



Newsletter of the NZ  
USAR Search Dog  
Association

# PawPrint

## Meet our new USAR SDA Coordinator

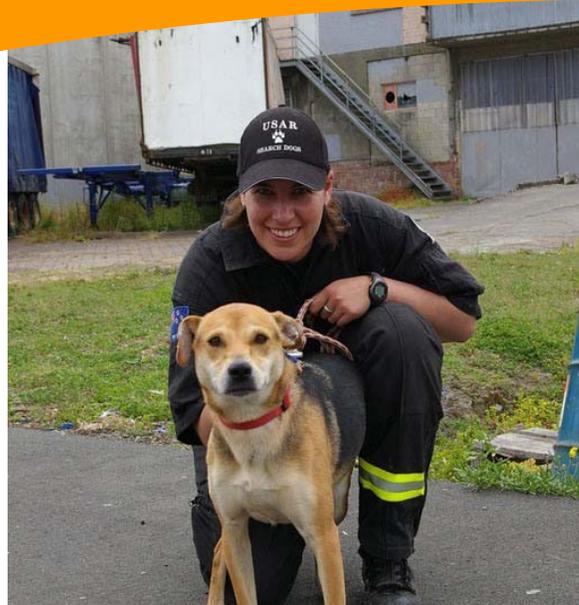


Hello. I am Fay Deam, your new SDA coordinator. I have been teaching the flute for a number of years and prior to that I was a cardiology technician. While heart stopping moments with search dogs are new to me, on a more sedate note I have served on the Christchurch branch committee of the Institute of Registered Music Teachers. I am currently working toward the National Certificate in Computing.

My husband Bruce lectures in Earthquake Engineering at Canterbury University. Our elder son Sam (14) lives for hockey and computer games. Andy (10) loves music, gadgets and making things. We live in Christchurch but have also lived in Wellington and Vancouver, Canada.

In my spare time I like to play European Board (strategy) games and scrapbook our family memories.

I look forward to meeting you and helping the SDA organization.



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vol 20 July 2009

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## Sasha and Sara's first K9 Deployment.

We give everything we have to train our dogs in hope that we will one day get to use them in a real situation knowing that we will make a difference in someone else's life at the most crucial hour.

For the last 4 years, Sasha and I have been training each other in preparation for the call out. Most of us think that we probably won't get to use our dogs in a real operation compared to the amount of times dogs are utilised worldwide.

However, on June 27<sup>th</sup> at 2pm I received a phone call from Jim Stuart-Black saying there was a situation where dog teams were required.

Now I was thinking that our dogs would not be called on anytime soon, so when Jim called me his voice didn't even register and I thought it was a LandSar call out. So typical me says no my dog is not operational of which his response was "what are you talking about?" Then I asked him if he was calling for a Landsar operation and Jim responded, "No this is Jim Stuart-Black for USAR"

"Oh ok then yes we are ready to go I can be there in an hour."

### The Brief:

At approximately 12.45pm a digger excavating at the site apparently slid on a bank, flipped and crashed into a house on Finlayson Ave.

Six people were on site when collapse took place. 3 live victims, 2 bodies and 1 unknown.

**Hazards:** broken glass and exposed nails, if a door is closed do not enter due to excessive weight on the other side of the door.

Sasha and I arrived at the scene around 1515hrs and were briefed by a Police dog handler who had just searched the house. He said that his dog had alerted on the road end of the house opposite to the entry point on the site. He was unsure of what his dog had alerted on due to many fire personal in the house cutting holes into the floor and removing the 3 live victims before his search. There were two deceased in the house near point of entry; one to the left corner, in small room and one on the right side corner, in the kitchen. There was speculation of one more unknown victim still to be found in the house. The only person that knew exactly how many people were on the site at the time of collapse was one of the deceased.

## New promotional material

The USAR SDA have recently produced two new pamphlets to promote the work of USAR Search Dogs.

The first "USAR Search Dogs in New Zealand" gives an overview of the need for USAR dogs, how they work and some recent deployments. It is designed for general promotion if you are at events, displays, talks etc.

The second "Training a USAR Search Dog in NZ" is more for people who might be interested in becoming a handlers so is more appropriate for recruiting etc but please feel free to have some in your car in case you happen to meet just the "right" person when out and about.

Copies of both of these can be obtained from Fay.

There is also a major revamp of the website happening so please remember to promote [www.usardogs.org.nz](http://www.usardogs.org.nz) whenever you can.



### The Search:

At 1530, Sasha and I began our search with Mike from TF3 as backup. My search plan was to set Sasha off into the house to see if she could pick up live scent. Sasha entered into the small room to the left of the entry point where 1 deceased was. She was only in there for about a minute before I called her back to continue searching the rest of the house. Sasha went into the kitchen through the dining room where the second body was on the right hand side of the entry point and showed no interest in the 2nd deceased person. Sasha then came back towards me, so my plan at this state was to send her down the corridor searching the rooms on either side while following behind her. For the first half of the house she showed no interest until she reached the road end of the house, this was opposite the entry point. I noticed her nose up in the air working around the room trying to work out the scent. She entered into another room on the right side of the house, which shared the same wall and then looped back into the point of interest. She came back down the corridor and entered into the bathroom, which shared the wall to the room with the point of interest and had her nose going up that wall barked once. I then asked her to "show me" and she went back into the other room and gave a solid alert.

I rewarded Sasha, put her back on lead and then proceeded to check out the area with Mike to see if we could confirm sighting of the victim or hear a victim; of which we could not.

### Outcome:

Sasha had verified the police dog find. A USAR search team was sent in to that area where they removed more flooring but could not find the source of the live find.

The first body was removed around 1630 and the second body around 1830. After the removal of the two bodies, Tania and Mocha searched the house to clear the scene. Mocha searched the house showed no interest in the house but did have a small whinge around the same area that Sasha and the Police dog had alerted in but did not alert, Tania was sure that there was no one there.

As we were packing up the trucks, a woman from the Marae, approached all of the dogs and personally thanked them for doing a great job. She was so grateful that the Dogs, Fire, USAR and Police were all there helping in this tragic situation.

This operation was a huge learning curve for me. I was pleased that Sasha had done everything that the police dog had done and verified that dog's find. Nevertheless, I was also confused about what had they alerted on. I suppose that's from our training of knowing that when you have two dogs alerting in the same place then surely there must be live scent there. We have to believe that, because that is, what our dogs are trained to do, and if you can't trust your dog then you shouldn't be there.

It felt good and was a relief to have Tania and Mocha there searching the house after the bodies had been removed to make sure there was no one else left behind.

There is so much to learn in this line of work, most of it will come with experience, and understanding how scents works. There were many people around the site and it could have been possible that their scent was pooling in the holes that had been cut in the floor. There have also been many papers written in regards to freshly deceased and the mix of live scent changing over.

### How do we prepare ourselves for the next operation?

Make sure the training we do now is for the real event. Distraction training with lots of hot scent articles and train with lots of people on site so our dogs can tell the difference between people standing around and that of a the live scent of a missing person.

Don't let your ego get in the way of training and any mistakes you make don't feel embarrassed by them, mistakes are character building and are the best way to learn.

# Support Course and 72 hour exercise



A support course and 72 hour exercise had several members of the USAR SDA heading to Palmerston North in May.

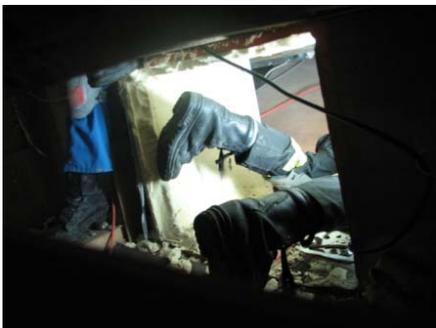
This was the first support course since 2006 so was a great opportunity for operational handlers who have not done the course, handlers approaching operational status and others who have been accepted as support staff for the their local USAR TaskForce.

Those attending were: Brenda (as National Trainer) and Keepa & Boss, Sara and Sasha, Janelle and Cairo, Paul and Sam, Nikki and Vader, Anne and Rumble, Tim, Lois and Kirsty.



The Support Course was held over a weekend, delivered by a Christchurch team of Paul Burns (TF Leader), Dick Tolan, Chris Freeman and Brenda Woolley. This covered the basics of the support role and Base of Operations set up. It was a great chance to meet other support staff including communications staff and other logistics staff. Pretty early on I think we realized it was going to be all hands on deck with everyone needing to show their flexibility and multi-tasking skills.

The 72 hour exercise, which is the final part of the three week technicians course ,started on Monday at lunchtime. Based on an earthquake scenario the Base of Operations was set up at Longburn Freezing Works and a number of scenarios run throughout the complex.



The main learning points were:

- Timber and wood are the same thing
- 2 o'clock-2 o'clock shifts are crap no matter which shift you are on
- Asbestos briefings are great (held at the pub)
- 2 minute noodles are an excellent breakfast food
- Boy racers are out in PN on Tuesday nights

Seriously, some great scenarios set up as part of the exercise and/or by Brenda and some excellent learning.



## Upcoming Events 2009

### 31 July

AGM  
Papatoetoe Fire Station  
15a Lambie Drive  
Manakau City  
And Video Conference

### 1 & 2 August

Northern Training Weekend-  
Auckland

### 12 & 13 September

Southern Regional Training-  
CHCH

### 25,26&27 September

Recruiting and Central  
Training

### 17 & 18 October

Operational Assessments  
Christchurch

## CREP- May 2009

The Canine Readiness Evaluation Process held in Auckland in May was notable for a number of reasons:

- The first CREP held in Auckland
- The last assessment under the current assessment scheme (see article following)

Well done to the Auckland crew, coordinated by Sara and congratulations to Brenda and Keepa, and Tania and Mocha who recertified on this occasion



## USAR Dogs in the News....

This article featuring Tania and Mocha appeared in the local paper to correspond with the CREP in May ....nice work guys.

# Ready for a disaster

By Luke Parker

Mocha the dog could indeed be your best friend if disaster strikes.

The four-year-old catahoula leopard breed is one of only 10 certified search and rescue dogs capable of sniffing out people trapped under rubble.

She was re-certified by the Search Dog Association earlier this month after serving three years.

Handler Tania Evans bought Mocha as a 10-month-old pup off TradeMe with plans to train her in search and rescue work.

"I started straight away," she says.

"It took about 14 months to get her operational for service."

Search and rescue dogs can pick up any live human scent and are used in earthquakes, damaged or collapsed buildings or bridges and in flooding.

Tania, who lives in Waitakere village, says only 5 per cent of dogs have the drive to do it because the training is so vigorous.

The handlers start out with simple games of hide-and-seek.

"Finding human scent is a game to the dogs," Tania says.

"They still think they're playing when they rescue someone in real life."

The dogs are trained to bark for 20 seconds after reaching trapped people.

Tania meets twice a week



**Super dog:** Handler Tania Evans and Mocha train regularly to keep up her search and rescue skills.

Photo: LUKE PARKER

with the Northern K9 Search Specialists who hide volunteers in rubble or derelict buildings for the dogs to find.

"This is to maintain their skills," she says.

She also hones Mocha's agility with tunnel exercises, plank walking, ladder climbing and walks over wobbly and unpleasant surfaces.

They train together for

around six hours a week.

Mocha hasn't been used in a real-life situation yet but Tania says it's only a matter of time before something serious happens in New Zealand.

"We need to be prepared."

Auckland has two certified dogs. The other eight are in Christchurch.

Tania and Mocha are on call around the clock to go any-

where in the country.

She loves being able to use Mocha in a way that gives back to the community.

"Dogs get a lot of bad press with biting and attacks," she says. "It's great that she can be useful in a positive way."

■ **Volunteer victims are needed for rubble training exercises. Email northernk9search\_specialists@gmail.**

## A well deserved retirement for Milo...



Milo came to the shelter in July 1999 as an 8 month old BCOx -her owner although not cruel to her, had no longer any time to exercise or care for her and wanted to give her away. They were turned away from the shelter twice after being told that we would not be able to re-home her and she would possibly get put to sleep. The third time they came back they left her with us to have her put to sleep.

“WELL” what can I say this scrawny looking mad thing stole our hearts- she was and still is no oil painting but has a heart as big as a Lions and would do anything to please.

I first started to train her as an area search and tracking dog for Land SAR. She fell into it like a duck to water and was operational area search within 18 months - that's not to say we never had any problems; we did like everyone else, but she got through and stayed operational until she retired from Land SAR a year ago.

WE also got involved with USAR disaster dogs, now this was a different thing altogether...We had to retrain her to be a stay and bark dog instead of a refund as this was what was required to pass this evaluation. Again she just plodded on and did what was required for this and passed her first assessment at the age of 3yrs. She has passed both Land SAR and USAR assessments every year since and was the first NZ dog to pass the first USAR Advanced assessment under an American assessor.



Milo was also one of the first Christchurch City Councils Education dogs and went around all the schools and displays teaching young children how to approach dogs etc. This she loved. Kids were her forte she adored them and was always gentle and loving. I do remember a long time ago doing a search with her for a mother and two young girls- she found the mother first and the girls were very close but she made sure she always took you to the kids first then the adult.

It is now time for Milo to hang up her USAR boots - at the age of eleven I think she has done her bit. She has been on many call outs both Land SAR and USAR and has been put into some not so nice places, but has never refused to go in and do her best .We could always rely on Milo to be in there boots and all and work her way through calmly and safely. She was always the first one to be shoved down a hole or up a ladder in those early days and I am sure she would now if I asked her to, but I feel it is now time to retire her ,and let her off siders take over, before she gets hurt.

To me there will never be another Milo - she was my first search dog and we learned such a lot together and because of that her four other mates have had an easier time of it.

She never took offence at anyone and was always ready for a cuddle or a pat whether it be a small kiddie, burly policeman or a fireman that covered in concrete dust you wouldn't recognise him. She would walk off with anyone that would take the lead.

One of my proudest memories will always be when we put her into the buildings at the Cashel St Fire. We were two stories up and the floor had collapsed we needed to search the rooms on the far side so we had to direct her from the far corner around this room into one on the right hand side then out of that one along the back wall and into the far left corner room. She did this with no hesitation only looking back at me for further directions. Having searched these rooms we then had to get her back in one piece, again she just followed my directions and got back safely. This may not sound a big deal to anyone that did not see this but when you saw she had about an 18inch ledge to walk around ,and had she fell or the floor had give way she would have fell to the floor below which was still smouldering.

When we train these dogs we know that they are going to be put into places that are unsafe for us and that we could loose them but they do it (most of them) without question.

Milo has earned her retirement and I am sure she is going to enjoy the end of her days fishing and kayaking in the Sounds and bossing her other four doggy mates that are still working.



***I am so proud of you Milo you have served us well- Brenda***

## National Training Programme and new Standards

The pathway to operational status has changed significantly with the introduction of the National Training Programme Progress Checks and the new Operational Assessment Standard. The Progress Checks have been released to handlers' part of the NTP and the Operational Assessment is just being finalised and will be out to handlers in the very near future.

The main drivers and changes include:

- Need for ways to assess ongoing progress of teams in the National Training Programme, while providing targets for trainee handlers
- The need to have a more realistic search scenario for dogs that are going to be operational- it is now 40x40m with an 2-3 subjects and inclusion of distractions. All subjects must be located with no more that one false alert.
- Assessment best practice would indicate that an "all on the day" approach is not supportive of success- the traditional elements of obedience, agility, directions, bark alert and basic search ability will now be assessed as part of the progress checks

Consultation with a number of our key stakeholders have supported these changes and we look forward to the implementation in the believe it will increase both the quality and ultimately quantity of operational teams USAR dog teams in New Zealand.

The Advanced Standard essentially stays the same with again the basic elements being "signed off" before the formal assessment

Entry into National Training Programme



Completion of Progress Checks 1-6, signed off alternately by National Trainer and Regional Training Coordinators



Completion of Operational Assessment Standard with assessment by Civilian Assessors, the NZ Police and a Reg. Vet



Operational USAR Search Dog Team

