



Newsletter of the NZ  
USAR Search Dog  
Association

# PawPrint

## Upcoming events

Operational and Advanced  
Assessment

17 – 18 October  
Christchurch

Foundational Training  
Weekend

28 – 29 November  
Christchurch

Operational Handler  
Weekend

12 – 13 December  
Christchurch

National Training Weekend

26 – 28 January 2010  
Auckland



## Welcome to Spring

Welcome to your spring issue of Pawprint. I am sure that you will be enjoying both having warmer weather for training and the spring flowers. The Search Dog Association also resembles a spring garden, with a lot happening that is both visible and behind the scenes.

I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to those who recently joined the SDA. There is an article in this issue by SDA President, Brendon Irwin, on the recent Palmerston North recruitment drive and also an article on the Structure of the SDA.

Recent events include the AGM and Auckland Regional Training Weekend at the end of July/beginning of August. This was followed by the September Training Weekend in Christchurch and the Central Training Weekend and Recruitment Drive in Palmerston North.

There is a new section in Pawprint about dogs in the media. This includes links to recent newspaper articles about search dogs in general.

If you get your news through the web you have probably already noticed that the SDA website has been revamped by Janelle Mackie. Even if you haven't looked yet, please bookmark it so you can keep track of upcoming SDA events, handler dog teams, the national training program and lots of interesting news and facts.

The SDA Constitution was updated and approved at the AGM. The most significant changes include extending the Presidential term to up to 4 years and permitting association business to be conducted electronically. The AGM itself had a video link between Auckland and Christchurch and the Management Committee hope to be able to use this medium for their meetings too. You can request the new Constitution through the contact link to Fay on the SDA Website.

Well, I hope you enjoy the rest of your spring issue of Pawprint and take some time to smell the spring flowers.

Fay Deam  
SDA Coordinator

this issue  
vol 21 October 2009

Up Coming Events

The Structure of SDA

Central Area Recruitment

Central Regional Training Weekend

Tsunami Alert

Our Dogs and our people

Auckland Regional Training Weekend

Southern Regional Training Weekend

Travelling with your dog

Dogs in the Media

NZ Search Dogs in Samoa

# The Structure of the Search Dog Association

For those who are new to the association and even the old hands I thought it would be helpful to have an article on the structure of The Association.

The relationship of the association is best thought of as a triangle with the Fire Service, the national trainer and the members being each of the triangle's points. Funding for the association is from the Fire Service and Brenda our National Trainer is responsible for implementing the training programs with the members on behalf of the Fire Service.



Fay Deam as the Association Co-ordinator.

Neither Brenda nor Fay have voting rights.

The Fire Service is represented by Jim Stuart-Black.

The Management Committee is responsible for running the association. This includes setting planning calendars, managing the finances, preparing association documents, and generally attending to the running of the association.

Brenda's role as National Trainer is in implementing the training programs and working with the Fire Service to achieve the association's objectives which in turn provide the NZFS with an operational search dog capability. Brenda is also responsible for directing the Regional Training Co-ordinators (RTC's).

The RTC's arrange the details for local training and ensure the regional training weekends are organized. Aside from this, they provide first point of support for handlers with training issues. Tania Evans and Nikki Smith are the RTC's for the Auckland area; Janelle Mackie and Linda Pike are the RTC's for the Southern Area (Christchurch). Lois Blackmore represents the Central area.

Brenda will be working closely with these people to ensure they are aware of the various equipment needed for the stages of progress checks for dogs and handlers.

The RTC person is the one you should advise when your dog is ready for the next progress check. Although the progress of each dog is up to its handler, the trainers need to know the stage of each team.

## Our dogs & our people

It's with sadness that I announce the early retirement of Murphy one of our newest and most promising dogs to the National Training Programme. Murphy is based in Auckland with his handler Briar English and was recently diagnosed with cancer.

We all wish both Briar and Murphy the best.

Recently Linda Pike lost her mate and long serving search dog Mij.

Mij was a fantastic search dog, with dual certification as operational in both USAR and LandSAR and a 'foundation dog' in both disciplines.

– Brendon Irwin

The Membership as a whole is represented by the Management Committee who is voted by the members. For the 2009/2010 year they are

Brendon Irwin - President,  
Graham Joseph - Treasurer,  
Linda Pike and Lois Blackmore.  
Dave Brunson was co-opted onto the committee due to his extensive knowledge of USAR with a national scope. Dave previously represented the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management on the committee.  
Brenda Woolley is on the committee by right as the National Trainer and

## Central Area Recruitment Weekend

The SDA recently held a recruitment weekend for the central/lower North Island at Palmerston North.

The aim was to engage the interest of firefighters both career staff and volunteers as potential dog handlers with information in the form of a story in Fire & Rescue magazine.

A fair amount of interest was generated not only from the central region but other areas around the country with around 35 registering interest.

The weekend consisted of an information night on the Friday where Janelle Mackie

delivered a professional presentation on the role of USAR dogs to around 15 people. Saturday morning was dog suitability testing at the Higgins rubble site where one dog at this stage has the signs of the traits that we need out of the three tested.

There are a good number of people interested from the Manawatu area and Lois Blackmore already has gently been twisting their arms to become subjects.

Hopefully in the next 12-18 months we may see some fruit from this recruitment.

– Brendon Irwin

## Southern Training Weekend – Christchurch 12-13 September

### A Subject's Perspective

I fastened up my helmet and scampered across the wood pile with a walkie-talkie in my hand and a smile on my dial. While we waited for the dogs we chatted on the radios about what colour spider's blood is, I thought it was green.

There were 5 dogs that came looking for me. The first one stole the tug-toy right out of my hands when we got to the 5th dog it got impatient and jumped into my hole to get the toy. There wasn't much room! My name is Andy and I am 11 years old. It was fun hiding for the dogs.

– Andy Deam

## Central Training Weekend –Palmerston North

On Sun 27th we were at Longburn for a days training. Predictably, Palmerston's weather was very unpredictable, didn't matter as we would be inside most of the day.

We had 6 handlers with their dogs, Brenda/Boss, Linda/Que, Janelle/Cairo, Nikki/Vader, Anne/Rumble and Lois/Lilly. Unfortunately, Rumble had a leg injury so was on enforced rest for the day. This turned out to be handy for the rest of us as we had a full time casualty for the day. (I can say this because she's my sister)

We started the day with bark boxes made out of mass pallets. What fun! Que, you are such a show off and of course Cairo was barking as soon as he was off the lead "let me at it"

For those of you who have been to Longburn, you will know how very challenging it can be for both handler and dog. ESPECIALLY THE PANCAKE! This was our first mission. To negotiate both dog and handler down thru the 3 or 4 floors (I lost count) to the tunnel below, then send the dog off to search for Anne. AWESOME! We even had our own food distraction - a 1/2 decomposed carcass which surprisingly, didn't worry the dogs at all. Next hide was a series of large metal vats joined together. The technicians had previously cut holes between these vats - just big enough to fit thru. Our mission being to get the dog and yourself thru these vats, out the other end, and off to search for Anne, in another part of the building. Onto number 3 - the 'tunnel' with, heavens above, there's Anne at the end again!

I think we had smoko next. Brenda made a comment that it was fashion week.

## Tsunami Alert – Whitianga Response

With the potential Tsunami risk that occurred as result of the Samoan earthquake a number of coastal areas

particularly on the East Coast of NZ took the threat seriously.

With the first week of the school holidays upon us we headed to Whitianga

Well, we just looked at each other and laughed!

Number 4 - a mixture of Brenda and Nikki hiding in a ditch under a building amongst some shoring. It was interesting to hear about the different ways that the dogs found scent.

Number 5 - Linda, Anne, Nikki and I were finally allowed to set up a search for Brenda and Janelle with their advanced dogs. We tried to make it as hard as possible, (always fun). The dogs had a large room with no roof to search in. This was quite an exciting room with 2 casualties. They had to work totally independent of the handler who was not allowed to step into the room at any time. After finding the first casualty and alerting, dog was given the command to carry on. I was very impressed with these 2 dogs.

Our last search was outside. The casualty was inside an open air-vent under the sub-foundation of the building. The mission was to search the perimeter of the building, hopefully picking up the scent on the way passed the air-vent. I must add that the wind was at our backs, so the dogs actually passed the vent and back tracked. It was great to watch. What a morning! We had a great time. It always amazes me how very clever our dogs are. They are truly special creatures. Many thanks once again to Brenda, Linda and Janelle for the help and encouragement we received.

– Lois Blackmore

and got to see the town's response to the Tsunami.

Around 0830hrs the Whitianga Volunteer Fire siren began to continuously sound for around 20 minutes. The local radio station was broadcasting the local civil defence evacuation plans with the township being evacuated to higher ground to Centennial Hill - where we were staying.

Not only did we have a perfect and safe view of the Tsunami should it reached land but also a view of the main road and a steady stream of cars heading up the hill. By 0920hrs the radio station ceased broadcasting as its staff had been ordered to leave by the Police.



Que searching for Andy

This event made for an exciting morning for our children with all the goings-on around us and media talk of the potential 'big wave'. We took the opportunity to talk about what we as a family should do in a civil defence emergency – as it would be likely that dad would be away with the 'fire truck' or the 'special rescue team' (USAR Task Force). The kids sprung into action filling buckets, jugs and the bath with water – even though we were on tank supply, if we had lost power the pump would not function. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the morning was how the local community and tourists co-operated with the information

being given by civil defence with essentially almost complete evacuation of the township.

Maybe it was the memory of the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2005 still in the back of people's minds?

Although nothing did occur it was a good exercise in the testing of civil defence procedures and a reminder to all to be prepared.....oh and a great holiday adventure for the kids!

– Brendon Irwin

## Northern Regional Training Weekend

As the morning progressed the weather closed in and by lunchtime we had some heavy rain. It was a quick trip to the local bakery [which is infamous in the area] and then a short distance down the road to our afternoon venue – Heron Construction.

Heron Construction is a shipping repair/construction yard with a variety of contents – ship parts, stacks of metal pipes, containers, digger etc. The more experienced dogs did a quick yard search and then it was onto run aways, and fun stuff for all. We finished up at about 4pm and headed off home for a warm shower and suitable clothing for the group dinner.

– Tania Evans

**Sunday** saw Auckland turn on some much appreciated fine weather. The day started at the Otahuhu Fire Station. A venue where we have managed to permanently locate our agility gear, thanks to NZ Fire Service. The dogs all performed well on the gear and there were a few challenges as usual. Here, we also completed heelwork, emergency stop and down stays.

After lunch we ventured to the "rubble mountain" at Adams Landscape, a site we have used in the past. On the day, part of the site was operational with machinery, trucks etc so this proved an added bonus of what it might be like on a real USAR site!

The site was set up with the new format in mind i.e. distractions, which one of the dogs managed to find. This site was where we had intended to do our "directionals" but between our last visit and the weekend of the regionals there had been a new road and perimeter fencing put up preventing us from accessing the area. Thanks to Tania, an alternative was quickly found, only 5 minutes drive away. This was the conclusion of our weekend.

Our thanks go to all who attended, handlers, subjects, helpers and both Brenda & Janelle for their time and words of wisdom.

– Nikki Smith



**9am Saturday 1 August:** We gathered at our first training site – Andrew House Removal yard. This site provides a great selection of houses to search, so after everyone signed in the logbook, Brenda investigated the houses for suitable hides to challenge both handler and dog. We were fortunate to have a few of the local Girl Guides volunteer to hide for the dogs. They were all keen and happy to sit in their hides, texting each other as the dogs found them. One of the valuable handler lessons learnt that morning was the process to follow when your dog has alerted on a subject and there is an area next to the subject that is effectively un-searched. Remove the subject and send the dog in again to check the area for another subject.

# Traveling with your USAR dog

As we have more and more opportunities to travel and train with our dogs thought it might be timely to share some ideas about travelling with your dog to make life easier for both you and your dog.

The focus of this article is for flying with your dog but even when driving some of the ideas might be appropriate.



## Flight bookings

When you book flights (or someone else books them for you) ring the airline with your booking reference and ask that your dog is added to the booking. This is not a requirement of the airline but is recommended so they are not surprised when you turn up. They

may ask you for the weight of your dog and crate and give you an idea of the price.

## Packing your dog kit

I find I seem to spend as much time "packing" for my dog as I do for myself. Some of my items to take include:

- 🐾 Dog toys- always more than I need in case you lose one- aim for 3-4
- 🐾 Spare lead and collar
- 🐾 Food and bowls
- 🐾 Poo bags- I always have one or two in my pocket
- 🐾 Water bottle- sometimes take it empty as my dog does not seem fussy but if your dog is ever reluctant to drink, then consider taking some "home" water due to chlorination etc which might be enough to make your dog reluctant to drink
- 🐾 Spare small water bottle and bowl to take onto training site
- 🐾 Dog First Aid kit including saline
- 🐾 Dog Towel- either small high absorbency or just old towel to dry off before bed
- 🐾 Long lead- I have one about 5M which I use when do not have open area to run around and he can still sniff about he will toilet on this long lead
- 🐾 Fleece blankets x2 – just from the Warehouse but great as dry quickly
- 🐾 Glow collar for night/building search
- 🐾 Dog treats for bribery or obedience

I pack this into a small bag to put inside my big bag and then always take with me when we leave accommodation.

Consider having 1 meal of dog food in your carry on pack just in case your checked luggage ends up somewhere else.

## At the airport

Arrive in plenty of time- at least one hour before the flight and even earlier if busy time at airport. Try and ask someone else where you report before hand. Some airports (e.g. Wellington) require you to have your dog in the crate at all times- that is their choice and arguing is not a good look for any of us. Otherwise just have your dog on a lead and walk them beside you but keep them under control. Try and get them to toilet before you enter the terminal and try and stay calm as they will think there is something to worry about.

Have the weight of your crate and your dog written on the top of your crate as they are less likely to try and weight them- they might still, but worth being prepared.

They should put a luggage tag on your crate somewhere and just check that has right flight number on it.

Have some cable ties ready if you have any concerns about your crate latches but remember that you can't take a pocket knife or anything with you to cut them at the other end, which will delay you letting your dog out until checked luggage gets there. I have a knife in outside pocket of checked baggage or have borrowed scissors from AirNZ staff.

Depending again on the airport they will take your dog in the crate or put it on a large luggage belt, or they may take you out the back to load. Keep your lead with you.

We are flying the dogs as excess luggage and the airline has no obligation to take them- our only other option is to freight them which for most dogs would be around \$300 each way. If for some reason they will not take them on your flight they will change you to the same flight as your dog. If there is a big delay ring a local handler to help you out.

## At the other end

Your dog will normally come out where oversize luggage comes and may come before checked luggage or after. Have your lead ready. They have got me to come and get him out of the crate before (if only one baggage handler) while other times they have carried the whole crate out. Palmerston North are funny and have seen on several occasions a dog on the carousel so look out for that as I don't think dogs really enjoy that ride.

If you have a van try and pack your luggage around the crate so they can't slide, or many cargo vans have tie down points so you can use a piece of rope (or your spare lead) to tie crate down to stop too much moving around.

## At accommodation

Most places we stay are very accommodating but this is normally due to some good PR by others before you and once we have found a nice place we don't want to lose it.

No dogs in any accommodation anytime. This might seem obvious but has happened (long haired dogs add to the fun) and the

## Dogs in the Media

It has been great to see some of the dogs from our "sister organizations" in recent newspaper articles and on TV.

Landsar held their avalanche assessments from the 27- 29 August. There were articles in the newspaper and these dogs featured on Close Up including the reporter hiding in the snow. These dogs have had a very busy time this winter.

"Game for a dog: life and death for a human" can be found at [www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/.../Game-for-a-dog-life-and-death-for-a-human](http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/.../Game-for-a-dog-life-and-death-for-a-human)

## Island heat makes work tough for NZ search dogs

4:00AM Monday Oct 05, 2009

By Alanah May Eriksen  
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One of the dogs works through the debris on the beach at Saleapaga. Photo / Greg Bowker

excuse was "no-one had told us specifically we couldn't"....

When you take the dogs out of the vehicle always have them on lead and remember other guests might not be "dog people" so keep them under control and do not let them approach other people. Basically, unless you are taking them in or out for a walk, they should not be seen or heard.

If you have any doubts just ask another handler who has flown or travelled before I'm sure they will be happy to help you.

Happy training.

– Janelle Mackie

It took less than an hour of searching for bodies in intense heat before the four New Zealand sniffer dogs needed to cool off in Samoan waters.

The Alsatians, their handlers and 11 other police officers who are part of the Specialist Search Unit arrived yesterday on a New Zealand Army aircraft landing at a school in Lalomanu.

After a quick briefing they began trawling through the wreckage in search of human remains.

A group of more than 100 people, including the local police, Queensland search and rescue workers, medics and villagers lined the few hundred metres of the coast of Saleapaga following the dogs working in front of them.

But Zena, Asko, Ice and Jess - all aged between 2 and 6- could take only about 45 minutes of the scorching weather before needing a swim.

But the water was not cold enough and they took refuge under a large palm tree before resuming their search and then moving to the next village.

They were also working on empty stomachs, having last eaten on Friday, because Alsatians' intestines are prone to twisting and their handlers did not want sickness hampering search efforts.

The police were also keeping an eye out for stray dogs in case of disease, although the sniffer dogs had been vaccinated before they left New Zealand.

The police are expected to resume the search for bodies today and it is not known how long they will need to stay in the country.

