



RESCUE DOG

ICAR (International Commission of Alpine Rescue)

Tobbachio/Dobbach Oct 2023

Dolomites Sud Tirol



I was asked by FIPS to represent them at the Dog Commission at ICAR in the beautiful Sud Tirol in October this year. I drove out so that could visit the family in Switzerland either side of the conference. Sud Tirol is in Italy but used to be Austrian before the 1st WW and the locals cling fiercely to their Germanic heritage.

Wednesday Mountain Day: All 359 of us were bused up a steep mountain road into a national park where we divided into our specialist areas for workshops morning and afternoon. The other specialist groups are Air Rescue Commission, Terrestrial Commission, Medical Commission, and Avalanche commission.



Our first workshop was a demonstration of Man trailing with this beautiful dog (x poodle/wire haired pointer) backed up by two air scenting dogs. Alongside this on a huge screen they showed the software they use to control a search by the dogs wearing a GPS collar and being linked to search control and the dog handlers.

They also followed the demo with a large search drone. You could follow

this on a huge screen in the car park.



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The Bergrettung local Mountain rescue organisation organized all the practical day.



We then all walked round the mountain to a mountain refuge where we were served Soup and bread for lunch plus tea and biscuits entertained by an impressive helicopter long line rescue off the towering rock walls.

In the afternoon we had 2 workshops on developing the bark indication of search dogs and on man trailing.

It was a beautiful day in the Dolomites with a lot of knowledge sharing in all commissions.

Thursday and Friday Classroom and Lecture hall days.

The Dog commission had about 30 delegates with dog handlers from USA, Poland, Sweden, Croatia, Norway, Sud Tirol, Bulgaria, Romania ,Austria , Switzerland, Ireland England and Scotland.

Any delegate to listen in to other commissions presentations and those that cover more than one commission are usually in the big lecture hall.

The presentations were split between training subjects and case studies all of which provoked healthy discussions.

Training ones

- Training pups to indicate by barking in a controlled non-threatening way by teaching distancing and calm position.
- Norwegian study into the effect of dog teams being attached to a helicopter while conducting a search – outcome -the dogs did not seem bothered by the presence of a helicopter. SOP's are to be developed
- Polish puppy selection and suitability test. Before this was introduced a lot of dogs failed 6 months of training.
- French Mountain Survival Course for Civilian Helicopter crews
- Lost Person Behaviour (very scientific) built up on data collection from case studies



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- Avalanche Asphyxia prevention device development process
- Norwegian Avalanche Search dog training course experience of Lake District dog handlers invited to join in and observe
- Rising Global temperatures increasing risks to MR from wild fires and incidents of Heat illnesses

Case Studies

- Loss of light aircraft in Colombian Rain Forest with the challenges of locating 4 native children ages 13 years to 11 months who were found alive after about 3 weeks. Dogs were used and one found the children and stayed with them for 2 days when he disappeared never to return.
- Austrian search operation in Hochkalter involving 1 missing person who was caught out in increasingly bad weather and underprepared for the mountain. The weather prevented MR from reaching the MP. The decision making was explained and the effect on teams moral.
- Austria avalanche with 1 buried ski tourer on a forestry road. He and his 2 friends had no transceivers shovels or probe. Avalanche dogs were involved and indicated 8m above casualty. He was recovered 3 hours after slide buried 2.8 m deep with an air space made by a small tree. He was hypothermic and injured but alive.
- Swiss avalanche involving a party of secondary school children with a guide. 2 children were caught. First casualty found with beacon and probe in the first 3 days, 2nd not till May (buried 10-15m deep and was flushed out by river in spring). The snow was very wet and heavy, the dogs found it impossible to get a scent. The area is known for wet avalanches. Have had 2 similar wet avalanches where people were found alive after 1-3 hours.
- Turkish Earthquake responded to by Bulgarian MR with 5 dog teams. Getting to where they were most useful was difficult but in 5 days the dogs found 13 live casualties and a lot of dead bodies. Conditions were challenging but they never lost motivation.
- Polish Mine Rescue- A methane explosion in Poland's largest coal mine killed 7 miners in 2022. Because the mine was so dangerous recovery was suspended for 18 months. 5 bodies "were recovered 10 days later then cadaver dogs were requested. Conditions were awful 2hours down to search area very hot and dusty. Dogs found both bodies through a hole in rock and the second through water who took 2 months to retrieve. The dogs drank 5 litres of water after and were rested for 2 weeks.
- Snowbird Avalanche crossing road towards beginners' area. Been heavy snow for 3 days before, gas ex out of order, tried Heli bombing but failed. People were in beginners' area, but no one was reported missing. Tip was 15m deep, 4 dog



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teams attended and only indicated on well used path. Response was rapid and efficient.

- Case study Kruberalpass 86 yr. old tourist who liked foraging in forest. Failed to return for dinner, alert at 21.00. Man trailers deployed first and took freshest forest trail, one took an old track. 2 air scenting dogs followed 200-300m behind to the left and right of man trailer. Air scenting dog found in thick vegetation at 02.00. MP had fallen in a hole and died.



The Sud Tirolians looked after us with good food drink and local traditional entertainment and a lot of experiences were exchanged over a glass of something.

Submitted by Kate Hunter, BASP.