird and onto the second subject in the end room of the building.

Later that night we all headed off to Balle Brothers Packing Shed. This for me was one of the highlights of the trip, looking back towards a mob of barking dogs with handlers holding on for dear life. All dogs did amazingly well considering the camera crew poking cameras and microphones close to them.

Saturday involved a number of sites including a house removal yard, construction yard and Humes Pipes. Short searches, runaways and call outs were the main theme of the day. Lunch was at Papatoetoe fire station followed shortly after by a presentation on Critical Stress Management.

Our final day we were to be based out at the Auckland Airport rubble site. This site was a dumping ground for huge chunks of concrete from the runway. There was talk from a number of handlers that this pile was one of the largest, most challenging and most realistic they had ever worked on.

Operation dogs and handlers were first up and the dogs I watched searched the pile very successfully. The newer teams had the opportunity to explore the rubble and to partake in a short exercise with Linda.

Congratulations to Brendon, Nikki, Kirsty and the rest of the Auckland team for a great weekend.

Tim Drennan





Training at Auckland Airport and Humes Pipes

National Training weekend was a great weekend to work alongside the operational handlers which meant I gained valuable training skills from the experts.

Joanne Kennedy

Never thought we would ever be allowed to search on **STONEHENGE!!**
Awesome rubble pile—
thanks Auckland.

Linda Pike

Special thanks to Brendon and the crew for a great afternoon, was so stoked to see Sarge and Malcolm in action, yes they make a fantastic team. I can see why you are all so dedicated to the cause, the dogs and crew were all fabulous, I look forward to the next invite.

Vickie Byford
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER
WAIPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

I would just like to thank all the people involved with the organization of the training weekend, I thought that Brendon and Nikki did a brilliant job, I thought Steve and Alana were excellent as subjects and stepping in to take care of the catering when required. It was really neat meeting all of the other handlers from around the country.

Malcolm Percy

President's Column

Greetings to you all

Since the last edition of Pawprint (December) a number of events have occurred in the life of the SDA including a couple of new initiatives. Here is a quick overview along with a schedule of upcoming events:

Foundation Training Weekend

As mentioned in the Christmas edition our first ever Foundation Training Weekend was held in early December 2009 - the location Christchurch. The rationale behind this weekend is to engage new handlers who have limited or no dog handling experience or those starting out again with a new dog to ensure they are heading in the right direction. This is particularly so for those living outside of Christchurch who don't benefit from weekly input from the National Trainer, evaluators and other experienced senior handlers to develop their skills and to give advice that we all need when starting out.

Of most benefit to the newer handlers was the focus on the 'basics' of becoming a good dog handler. The overall success and positive comments that have come out of this weekend have seen the SDA gain funding to run another FTW in July 2010.

Operational Handler Weekend

Another first for the SDA, and long overdue. Much of our emphasis is on our beginning and intermediate level dogs and handlers as we continue to grow the USAR search dog capability.

However, this does mean that at times our operational dogs and handlers do miss out on opportunities to be extended with their training. Prior to any potential deployments we need to ensure that our operational teams (both human and K9) can indeed experience a fraction of what it is like on an operation; for example:

- establishment of a BOO (Base of Operations)
- working for extended periods
- working after limited sleep
- working when under stress
- working when physically and mentally drained
- sites where the dog does have multiple finds

The weekend was a success and the SDA will be seeking funding to ensure that this event is held at a minimum annually.

Thanks to Tim, Ben and Craig along with TF2 members - without their help this weekend would not have been as successful as it was.

National Training Weekend 2010

The 6th National Training Weekend was held in South Auckland in early March; which the majority of handlers were able to attend. Every year at each region where the national weekend is held there is always a training exercise or event that is a highlight.

the very first national in Wellington - the tunnels under the NZ Army Barracks and visit to NZ Police Dog Training School.

three years ago in Auckland - NZ Navy Tunnels at Whangaparaoa

two years ago in Christchurch - night exercise at Christchurch Woman's Hospital

last year at Longburn Freezing Works, Palmerston North
this year; undoubtedly most will agree the rubble pile at Auckland Airport - daunting for both man/woman and dog alike.

The NTW is always the highlight of the year on the USAR SDA calendar both for the training opportunities and social occasions; and this year proved to be no different. A huge thank you to a number of Auckland based handlers who assisted with organisation, especially Nikki Smith.

Our dogs & our people

In the October 2009 edition I mentioned that Murphy (Briar English's dog) was unwell with cancer. Most of you are aware that Murphy has since lost his battle. On a much happier note Briar has a new pup Casey who is showing tremendous promise at this early stage.

Motel Accommodation

After the National Training Weekend I received a complaint from the motel owner where we stayed. A similar complaint was received from the motel we use in Palmerston North. Both motel managers had expressed concern that it "appeared a dog had been in a unit".

I know that all of you are professional enough, and indeed know the SDA's position with regard to this "no dogs in units" - so I'm confident that this did not occur on either occasion.

Consequently we all need to be particularly vigilant, especially those with long haired breeds to ensure that dog hair is not carried into motel units on clothing etc.

I suggest this is what has occurred giving the managers the impression of a dog being in a unit.

Be mindful that locating motels that will accommodate the dogs is not easy, so I suggest in future packing a clothing brush and be cautious

Annual General Meeting & Election

In a little over two months time we will be holding our AGM and management committee election. At least two of the current management committee members will not be seeking re-election. The vacancies created will need to be filled from within the current membership base. Start thinking if this is something that you can give back to the association and its members who have supported you.

This will be my last piece for *Pawprint* in the role of President of the Search Dog Association. After 5 years on the management committee, the last 3 of those as President I decided to not stand for re-election to the management committee for next year. I have come to this decision over the last 3 months for a number of reasons, none more so than allowing me more time to spend with my young family.

Change can seem daunting for some but I believe that it is healthy to keep us all moving forward positively for the good of USAR dogs in NZ.

Finally, best of luck to all those going for revalidation, or certification at our mid year operational assessment at the end of May.

Upcoming Events

May:

- Operational Assessment
- Management Committee Meeting (full day)

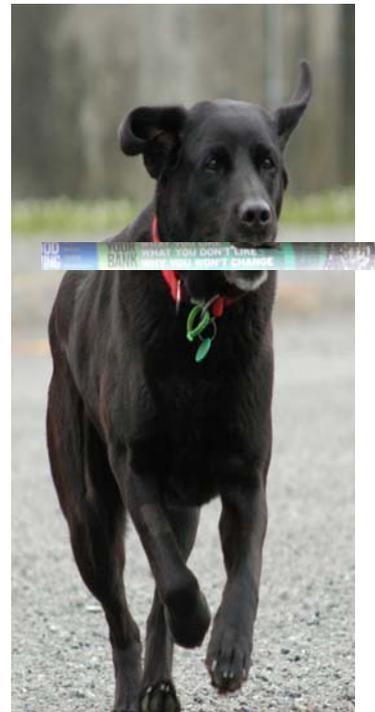
June:

- Regional Training Weekend - Southern

July:

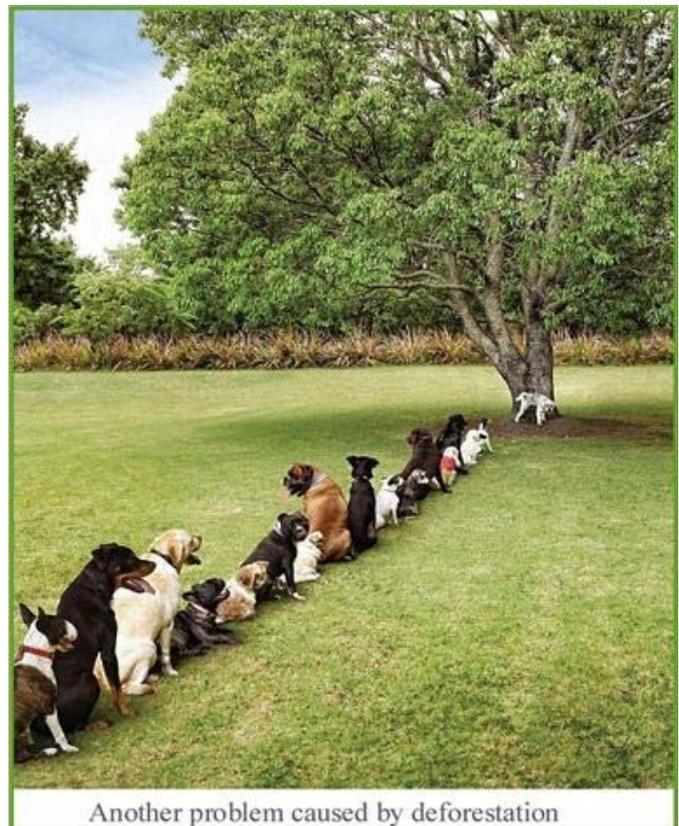
- Foundation Training Weekend (Christchurch)
- AGM date TBC (via video conference link)

Brendon Irwin



Dogs in the Media

The following picture has been seen recently in advertisements and on the web.



Another problem caused by deforestation



For toy fanatics

Got a dog that just can't sit still? That will retrieve the ball a hundred times and still be asking for more? Then **Search & Rescue** (SAR) might just be your thing, if you enjoy teamwork and giving back to the community. Dogs can either be trained in LandSAR, where they search for lost persons in wilderness environments, or in Urban SAR (USAR), where they are trained to locate live human victims within structures that have collapsed (for example, due to earthquakes) so they can be rescued. "You want a dog that will do absolutely anything to get the toy – run over demolished buildings or in the bush for hours on end. The best SAR dogs are commonly not very good pets," says Malcolm Percy, who does USAR with his Labrador-cross, Jet, and his staffie-huntaway cross, Sarge.

"They need good stamina – USAR dogs are expected to work 12-hour shifts and spend 50 per cent of that time searching if necessary. They need to be good with people and other dogs, confident on all kinds of surfaces, unfazed by noises and confined spaces."

SAR isn't to be taken lightly: lives are at stake and people rely on you and your dog's ability and commitment to

being a team player. But the rewards from using a dog's natural instincts and knowing you can make a difference during a disaster are huge.

Contact: USAR: www.usardogs.org.nz
LandSAR: www.nzlsar-dogs.org.nz



USAR dogs are trained to help find people in the aftermath of a disaster.

Thanks to Malcolm Percy and the Editor of fetch! for allowing this to be included in Pawprint. Fay's note, it is a reconstructed file not the original PDF file.

From april/may issue
of *fetch!* magazine

Advertisement

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“stress” related mannerisms and ailments. Equissage also assists in acceleration of healing after surgery, respiratory disorders, older canines with arthritis and limb stiffness.

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Coordinator's Notes

As this is a large issue, the article on the Central Training Weekend held 1–2 May will be in the July issue of Pawprint.

I would like to add my thanks to Brendon, Nikki and Brenda and their helpers for a superb National Training Weekend.

Please do give some consideration to who you would like to represent you and your area on the Management Committee. Nomination forms will be sent out a month prior to the AGM.