



Newsletter of the NZ  
USAR Search Dog  
Association

# PawPrint

## Up Coming Events

22-23 January  
Central Regional Training  
Weekend

19-20 February  
Northern Regional Training  
Weekend

11-13 March  
National Training  
Weekend  
Christchurch



## Christmas issue

It is that time of year when we reflect on the people who have contributed to making the SDA a great organisation this year. Call it brickbats and bouquets if you like, no brickbats but lots of bouquets.

The first and biggest amount of thanks goes to Brendon Irwin, who has so ably led the SDA over the last 4 years as President. Brendon has recently resigned; there will be a tribute to him later in this Pawprint. Tim Drennan has taken over as President and we welcome him.

Secondly, a huge thanks to Brenda Woolley who as National Trainer has instructed and inspired handlers around the country. It is great to see individuals progressing towards their goal of being Operational handlers.

Thirdly, thanks go to Graham Joseph as Treasurer he keeps the Association's money wisely invested and makes payments on a day to day basis.

The SDA has also been well served by the 2010 Management Committee, Brenda Woolley, Graham Joseph, Lois Blackmore, Dave Brunson, Tim Drennan, Jim Stuart-Black, and as of November, Kirsti Kay.

Linda has stepped down at the last election and we thank her for all she has

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done on the SDA Committee over the last 2 years, Linda will still continue on as a civilian assessor.

Operational Assessments wouldn't be a possibility without the help of Paul George and Christopher Best as Police assessors and Jenny Waters as our Vet.

Thanks also go to Janelle Mackie for her work as Web Mistress and her work on a range of key documents and activities for the association.

In the regional areas we are grateful for the work of Regional Training Coordinators. In the Northern Region Nikki Smith, we thank her for all the work she has done, she has been replaced by Kirsti Kay, in Central Lois Blackmore and Southern Janelle Mackie and Linda Pike.

The SDA is a small organisation and thanks go to all the members for their support, I know that I have personally arm twisted many of you for articles for Pawprint.

I wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and fun times with family and your four legged friends.

Fay Deam  
SDA Coordinator

[www.usardogs.org.nz](http://www.usardogs.org.nz)

## Auckland Regional Training September 25-26

Regional Training Camp was held in Auckland on 25-26th September, 2010. We had a good number of handlers attending this year, seven in all. This meant we were able to get a fair amount of training into a short action-packed weekend. On the Saturday we all met at the Auckland International Airport Rubble Site. We started out with bark boxes, just to get the dogs all rearing to go, and then set up some directionals for progress checks. Around



mid-morning we set up training scenarios on the massive slabs of rubble and sent the dogs up and over. As the day was getting warmer it seemed to take a bit of a toll on the energy levels of some of the dogs getting over the rubble. However, over-all the dogs did really well and had a great day.

We also racked Brenda's brain for scenario search plans. Steve and Alana did an awesome job in preparing the meals for the day along with being great subjects.

On the Sunday morning we kicked off the training at Otahuhu Fire Station where we continued progress checks on the agility gear, heel work, down stays, and emergency drop. After all the dogs had completed the checks we headed to a vacant building in Takanini. This building was a brand new site to the search dogs; a perfect place to put some fun training and a little bit of testing together to see where the dogs were at. There were three scenarios

set up in the building, the first one being to walk the dog on lead to a small area of rooms where the handler was not allowed to enter other than putting the dog over the barricade and send it in to search. All subjects had toys with them and rewarded the dogs with a good play. The second scenario was also another small area with a similar set up and Sasha had no problems finding the subject.

The third scenario took us to the back part of the warehouse with a start point from which the handler was not to move. To the left of this point was a small self-contained office space and to the right of the start point was an area that was about 20 sq. meters which the dogs were sent over to cover. My search plan was to send Sasha to the right of my start point and get her to clear the area that had bits of tubing and various other parts stored in the warehouse. She worked down the wall to the back boundary and then came back up through the area where she showed no interest until she came towards the office. At this stage her body language changed and she alerted once, more out of frustration that she wasn't able to get into the office where the subject was located. I then got her to work alongside the wall where she was able to pick up a stronger scent from the subject. She then bolted through the wall into the subject and happily received her reward.

By the time all handlers did these three scenarios the day was pretty much over. The weekend seemed to run smoothly and there were some good training ideas passed around on how to improve techniques. It also helped having great weather which was a first for Auckland training camps.

Sara Rad  
Operational Handler - Auckland

## Operational Assessment

Operational Handler Assessment – October 2010

I nervously packed my bag checking, re-checking and checking once more, just to make sure I had everything I may need. In hindsight I probably could have left ½ the stuff I took at home. I was trying to convince myself that I wasn't nervous and I was just heading to Christchurch for a normal training weekend. YEAH RIGHT! Tommy and I had been working towards this weekend for a year. I knew he was ready it

was the 'dope on the rope' that I was worried about.

Once I had landed in Christchurch I realised that it was now too late to worry about what I had forgotten and surprisingly I began to relax a little. Until Saturday morning that was!

I was so pleased to have pulled #1 meaning that I got to go 1<sup>st</sup> therefore getting the assessment over and done. So there we were at the bottom of the pile and it was finally time to send Tom off. He seemed to

be firing and was barking continually which is always a good sign. When I let him off he immediately bounced up the rubble ready to find someone. At this point I sighed a HUGE sigh of relief. From past experience I knew that if Tommy headed straight up the pile at top speed, he was on top form and would work well.

Not long after sending him off, I heard him alerting so up the pile I went to reward him and now the hard mind work begins. I felt as if we had covered the pile at least 5 times but still I kept thinking what if we missed someone. At one point he looked at me as if to say 'Hey lady, there are only 2 people up here, I have found them both, I am not sure what more you want from me!' this quiet unmistakable look made me realise that if I did not call the search then he would either leave the pile without me or would false alert. I reluctantly called the search after 8min and left the pile praying that we had found everyone.

Of course Brenda and Paul weren't very helpful as both had total poker faces. EEEEEK! Had I just blown my chance? Oh well, too late if I had. We headed down to see Jenny and poor Tommy just stood there whilst I squirted saline up his nose. Personally I would bash someone if they tried to do that to me, but Tom just stood

there as if this was an everyday occurrence. Although I did not know if we had passed I was very pleased with how he had worked.

Time dragged on as I waited for the other teams to finish. As they were on the pile for longer than us I started doubting that we had found everyone. Eventually as each handler came back it became clear that either there were only 2 subjects or we had all failed.

After what felt like a very long lunch break, I was called into the 'office' (Paul's hire car) and was congratulated. Man was I pleased and a little stunned to tell the truth. After a year of training for this day, it was finally here and we were now operational, what a surreal feeling!!!!

As usual I would like to say thanks to the Christchurch team, for holding yet another fantastically organised and enjoyable weekend.

For those coming up for an assessment the only bit of advice I can give is

**TRUST YOUR DOG!**

Kirsti Kay  
Operational Handler - Auckland



## Results

Handler	Canine	City	Certification Date	Certification Level
Linda Pike	Buk	Christchurch	16 Oct-2010	Advanced Operational
Linda Pike	Que	Christchurch	17 Oct 2010	Advanced Operational (reassessment)
Craig Cuthbertson	Lewis	Christchurch	16 Oct 2010	Operational
Kirsti Kay	Tommy	Auckland	16 Oct 2010	Operational

# Operational Vet Checks-Irrigation

What's All This Irrigation About?

*Imagine you're crawling through a construction site, with clouds of concrete dust blowing around, and you're trying to find someone. No goggles, no respirator. Your eyes are full of dust and you can barely open them. Your nose is blocked, you can hardly breathe, and for some bizarre reason you are relying on your sense of smell to find this person.*

*Tough, isn't it?*

*Luckily, you and your mate have prepared for this. You've learnt to sit calmly (and it isn't easy) while your buddy rinses the dust out of your eyes, and flushes out your nose so it works again.*

Irrigation has two purposes: to ensure the welfare of the search canine, and to keep the dog operational under difficult conditions. It isn't an evil trap thought up by Assessors to stress the handlers out; it's a very necessary part of looking after your dog. Think of it in the same category as feeding, watering and toileting – routine.

Nasal irrigation entails squirting a steady stream of saline up each nostril, to flush out dust and contaminants. To be effective, you need to use a reasonable volume, not just a few drops. Hold the nose up slightly and direct the nozzle of the vial towards the inner side of the nostril. The fluid will either be sneezed out again or will run down the back of the throat and be swallowed. Let the head go to allow this after each side is irrigated



To flush the eyes, point the head upwards slightly, and use the hand on top of the head to hold the saline. Open the eyelids with your finger tips and squirt a steady stream of fluid across the eye. Again, remember you are trying to flush dust and foreign bodies *out*, not putting drops *in*.

Dogs (like most non-human animals) have a third eyelid, which acts like a windscreen wiper when the dog blinks. A lot of material will collect between this and the lower eyelid, so make a point of flushing this area. You can easily make the third eyelid come across by putting gentle pressure on the eyeball through the top lid (this is painless and causes no harm) while pulling down the lower lid.

How you train your dog to be compliant while you are doing the irrigation is up to you. Follow basic training principles, take it in small steps, use food rewards if appropriate and keep it fun. It is a trust issue, so try and avoid turning it into a battle of wills. It is no harder than training your dog to walk up a ladder. Talk to other handlers and trainers about their techniques and tips.

Above all, do not turn up at an evaluation without training and hope to wing it. You could be jeopardising all the hard work you have put into other areas. Even if you pass, your dog will be very unhappy about the whole unexpected experience, and you may never be able to do it again.

Always remember that irrigating the eyes and nose is for your dog's benefit.

Jenny Waters  
Veterinarian

# Operational Handlers Weekend

4-5 December 2010

Well it was the last training event of the year, a long year for most with a lot of the handlers training new dogs and getting interrupted with earthquakes. This has refocused a number of us to the bigger picture, and the reason why we all train our dogs. As usual the Christchurch section had their training hats on, or I know something you don't know for the local handlers, which always keep the air of mystery about what's going on with a few white lies to throw you off the scent, well that's why we have the Dogs.

The week before an email was sent with direction of where to meet. Then the Friday text message comes. Yes Janelle has a new building OOOooooo \*\*\*\*.

Friday night started off with building searches at the old Christchurch hospital nurses quarters. For lucky Kirsti it was straight from the airport to the old Christchurch City Council building.

Tim and Craig were the first back to Woolston USAR base to get their directions from Janelle on what was going to be happening for the rest of the night. Of course a feed came first. It started with Pasta then the BBQ was on the hit list.

Craig was off to help with the tunnel exercise with Ben while the tent went up and Tim and Graham went for food. Then it was over to Linda and Sara for the cooking. As usual everybody chipped in, which is great to see.

Once we all had a good feed it was off to Wigram Airbase for most of us to set up lights for a night search while Brenda and Sara had their night search in the old Hospital building. A great start to the weekend that finished at around 2 am.

Saturday morning started with a trip back to Wigram, now in a different light for a two person search. Then it was straight onto the Airport site and a long rubble pile and open area search run by Brenda and Ben. Yip more time for more food before heading off to Issac's and more good long searches. Don't know how people get lost behind xmas trees during training. Nice touch Ben, for Xmas.

The panda eye look was worked on during the day and a number of people were sporting it at the end of day in the pub.

Well that was it for the day and then it was back to USAR base for a cup of tea and a good shower.

Sunday morning came around after finally getting to sleep after Craig and Tim helped empty the USAR truck after its return from Pike River.



Once the USAR K9 Treasurer was released, after being locked in the base during his moment alone, after setting the alarm off! Then it was time to head off to Pound Road to look at what can cause trouble in search work. It was Linda's turn. All Linda could say to me on Saturday that there were major distractions. She was right; there were cockerels and a number of really smelly items. Then a great subject who was right at the end of the search, to complete the day.

I think I can talk for all the operational handlers old and new that it was a great weekend for all involved. This was a great chance to extend our own training and learn new lessons.

Thanks to Brenda, Janelle, Ben and Linda for all their help in setting up the locations.

Craig Cuthbertson  
Operational Handler - Christchurch

## Reflections on Brendon Irwin's Time as President

When Brendon was elected to the position of President in July 2007, he wasn't too sure about what he had gotten himself in for. He was however a fast learner, and over that first year he came up to speed with the many aspects of the role.

This was of course a time of significant development of the USAR canine search arrangements and capability – a 'growth spurt', you could say. Previous work by Matt Dodd and John Evans to develop the concept of 'centres of excellence' led on to the establishment of the National Training Programme. This has proven to be a very successful programme that has boosted our capability through a more systematic approach to introducing new handlers, active monitoring of their progress, preparing them for the operational assessments and then continuing to 'stretch' them once operational.

This programme didn't just happen, however. It required a budget and business case, prepared by Janelle Mackie, to establish the financial requirements, and then close interaction with the Fire Service and MCDEM to obtain the significant increase in funding required to implement the National Training Programme, and to create the position of National Trainer that Brenda Woolley now so capably fills.

Brendon was the 'man in the middle' through this period, and put in huge hours interfacing with Jim Stuart-Black, Brenda and Janelle to bring this to fruition at the end of 2008.

He allowed us to persuade him to stay on longer than the original two year time frame as President – this actually required a change to the Constitution, but this was quickly achieved with wide support.

Through his time as President, Brendon was always there at events such as operational assessments and training weekends. He represented the Association very capably at a range of other USAR and non-USAR occasions. He also put a lot of time and effort in communicating with our members and stakeholders, and it is a much more informed membership that has resulted.



Brendon has done an outstanding job as President, leading from the front throughout. The Management Committee (all of us over the past three and a half years) are very grateful for the immense effort that he has put in on our behalf. The great results that have been achieved while he has been at the helm speak volumes for his leadership and vast commitment of time.

Thanks, Brendon!

Dave Brunson  
On behalf of the USAR SDA  
Management Committees  
(2007 to 2010)

## Profile of New President Tim Drennan

I have been training with the Southern Training group since January 2008. I became interested in search dogs after purchasing our first dog Meishka, a Bernese mountain dog. After a quick Google search and a couple of emails to Janelle Mackie I decided that Meishka had the required attributes of a good search dog. I attended a recruitment evening and a dog screening session at the now demolished Christchurch Women's Hospital. After a discussion with both Brenda Woolley and Linda Pike it was decided that Meishka's rather large stature was not ideal for this type of work – she is however still a very much loved family pet!! The next challenge was then to convince my wife that a second dog was required. Our two boys Reuben (9) and Toby (6) didn't need to be asked twice.

Since that day I have had two dogs the first being Enzo a lab cross who was entered into the National Training programme. Unfortunately due to a number of factors – one being his love of chasing birds!! Enzo had to be re-homed. My next dog Cooper was a Spaniel x Border Collie. A number of people would consider this a brilliant cross well suited to being a good search dog. My first doubt was raised when on day two I watched Cooper come running in from outside and at full speed face planted into our glass ranch slider door, it took a good minute for him to realise what had happened. The next training session I went to also did not go well. I was told "don't get too attached". Three weeks later he too was re-homed.

Just as I was beginning to wonder where I was going wrong, I was introduced to Boo! at the Christchurch City Pound. Boo's high play drive and love of her polar fleece toy saw her pass the Operational assessment after being in the National Training programme for less than 6 months!! She is a Lab cross English bull terrier. More information on Boo! is available on the USAR dog website.

When not training dogs or being a taxi driver for our boys busy schedules I work full time at the Christchurch City Council Laboratory and have done so for the past few years. I have also owned and run my own business "Inside Oceans" during this time. I am very aware of the extremely high precedent that has been set the last three and a half years by Brendon Irwin. I am certainly looking forward to the challenges of being the NZ USAR SDA President.

Tim  
Drennan  
President

Meishka, Boo and the new puppy Tilly. Tilly decided she would rather play with her ball rather than pose for a photo.



Wishing you a Merry Christmas