

# Dog Talk

The official *unofficial* newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

February 2010

Volume 13 / Number 1

## Haiti Tribute Issue

This issue is dedicated to the men, women and children that lost their lives in the terrible earthquake in Haiti. I would also like to recognize the men, women and search dogs from the FEMA Urban Search & Rescue teams that made us all proud- *Editor*

### VA-TF1

Sonja Heritage & Czaro  
Elizabeth Kreitler & Racker  
Chris Holleyman & Petzl  
Chris Holmes & Cazo  
Tim Dingess & Lago  
Ron Sanders & Tomo  
Teresa MacPherson & Banks



### VA-TF2

Lisa Berry & Gabe  
Lori Tocke & Winn  
Karen Meadows & Ace  
Jennifer McKay & Rogue



### FL-TF1

Kristian Labrada & Bella  
Steve Driscoll & Blaze  
Frank Garcia & Vegas  
Scott Mullin & Striker  
PJ Parker & Chase  
Greg Strickland & Indy  
Hilda Wood & Flash



### FL-TF2

Julie Padelford & Dakota & Riot  
Sylvia Arango & Brian & Radar  
Elizabeth Kienzle & Josh  
Brian Smithey & Powder & Chief  
Roger Picard & Cinder & Party Girl



### NY-TF1

Scott Mateyaschyk & Aragon  
Anthony Compitello & Ceasar  
Anthony Jacobs & Storm  
Chris Bonomo & Hunter



### CA-TF2

Billy Monahan & Hunter  
Gary Durian & Baxter  
Jason Vasquez & Maverick  
Jazmine Segura & Caddilac  
Ron Horetski & Pearl  
Ron Weckbacher & Dawson



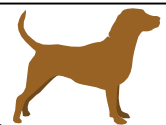
Dog Talk



VA-TF1



VA-TF2

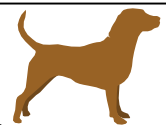


**FL-TF1**



*Courtesy of Miami Dade Fire Rescue*

**FL-TF2**



CA-TF2



***I had the chance to talk with Steve Driscoll from FL-TF1 following their 11 day deployment to Haiti. He was kind enough to answer my questions regarding his thoughts on the mission. Thanks to Steve and Blaze:***

***How many people did your team save?***

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue FL-TF1 had 11 saves over 11 days. This was by far the most saves a team has had in a time period of less than 2 weeks. These lives were saved by searches conducted by our Task Force Members, Canine Teams, and Technical Search Specialist.

***Were the conditions tough for the dogs?***

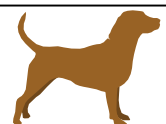
Hot, dusty, and a very unstable environment made it extremely difficult for our Canines on a daily basis. Additionally, a very strong odor of human remains made it even more challenging. I believe the reason all of the Canine Teams fared so well was the realistic training we all participate in while at home. This continuous preparatory training paid off and made all of the countless hours worth it with just one save let alone eleven that the team had. As for the Human Remains odor that our Canines had to deal with on such a large scale, Teresa MacPherson stated it well when she compared it to background "white noise" that the dogs just had to eliminate.

***How did you feel when your dog had a live find?***

I think everyone that reads this and has a search dog knows how I felt. It is indescribable. It validates everything you have trained and prepared for over the years. I have been a Firefighter/Paramedic for 19 years and have had my fair share of saves while on the job. But I will always remember this deployment and our teams contribution as one of the highlights of my career. I only hope that all handlers have the opportunity to have that same feeling at least once in their career.

***Was decon a problem?***

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue FL-TF1 set up a very thorough Decontamination system for both the Task Force personnel and Canine alike. Once this DECON system was in place, all teams that were deployed used this station everyday.



### ***Were the dogs utilized enough?***

I can't speak for all the US teams but for FL-TF1 the answer was yes. I started as a Handler in 1998 when Canine Teams were not always at the same level of training and capabilities. Since then, there has definitely been a positive change towards standardization of training and certification for the National Program. With this has come confidence in our Canine teams.

As for FL-TF1, each and every member on this deployment believes in our Canines which was evident by our utilization. Even before we arrived in Haiti we knew of the commitment our Task Force has in our Canine Program. As it relates to this deployment, Not only did our Program Manager roster the 4 Canine Teams under the Search component but also added 3 additional Canine Teams that are cross trained and rostered in the support function to give FL-TF1 the capability of 7 fully certified teams at the ready. And all 7 were called upon and worked on a daily basis which increased our likelihood of saving as many people as possible.

### ***How was your teams morale?***

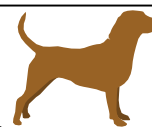
I think even with all the sadness, moral was very high because of all of the saves each and every team was making. We would either find another person, or hear of another team that just did and you knew there was still hope. I think our team was focusing on the positive impact we were making and the good that we were doing. I for one was very proud to be a part of such an organized effort.

### ***How did this disaster rank with previous disasters that you have been on?***

I thought I had seen it all but I was wrong. All disaster are horrific for their own reasons but this was the worst that I have ever seen. The human tragedy, suffering, and long-term implication are hard to fathom. I only hope that Haiti can recover from such a tragedy. They all need our thoughts, prayers and support for a better future. And to that end, if the people reading this have not yet contributed in one way or another, please do so now. This is the way we all can be there to help the Haiti people in one way or another.

### ***What were the details of the 2 year old rescue?***

It was exactly how the program is suppose to work. A true team effort. There was 13 Firefighters on our recon team. It was day 6. We were working in a depressed/devastated area. These residences were all connected to each other laterally and one on top of each other on the side of a mountain. It was a huge area of devastation. We were following a lead on top of the mountain which turned out to be a deceased person. This was an isolated area which I took advantage of. Blaze hadn't had a find since day 1. Thus no rewards for 5 days. There was so many people watching everywhere you went that you couldnt stage a rescue. I utilized the Haitian that we were following to that lead, and explained to him the importance of keeping the dogs motivated. He was eager to help so we hid him next to HR. I sent Blaze and he alerted and was rewarded without any Haitians seeing it. We then were making our way down the mountainside. The team had stopped to regroup and one of the team members thought he had heard a knocking. Later we determined that this couldn't have been the case. However, thank God he had stopped and heard something because it was enough to send my dog. We had an odd number of dogs on our team so Blaze was working alone that day. There was too large of an area to run your dog on the entire community. With the heat and being day 6 we were working more off of leads from the Haitians. There was no lead at that time. I wouldn't have sent Blaze to that area without the Firefighters input. I sent Blaze on the search of the entire vicinity he ended up down below me on the mountainside out of sight and then started alerting very strongly with intent. It was difficult to gain access to Blaze but I finally made it down to him. While this was going on our team down below was locating and obtaining info from the mother and locals. The mother had arrived before we got the baby out and our medical specialist said she was singing and praying. I found him barking straight into a concrete wall. I called on the radio our team leader JRod and notified him that He needed to make his way down to our location. When he arrived I advised him where to breach. Gave Blaze a well deserved reward, and the entire team went to work. Our search tech was preparing the search cam while the Rescue specialist were breaching a small hole



in the wall. They completed their task and shined a flashlight into the hole and there was baby Carla, right where Blaze had alerted. They then were working very carefully to make the hole big enough to extract the baby. They pulled the baby out and immediately, transferred her to our Medical specialist and team Doc. There was no obvious signs of trauma, however she was dehydrated. They used an old ironing board to immobilize her and started a IV line. We then carefully passed her out of the area and made our way down the mountain to our team van. They transported her to a field hospital and she was released to her parents the next day. It was very cool seeing the whole recon group utilized. We all were emotional and thats a rescue I will never forget

**Photos from on the ground in Haiti...**

Scott and Striker

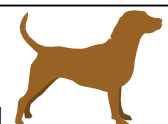


PJ and Chase go first

*Photos Courtesy of Miami Dade Fire Rescue*



The 3 y/o girl that K9 Chase & K9 Striker PJ Parker and my dog helped to find after she had been buried 5 days next to her dead grandmother and 2 dead aunts. The dogs pinpointed the exact spot on the collapse in less then a minute each. PJ ended up having to go down the hole we made because the little girl was afraid of the men and only after we lowered PJ by her ankles and she said baby in French would the little girl raise her arms up to PJ so she could pull her to the surface. What a great day for both the K9's and the team! – Scott Mullin





## Information for vets post-deployment...

### Post-Deployment Considerations for Working Dogs:

The environment of Haiti presents challenges that the working dogs do not commonly face in their home environments, or that their normal medical care providers may be aware of.

Be sure to advise your veterinarian that your dog has been out of the country and may have been exposed to pathogens other than what they are used to encountering clinically. Do not hesitate to contact CDC or other resources for assistance.

Following is a list of considerations to observe for or discuss with your veterinarians when you return home:

**Parasites:** *Toxascaris* and *Ancylostoma* are common parasites in Haiti. While also common in the U.S., it is recommended that you consult your veterinarian regarding treatment at a prescribed period after leaving Haiti.

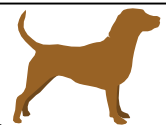
**Cutaneous Anthrax:** Anthrax is endemic in the soil of Haiti and occurs commonly in the people. The spores enter through wounds and produce a black lesion. Easily treated with antibiotics, it could be easily missed by a stateside veterinarian as the disease has been basically eliminated in the U.S. Heavy hair coats and pigmentation of the canine may make this somewhat more difficult to diagnosis. Incubation is approximately 8 days, and the lesion will appear as a black area. While antibiotics will have little effect on the initial lesion, they are necessary to prevent the spread of the bacillus.

**H1N1** has been prevalent in Haiti. While the incidence is low, it does occur in canines and should be considered with respiratory conditions.

**Leptospirosis** is endemic and can be found commonly in water sources in Haiti. While vaccination is part of the typical distemper combination, it is a killed fraction and therefore neither confers a guaranteed protection or protection that lasts a year or more until the animal's next vaccination.

Your close association with your dog means that you are more likely to notice changes in their demeanor. While that does not mean they are ill, be aware that they have been exposed to pathogens other than their normal and should be checked if changes continue.

Garry G. Goemann, DVM, MPH  
National Veterinary Response Team Commander  
HHS/ASPR/OPEO





## **And back to “normal” DogTalk...**

### **THOUSANDS OF SERVICE DOGS TO RECEIVE FREE SIGHT SAVING EYE EXAMS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA**

**ACVO®/Merial® National Service Dog Eye Exam Event brings together veterinary ophthalmologists and thousands of service dogs for free exams. Registration begins April 1st for May 2010 event.**

#### **HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE 2010 EVENT:**

To qualify, dogs must be active “working dogs” that were certified by a formal training program or organization or currently enrolled in a formal training program. The certifying organization could be national, regional or local in nature. Specific service groups are listed on the website at [www.ACVOeyeexam.org](http://www.ACVOeyeexam.org)

**Owners/agents for the dog(s) must FIRST register the animal via an online registration form beginning April 1, at [www.ACVOeyeexam.org](http://www.ACVOeyeexam.org) Registration ends May 16th.** Once registered online, the owner/agent can locate a participating ophthalmologist in their area and contact that doctor to schedule an appointment, during the month of May. Appointment dates and times may vary depending on the facility and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

## **Upcoming Conference...**

Penn Vet Working Dog Center Presents...

***“Selecting working dogs for the next century. Scientific advances and man's best friend”***

Philadelphia Mar 12-15, 2010. More information and the link for registration can be found at [www.PennVetWDC.org](http://www.PennVetWDC.org)

We are inviting short presentations (abstracts) from attendees - these will be 5 minute oral presentations presenting either data or experience from attendees relevant to genetics, behavior or health issues in the working dogs.



# Canine Stats 2009

## Pass Rates

- 2003=49%
- 2004=54%
- 2005=58%
- 2006=63%
- 2007=66%
- 2008=73%
- 2009=74%

\*Since new certification process (Jan 07 thru Dec 09)=72%

## Number of Teams tested

2006=118 (76 passed)  
 2007=119 (79 passed)  
 2008=120 (88 passed)  
 2009=140 (104 passed)

## Attrition

- 2008 - .88%
- 2009 - (11.8%)

## Redundancy

- 2008 – 14.5%
- 2009 – 12.5%

## Number of Certified Teams/Actual Resources

Dec 2006 – 166 (T-1)  
 Dec 2007 – 201/173  
 Dec 2008 – 228/195  
 Dec 2009 – 248/217

## Certified Teams By Task Force December 2008 vs. December 2009

	Task Force	Dec-08		Dec-09	
		Certified Teams	Actual Resources	Certified Teams	Actual Resources
1	AZ-TF1	9	5	13	8
2	CA-TF1	4	4	7	6
3	CA-TF2	7	7	9	8
4	CA-TF3	7	7	6	6
5	CA-TF4	10	10	12	11
6	CA-TF5	7	7	7	7
7	CA-TF6	11	8	12	9
8	CA-TF7	5	4	7	7
9	CA-TF8	5	4	4	4
10	CO-TF1	9	6	6	5
11	FL-TF1	10	7	11	9
12	FL-TF2	12	10	17	13
13	IN-TF1	11	9	11	8
14	MA-TF1	9	8	9	8
15	MD-TF1	9	9	12	12
16	MO-TF1	5	5	7	7
17	NE-TF1	4	4	4	4
18	NM-TF1	5	4	5	5
19	NV-TF1	9	6	11	8
20	NY-TF1	6	6	8	8
21	OH-TF1	5	5	7	7
22	PA-TF1	10	8	8	7
23	TN-TF1	14	12	14	12
24	TX-TF1	12	12	12	11
25	UT-TF1	6	6	7	7
26	VA-TF1	11	8	8	7
27	VA-TF2	7	6	7	6
28	WA-TF1	9	8	7	7
<b>Totals:</b>		<b>228</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>217</b>

**Certified Teams increased by 8.8% and Actual Resources increased by 11.3% from December 2008 to December 2009.**

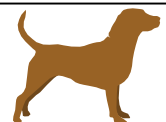


# ☆☆☆☆ Kudos to.....☆☆☆☆

DOGTALK is pleased to announce that the following Canine Search Teams have recently gained certification (or re-certification) as FEMA US&R Canine Search Specialists:

## ☆ Davie, FL - Dec 2009

Handler	Canine	Task Force
Sylvia Arango	Brian	FL-TF2
Joe Berres	Bailey	FL-TF2
V Hazelbaker	Cabela	FL-TF2
Julie Padelford	Dakota	FL-TF2
Brian Smithy	Doak	FL-TF2
Jen Brown	Phanessa	MD-TF1
Shawn Lundstedt	Ace	FL-TF1
Ron Sanders	Tomo	VA-TF1
Faith Clark	Chance	NM-TF1
Alvaro Renteria	Annie	FL-TF1
Frank Garcia	Vegas	FL-TF1
N Bogenschutz	Bandit	UT-TF1
David Mau	Lucy	UT-TF1

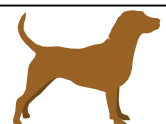


## Sun Valley, CA - Dec 2009

Handler	Canine	Task Force
Ron Weckbacher	Dawson	CA-TF7
Katrina Kurth	Leo	CA-TF7
Dave Stoddard	Rowdy	CA-TF7
Ron Cima	Ace	CA-TF7
Shani Richeson	Annie	CA-TF7
Tim Robertson	Speaker	CA-TF7
Teresa Ortenburger	Remi	CA-TF7
Jeff Ivy	Jakers	CA-TF7
John Dean	Ben	AZ-TF1
Bryan Morgan	BlackJack	NV-TF1
John Bernstein	Cassie	NV-TF1
James Shawn Kelly	Trooper	AZ-TF1
Adam Skiver	Desoto	AZ-TF1
Quincy Vidauri	Libby Oliver	WA-TF1
Robyn Krumwiede	Mac	AZ-TF1



Please forward any news, scheduled events, letters to the editor, or other info you want disseminated via **DOGTALK**, the underground canine newsletter to Anne McCurdy: [amccurdy@clarian.org](mailto:amccurdy@clarian.org)



## Reflections on...

Submitted by Teresa McPherson

# Heidi, Ron and Ondo

After working several GSDs in search-and-rescue Heidi Yamaguchi began searching for the once-in-a-lifetime disaster partner. She found him in Ondo. Unfortunately, she ran out of time before she could finish him. Before she passed away, she began training Ron to take her place as Ondo's handler. Ron did not know this at the beginning, but willingly learned the Japanese commands Heidi had taught Ondo. While Heidi was in the hospital in June of 2003, Ron told her that Ondo had passed his Type II test. Heidi died confident that Ondo would be her first advanced-certified FEMA disaster dog, in the hands of Ron. Ron and Ondo certified Type I a few months after Heidi passed away and recertified twice afterwards, their last in Ohio this past June. Their most recent deployment was the Haiti school collapse November, 2008. Ondo was an energetic, high-drive Mal, but the biggest "nudge" (Heidi's word) when around people - "I'm Ondo, gotta luv me!" Ron lost Ondo in December due to complications from surgery from a bowel obstruction. His Fire Dept was able to transport him through the record-snowfall to the emergency vet where he was able to say good-bye to his partner. This is the riveting accounting of Ron's and Heidi's and Ondo's first Type I certification, thanks to Elaine Sawtell



*Indiana Type I test, October 11, 2003 I knew She would be watching. When they walked up to our site - the Mine Shaft, the limited access pile - I felt her presence. Even the interview was different. Ondo never took his eyes off Rory as he gave the scenario. Oh, we know it was Rory's water bottle that had his attention - or was it? Then the search started. Up and out of sight he went, never looking back, never hesitating. Just like She taught him. He found the first victim. We all watched as Ron climbed the ridge to the back side of the pile. He marked the alert, cared for his dog, gave follow-up recommendations. Just like She taught him. Then Ondo was off again. Over the ridge, through the valley, over another ridge and into the second valley. This time it was different. It was just Ondo and I and the victim - a live person buried under feet and tons of car and concrete; unresponsive, with no hope for rescue except a dog with a heart for search. Soon Pat, my fellow evaluator, topped the ridge. But for a moment it was just the three of us. And She was watching. Ondo caught the scent. He tried to penetrate to the victim and got a nasty gash on his ear. No yelp, no quitting; he was focused on his job. Just like She taught him. When the day was over, VATF-1 had a new Type I team, Ron Sanders and Ondo. And she was there. Ondo may have been Heidi's once-in-a-lifetime dog. I don't know. I know she loved him. She chose Ron for him. She taught them both Japanese. She taught them to be a team. She taught them the importance of doing it right. Just like she taught us. Submitted by Elaine Sawtell, Lead Evaluator*

