



Search Tails

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

MESARD

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FALL 2008

MESARD Newsletter

Summer in Maine, every dogs dream. A tick or two, maybe a 90 degree day but our training puts us and our K-9's on the water in July and August. July was a split training between Northern and Southern teams. We do this to cut down on travel when possible. You can train close to home or take advantage of two trainings in a month and go to both.

First Water training was July 13th hosted by Deb Palman for the Northern group. This was held in Aurora and Amherst, with the Water site at Giles pond in the morning. We used the scent pump and approached it from both a motor boat and a canoe. Experienced dogs had no problems with the scent pump and knew their jobs where the less experienced dogs got more caught up in the visual with the buoys. Some of the new dogs were also getting their pond legs in the boats. While we waited for our turns, we took the time to work on obedience, which sometimes with "drivey" dogs is a challenge because they just want to get to work and not stand around waiting. In the afternoon the scent pump was placed in the West Branch of the Union river down below Deb's new house and teams went between the stream and the farm where Dr. David worked with us on cadaver.



Boat work with Chip & Chili

The Southern training was held at Spencer Fuller's in Freeport on July 20. Tracking, airscent and cadaver where the focus for the day. Thanks to the Planet Dog crew (Ken Hahn, Jeff Cloutier, Michele Lampron and Sarah Jane) for the fresh victims for the team to work. Ken is the manager of the Portland Store and Jeff is Product development. Our dogs love Planet dog balls! Watching our dogs work and how the toy is used for reward may give product development new ideas for the working dog.

Augusts' training was held on the 17th at Great Pond Recreation Center in Aurora with the water work done at Long pond. We used both divers and the scent pump. The younger dogs got the idea of the game when using the divers. They put together "find victim under water with reward", where the older dog understands scent, locate and ultimate reward. Again, Dr. David joined us and worked with teams on cadaver in a wooded area and a gravel pit near Long Pond. Teams in the afternoon got to track, do air scent and continue with cadaver work. Thanks to Deb for organizing both our water trainings and a special thanks to Dr. David and the volunteer Divers, Irene Yaws and Phil Richter.



Dave & Ruby in Freeport

Also in August the tracking teams, Bruce, Stacey & Cindy traveled to Vermont to train with Chris Weeks. And Not to forget, **Deb Palman retired** from the Maine Warden Service on August 29, Congratulations Deb!

September is another training split with Northern group back on land at Beth Swartz in Dixmont on Sept 14. We ordered up a drizzly day but it didn't slow down training. Everything from re-certs to airscent work was the teams focus. Dr. David again joined us to work cadaver. The youngster dogs could be heard off in the distance working on their find, re-find, indications work.

Continued on Page 2 ...



To quote Michele before she left for Indiana, "Find them, Find them all"

...Page 1 continued

All being "drivey" dogs, there was a lot of complaining when it wasn't their turn. This young group also worked obedience to get ready to take their CGC.

September's Southern training on the 21st was hosted by Michele Fleury at her new home in West Gardiner. A wonderful new venue for the team. Michele's home is in a newer development that borders farm and woodland, which she secured about 300 acres from land owners for us to use. Rolling hills, open fields, powerline, wooded slopes with stonewalls. Perfect training ground. A bonus for the tracking teams was a new victim, Tyler



Kelly, Troy & Irene discussing a successful re-cert

Jamison. Thanks to Michele's husband Lloyd who also helped by getting lost for us too.

Other events for September were completed re-certs for Troy, Irene, Kelly. They mapped out areas at Donnell Pond in Sullivan. Michele & Sean worked theirs out on Mount Desert Island and Deb's was completed at Beth's training in Dixmont.



Spencer & Gabe Cadaver training at Michele's

Jennifer F. & Leslie did a demo for the "Canine Carnival" at the Woodlawn Museum in Ellsworth. This was an all dog event. Many k-9 vendors, Breed rescues & K-9 demos of which Freya and Frida executed flawlessly. Frida and Freya both had the crowd eating out of their paws

Also doing demo's in Sept., Nancy, Jim, Gus and Spirit did the "Lost but Found Safe and Sound" presentation for over 100 fifth graders from the Augusta/Gardiner area on Sept 18. Gus and Spirit did a demo to go along with the video. The kids asked lots of questions and really enjoyed Gus and Spirit wandering through the crowd.



Gus getting the love in Augusta/Gardiner



Frey'a very happy victim, Sarah

Pleasant River Fish & Game in Columbia also invited MESARD to give a demo at Hunting & Fishing day on Oct. 4. Leslie & Frida spoke to 25 people. Two young volunteers were picked to be victims and what did they say after Frida found them? "AWESOME" It doesn't get any better than that!

By mid Sept. Deb Palman traveled out to Indiana to be an instructor at the National Search Dog Alliance Training Seminar Inaugural Conference on Sept. 18-21. This was a week long event where she worked with approximately 12 students on Advanced Air Scent. The conference was held at Camp Atterbury, a training base for the Indiana National Guard in Edinburgh, Indiana. Deb had a quick turn around after this first trip because by the end of the month Deb, Spencer and Michele all traveled out to Indiana for the IPWDA National Seminar Sept. 28-Oct.3, at the same location in Indiana that Deb was at the week earlier. 3 handlers and 6 dogs later, Alli, Gabe & Alex came away with the much coveted IPWDA Advanced Cadaver Certification. Quinn attained her Basic Cadaver Certification and Deb obtained her Master Trainer for SAR certificate.

Congratulations teams, MESARD will only benefit from all their hard work.

Search Safe LH

For the Love of Work, Belgian Malinois

Road to success starts with Irene Morey and her Belgian Malinois Nikka. Irene first heard of Nikka through an e-mail, it read "Warden Ron Dunham of Maine Warden Service has been promoted to Sergeant and can no longer train his Belgian Malinois in tracking". Irene who'd certified two German Shepherds for MESARD was intrigued by what she learned about the dog. Nikka had been surrendered to a NYC Shelter, no one really knows many details or how long she was in custody at the shelter. Before surrender, she'd been tied to a tree for a length of time and the wire that held her fast had embedded into her thigh. Thankfully, it just left an ugly reminder as a superficial scar, with no permanent damage. In spite of the horrendous treatment inflicted on her by humans, she possesses no ill will. She's a happy working dog through and through. Belgian Malinois are a medium size dog in the sheepdog family, females run approximately 55lbs and they are know for their very high energy and work drive. Ron Dunham started her in tracking and Irene has continued this as one of Nikka's specialties. The vet estimated her age to be about 2 1/2 and in these last 2 years Nikka has certified in tracking, article & cadaver. What is her favorite? "ALL OF IT", that's the kind of dog she is. Irene's been so taken with the heart and drive of the Malinois that she has begun fostering Mal's for the "America Belgian Malinois Rescue", To date Irene has fostered two dogs and has adopted one of them, a female. Meya. She's not working but Irene says she could! Meya also shows aptitude for Flyball but for Irene there are only so many hours to the day and MESARD gets all her extra and then some. So, Meya's with Irene and Troy to be loved! At press time Nikka was recovering from surgery on one of her front legs. A recurring infection yielded a foreign object. So, 25 stitches and 1 e-collar later, Nikka's on the mend.



With all that drive, Irene will be glad to get her back in harness and back to work. Then Nikka & Irene will be happy again!

Gear Review, "LED Lenser" High Performance LED Illumination Jim Bridge



P7 Model 8407

While I was at the National Hardware Show in Las Vegas I visited a booth specializing in top quality flashlights and knives. I was interested in the flashlights as I had not found a small but strong enough one for my search vest and I found one that fits my needs. The technical specs can be found at: <http://www.ledlenserusa.com> When I called the manufacturer about buying one I was told they only sell to dealers but when I explained about MESARD, they were willing to give us the same rate as their dealers so I purchased one. The light is sturdy, has a low intensity (good for map/GPS reading) and a high intensity choice which are controlled by the thumb switch on the back. It uses 4 AAA batteries and has 130 hours life expectancy per set (not clear if this is with low or high intensity). The head has a focus capability from flood to pencil beam and I have to say the pencil beam matches my 5 cell flashlight light, only with a whiter light. I used it for the first time on the Hallowell search and found it was just what I was looking for. The flood option gave a broad beam that illuminated well around us and was exceptional for walking, looking for evidence and people out a good ten yards. When I put it on the pencil beam it reached well out into the wooded areas and permitted nearly the distance I would have had in daylight. Long open sections like across a wide power line it illuminated the woods on the other side but a person would have had to have light or bright clothes to see. The only thing left to confirm is the 130 hours life on the batteries but even if I only get half that life expectancy the light will be exactly what I wanted. The light is on my search vest and available if anyone would like to take a look at it. JB

In Memoriam

“Saying good bye to a partner”



Anna von der Wolfen Blick

7/7/94 to 8/1/08

SchH I, FH 2, PDII, Certified SAR Dog, Patrol K-9 and Cadaver Dog
Warden Service K-9 from 1996 to 2003

During her career, Anna located:

- Shells at 22 different wildlife crime scenes
- Four illegally killed deer, most killed at night
- One suicide victim
- One homicide victim in a shallow grave
- A missing hunter who was found deceased
- Scattered bones from a missing person
- Two drowning victims

A woman in VT who had been missing for three days. The woman had attempted suicide by jumping off a cliff and laid seriously injured at the bottom for three days before Anna led me to her during a search run by the VT State Police.

Anna also:

- Tracked a suspect who killed a doe illegally allowing us to solve the case
- Tracked and located a suspect who ran from a deputy
- Tracked a lost 3 year old on New Year's Eve, following the track and giving a direction of travel so Warden Dan Scott could locate him out in front of the dog team
- Located a missing teenager by following an 18 hour old track over a half mile to find the boy sleeping at a friend's house
- Saved me from at least one assault
- Located many fishermen and their secret fishing spots, traps, illegal and legal bear baits and conducted many searches for fish and other evidence

“And to welcome a New One”

Congratulations to Michele on the new addition to her family. Nya is a Dutch Shepherd female, whelped May 28, bred by www.heartlandbelgians.com which hails from the land of Rattle snakes and Horn Toad Lizards (Oklahoma). Michele will train Nya in cadaver search, having researched many working breeds for the task. Dutchies are medium in size and that was something that Michele took into account. She loves the Rottweiler, but their size and health issues made her look at other breeds. The Portuguese WD was another breed familiar to her but coat maintenance was a negative. Dutch females will run 50-60 lbs, brindle in color, both dark and light variations in long, wire & short coat. Nya is a dark, short coat. Their temperaments are described as a Malinois with an off switch. They are work dogs which thrive in scent specific work but are also willing to be a chilled family dog in their off time.



Debbie Palman Retires Maine State Warden Service

Woman in Green by Jennifer Fisk

I was asked to write a story about Deb Palman because I have known her the longest of any MESARD members. The story begins before MESARD.

In the spring of 1980, I was a student in the inaugural 100 Hour Reserve Officers Law Enforcement class. At a session in Ellsworth, various LEOs dropped in to see what we were learning. Among them was a young officer dressed in green. This officer stood out not only by virtue of being the only officer dressed in green but also because this officer was female. I immediately noticed an attitude of confidence and competence. I queried my fellow students as to who this woman was. The answer was Deb Palman, first female Maine Game Warden. I knew immediately I wanted to meet this woman but how? It was not to happen for 4 more years.



First SAR Dog Conference with
Hans Erdman, Keene, NY 1986

Deb joined the Warden Service K9 unit with a coal black GSD named Raven. She trained him as a patrol dog which included tracking and evidence detection. Once again my path led me to Deb. I attended a Sportsman's Show in Bangor where Deb and Raven gave a demonstration. This performance was beautifully executed and left me teary eyed. I wanted to go meet her but what could I say as an introduction? Perhaps, "your dog is handsome" or "that was a great demo". No, that was too trite for really meeting this obviously accomplished WS dog handler. Perhaps another time.

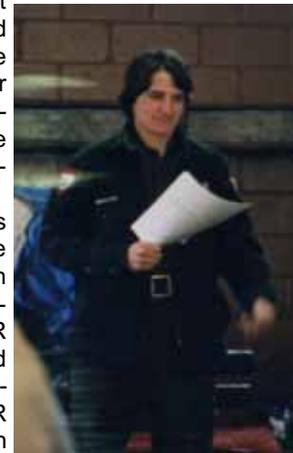
In the 1980's, a hunter, George Wescott, from Massachusetts became lost in the Greenville area. A massive deployment of SAR resources ensued. One of the resources was LE tracking dogs, including Deb and Raven. As time went on, it became apparent that tracking dogs weren't going to find Mr. Wescott. The Overhead Team of Warden Service called upon Ramapo Search and Rescue Dogs from New Jersey, who are trained in air scent area search, to assist. Deb worked with one of the teams and was impressed with their method of searching with a dog.

She recognized this was a great SAR resource but calling a unit from out of state wasn't going to happen on every lost person incident. She decided Maine should have its own volunteer SAR K9 unit.

In 1983, Deb began training with another Warden and Hunter Safety Instructor Bob Wentworth and their dogs. In March of 1984, Bob invited me to bring my 3 month old GSD to a SAR training with Deb and 3 other teams. Finally, I was not only going to meet the woman in the green uniform with the handsome well trained GSD, but also realize my dream of training a dog for SAR. At my initial training, it was quickly apparent that Deb was all business and had no tolerance for excuses. I knew to train with Deb I had to get on the fast track of learning all I could about SAR and dog handling. Over the next 7 months, six dogs and handlers trained regularly with Deb and all 6 certified for basic area search at Sukee Kennels. We got to enjoy our success for about 10 minutes before Deb announced this was a very basic certification and we had a lot more to learn. As the clock struck midnight she outlined the details of the next full day training session the following weekend.

In 1985, Maine Search and Rescue Dogs was formed and incorporated. Deb was elected Training Director and has remained in that position for the last 24 years. She has often had to sacrifice her own training time to help another team over a rough spot. She was happy to do so because she enjoys seeing a team be successful. During that time, Deb has trained and certified 3 more of her own GSDs as SAR dogs and as conservation patrol dogs. MESARD has become a very highly respected SAR resource not only in Maine but also in New England and Maritime Canada. Without Deb's dedication to the SAR mission, training ability, and vision of what a SAR dog's capabilities should be, MESARD would not be the unit it is today. She has been a driving force behind writing stringent standards and testing procedures which have only strengthened MESARD's teams.

As of August 29th, Deb's 30 years as the woman in the green uniform came to an end. I am happy to say, over the last 24 years I not only got to meet Deb, I got to learn from her and work with her in SAR. I am also proud to count her as one of my best friends. As a civilian volunteer, she will continue in K9 SAR, as she is currently training her 5th SAR dog. Hopefully, she will also continue to be the Training Director of MESARD well into the future.



2nd SAR Conference
Old Forge, NY 1987

MESARD Search Tail's Feature Wag

By Deborah Palman



The “Be Still” Exercise by Brenda Aloff – A Useful Tool for Working Dog Handlers

Last winter, at the invitation of New England K-9 Search and Rescue, I and other police K-9 and SAR dog handlers attended a seminar in Keene NH by Brenda Aloff. The material she presented was fascinating and a novel approach to training dogs. She has spent her career observing dog behavior, cataloging and analyzing it, and has come up with new training techniques that recognize that dogs operate in both thinking and “instinctual” modes. Her methods also emphasize communicating with dogs using the ways dogs communicate with each other.

The first technique she taught was the “Be Still” exercise. On one level, this exercise teaches the dog to calm itself and accept the person handling the dog. On another level, she described the exercise as a means of taking the dog out of an instinctual, reactive, “hindbrain” state into a thinking, “frontbrain” state. This is very useful for dog trainers and handlers, because if the dog is in a fearful or avoidance state, it is impossible to teach the dog anything and hard to get the dog out of the fear state. Aggression, whether motivated by prey or defensive, is also a hindbrain state, which is why it can be hard for trainers to control or teach control to a dog that is fully aroused.

I’ve spend considerable time reading Brenda’s books and find them fascinating but complex. This is because the subject of dog behavior and trying to modify it with all the differing variables of dogs and problems is also complex. Basically, the books point out that the ideal human dog relationship is such that the human is the pack leader and the dog “includes” the human’s input in their decisions. This is achieved by training the dog to be mindful of the human pack leader at all times. This teaching has to be done when the dog is in a “frontbrain” or learning, thinking and calm state of mind. The dog cannot be taught when it is in a hindbrain, adrenalized, emotional state like fear or aggression. The trick is to teach to dog to look for permission the second it sees the rabbit rather than trying to stop the dog after the dog has left on the chase. By the time the dog has left, it is deep in hindbrain, instinctual behavior and cannot be taught. In apprehension work, the analogy is clear – the dog must be taught to listen to the handler before the dog is taught to fight all out with the decoy.

When to Use “Be Still”

The Be Still exercise is used to calm the dog, connect with the dog and to switch the dog from hindbrain to frontbrain. I have used it primarily in situations where the dog was being fearful, and experimented with situations where an apprehension trained dog would not “out.” The reasons dogs don’t out are complex, but generally they are due to stress or a hindbrain, adrenalized state that cannot be changed and is usually only aggravated with traditional physical corrections. Because working with a dog in an aggressive state can be hazardous, don’t try to apply this exercise at aggression training sessions without knowing you can handle the dog without being bitten. I have found that the Be Still exercise does help dogs to release when they are deep in a prey bite fixation. Be Still used alone won’t help the dog to learn the out, but it may help to get the dog into a state of mind where other training techniques can be used.

Where I have used the Be Still exercise with seeming miraculous results has been with phobias and fear behaviors. Once a dog becomes convinced something is to be feared, it is hard to change their mind. Of course, we try to pick working dogs that are not prone to fear or avoidance, but at times unfortunate experiences occur and dogs learn to be afraid of things they shouldn’t be afraid of. If a handler can apply the Be Still technique early in the dog’s learning, or even perhaps later, often the fear and avoidance behavior can be instantly “unlearned.”

I can give two examples: In one, I found that my young female German Shepherd, who is normally unaffected by the environment, had troubles with shiny linoleum floors. It took awhile to recognize the problem because it wasn’t so much that the floor was slippery but that the floor had shine when the sun was shining outside. On dark days, I didn’t see the problem, but it would suddenly re-appear later on sunny days. We were doing detector work in a building and she would walk like she was on egg shells on the sunny days and suddenly became reluctant to work. Using food to lure her on the floor helped a little, but she would not break out of the fear state long enough to have a lasting effect.



Since I had learned to use the Be Still exercise and had seen Brenda bring shelter dogs out of a fear state and was told by Brenda it could be used for this, I used it on my female GSD. I did the exercise for about 3 minutes the first time until she relaxed while standing on the problem floor. This would indicate that the dog had been desensitized to simply standing on the floor

Then, having seen Brenda do something similar at the seminar, I deliberately pulled my dog around on the floor until she was up on her toenails and acting fearful again. The dragging around added more stress to the situation and brought her back into a fearful or hindbrain state. I did the Be Still again until she relaxed. After she relaxed, I took a deep breath myself, let her go and threw food treats all around the floor as she chased after the treats and snapped them up. Later I used a toy she could chase. I have not seen the floor problem with her since. Since I don't go in all sorts of buildings regularly, the problem may crop up in a different building, but it appears to be fixed in that building, at least.

I saw a similar problem when I was training some civilian dogs in an upstairs loft with unfinished floors and walls. There was a gap between the plywood floor and the outside walls about a foot in width. When the dogs got near the hole, they suddenly became phobic and wouldn't go near the hole or heel with their handlers within 10 feet of the hole. Attempts to lure or pull the dog near the hole just made the phobia worse. Trying the Be Still exercise, we took the dogs close enough to the hole so that they were tense and pulling back and applied the technique. When the dogs were fully relaxed under the technique, the handler let go of the dog. Both dogs walked up to the hole, sniffed it and never looked back. The hole was never an issue for either after that.

Pressing the Reset Button

It helps to think of the Be Still exercise as pressing the "reset" button on a piece of machinery. Using and completing (meaning using it until the dog relaxes) the exercise resets the dog from its fear state back into a normal, thinking state of mind. From that point on, it is up to the handler or trainer to decide how to teach the dog.

The dog has to be in the fearful state for it to work, otherwise the exercise doesn't "reset" or desensitize anything. I would use it on the edge of the fear first because a large dog might be hard to control if it is in a real panic, then get closer to the fearful situation again to desensitize more of it. While traditional training works to desensitize very slowly in small amounts, this exercise seems to work relatively quickly even when the dog is in a deep fear state.

Why or how does it work? Brenda couldn't really explain why or how it works, just that it does. It may be that the dog can't concentrate on two things at once, and the fear state and massage or "pressure" of the exercise can't exist in the dog's mind at the same time, so the pressure of the exercise wins out. Or perhaps it just releases enough of the dog's stress so that the dog can think and learn again.

Practice the Exercise Before You Need It

Handlers should practice the exercise before they need it because practice gets the dog and handler accustomed to the exercise. As the handler practices it, the dog will relax quicker and quicker until just taking hold of the dog and starting to massage will relax the dog. It is also an extremely valuable exercise to teach the dog to accept handling for grooming and health issues. If the dog has areas where the handler senses resistance to touch, these areas should be massaged and worked into during the Be Still exercise. A complete description of how to do this is given in Brenda Aloff's book, [Get Connected with Your Dog](#).

On page 8, see the "be still" exercise...

The “Be Still” Exercise

The following is a direct quote from Brenda Aloff's book, Get Connected with Your Dog:

“This is the first *desensitizing* exercise in this protocol. This is the exercise you will revert to again and again as you do the other exercises. In addition to the many other benefits of this exercise (refer to the table in *The Get Connected Protocol: Improve the Relationship by using Bodywork & Space: Encouraging Teamwork and Developing Trust & Respect* on Page 197), it is also used as a way to signal that an approximation has ended and this is the “rest period” before we begin another approximation.

- Hold our dog's collar with one hand.
- With your other hand rub our dog all over.
- Use a FLAT HAND and a FIRM Touch.
- Begin with a benign area, easily accepted by most dogs, such as the rib cage and back.

DO NOT stop the “rubbing the dog all over thing” until TWO things happen:

The dog's feet **STOP MOVING**.

In addition, *once the feet are still*, at least ONE of the following must ALSO be present:

the dog licks his lips

blinks his eyes

takes a deeper breath

or his feet are still for a count of five.

- A short and quiet Marker such as “Yes” is okay at this point if you like, but the more silent you are the better it is. Certainly do not indulge yourself in a lot of chatter. Really, all the chit chat is all about you. Shut up! Another valid reason for silence is that the majority of handlers do not Mark the behavior at the right moment, or drag the Marker out too long by saying, “Yes, good girl,” or something similar. A “click” at this point makes many dogs look for a treat, which can really disrupt the flow of this work. Many dogs have been taught that “good” or “yes” is an End Working Cue. If this is the case with your dog it will really interrupt the flow of the behavior.

- Stand up, as you have been bending over the dog to rub his body. Count to 2.
- Begin another trial (repetition of the exercise) using well-tolerated areas of the dog's body.
- Eventually you should be able to rub the dog's legs, face, pick up the feet, etc. There should be no No Go areas.

With a highly aroused or dog who dislikes being controlled in any way, at first the still feet may be fleeting, and you need ask only for a couple of seconds as long as you see one of the other observable signals, such as lip licking. These indicate that the dog is “trying” to come from Hindbrain to Frontbrain. Once the dog's feet are still and a Frontbrain signal criterion has been exhibited; **STOP** rubbing the dog **IMMEDIATELY**, by lifting your hand off the dog.”

This is only a basic description of the exercise. The key is to STOP rubbing when the dog releases stress. A stress release is signaled by a lick lip (most common), by a big sigh or long breath, by a relaxing of muscles and by other signals. A yawn or shake off where the dog shakes are signals of a deeper stress release and often signal when the exercise can stop for good. The “release of pressure” (rubbing) when the dog releases stress is what teaches the dog that releasing stress by relaxing and being calm is a good thing. I found that it really helps to have a coach standing off to one side the first few times a handler does this with a dog to see the signals and to remind the handler to stop rubbing. The lip lick is often quick and hard to see from above the dog without practice. To resolve fear issues, this exercise should be done until the dog relaxes completely.

Try the exercise and see what it can do for you. I suspect that it has a number of uses that are not mentioned in the book. The full reference for Brenda's book is:

Aloff, Brenda. *Get Connected With Your Dog: Emphasizing the Relationship While Training Your Dog*. 2007. 396 pages. Available from Dogwise, 701B Poplar, Box 2778, Wenatchee, WA 98807-2778, Orders at 1-800-776-2665 or www.dogwise.com.

Check us out online at www.mesard.org