CANINE TRAINING AIDS

BASIC CADAVER TRAINING USING SIGMA PSEUDO"" CORPSE SCENT FORMULATIONS I AND II

The following information is a compilation of experiences by Andrew J. Rebmann, of the K-9 Specialty Search School in North Franklin, Connecticut.

Sigma Pseudo Corpse Scent formulations provide a safe, easy to handle source for training specialty scent dogs. The formulations allow a search dog handler to observe the dog's reactions during its initial introduction to a deceased victim under controlled circumstances, and to train specifically for cadaver search, if desired.

Certain items of equipment make training easier. Multiple cement blocks can be used, with a container containing the source located in one. 'Scent tubes" made from eight inch lengths of one and *one-half inch black ABS plastic pipe, with tight fitting end caps containing the Sigma pseudo"" Corpse* Scent on a gauze pad may also be buried, hung, concealed above ground or used as a throw toy to reinforce a weak dog.

Sigma pseudo"" Corpse Scent is available in pre-measured one dose vials. One vial provides a sufficient amount of scent for most applications. When training for burials deeper than one foot, a stronger source will be provided if two doses are put on gauze pads and placed in the container.

Canine reaction to a body can vary widely. The general categories of behavior are:

t . Enthusiasm - the dog does not hesitate to approach the body. It may attempt to elicit a response from or urinate on the victim.
2. Cautious Interest - the dog slows its search, may become nervous and raise its hackles, but with encouragement, will approach the victim.
3. Avoidance - the dog will not approach the scent source and may actually attempt to leave the area. This behavior may become evident some distance from the body as the dog enters the scent cone.

If a dog exhibits avoidance during evaluation, verbal encouragement from the handler as the dog approaches the source, combined with immediate play reinforcement when it reaches the source should overcome its aversion.

Search for human remains is an additional specialty function for air scent dogs. Every handler should realize that not every search will proceed successfully. A handler cannot assume that the dog will
- alert' on a deceased victim. Victims have been missed because the handler did not recognize a different
- alert' or a wide ranging dog did not do a "refind" after locating a body.

Training for any type of specialty scent work requires that the dog be introduced to the scent source *prior to its use in realistic situations. Sigma pseudo"" Corpse Scents allow the handler to teach scent* recognition quickly. Once the dog reliably 'alerts' to the odor, then the product can be used to simulate deceased victims both above ground and buried.

Scent training should be conducted in progressive steps.

Step One: Scent recognition
Step Two: Scent commitment
Step Three: Introduction of desired alert
Step Four: Area search for above ground source Step Five: Area search
for buried source Step Six: Larger area searches

Sigma Pseudo"" Corpse Scent Formulations I and II should be used for cadaver search training. If you are introducing Sigma Pseudo' Distressed Body Scent (Trauma and Fear Formulation), the dog should be introduced to the source using steps one through four. Once the desired "alert' has been obtained, then the handier can proceed to step six.

The principles involved in training for cadaver search are identical to those used for other tasks. The handler must (1) introduce the dog to the scent, (2) develop its interest with properly timed reinforcement, and (3) reward the dog for locating the source. Once the dog becomes committed to finding and indicating the exact location of the scent source, the handler can introduce the desired "alert."

Emphasis is placed on the handler's timing of reinforcement. When the dog acknowledges that it has detected an odor, secondary reinforcement should be immediate. The reinforcement can be verbal or a sound cue for the dog. When the dog gets to the source, reward must be immediate and given at the source. Most handlers use a "ball play" reward, showing the ball to the dog right at the source, then throwing it for the retrieve.

The handler must concentrate on "reading' the dog's body language from the start. He must recognize the indication that the dog has initially encountered the desired scent, and be able to interpret its actions as it works into the source.

The initial stage involves teaching the dog scent recognition. The chemical is absorbed on a gauze pad and placed in a container. Since this phase requires many repetitions, the container is either placed in a "daisy wheel" or concealed in a concrete block in a line of four or five blocks. The 'daisy wheel" is a rotating device which presents four possible scent locations to the-dog and can be revolved to reposition the source after every trial.

When using a line of concrete blocks, the position of the source is changed after two or three repetitions. In this case, both the container and the block must be moved, since odor will remain in the block. Otherwise the handler may become confused by the dog's reaction to an empty block and not realize the dog is "alerting" to residual scent.

In the early steps, the handler is aware of the placement of the scent source, so he may properly reinforce and reward the dog. Once the handler recognizes the dog's actions, then the same exercise is carefully supervised to prevent acknowledging false alerts from the start. Proper reinforcement and reward permits rapid development of scent commitment on the part of the dog.

When the dog shows a strong commitment to the exact location of the scent source, the desired alert is introduced. The alert can be either active (i.e. bark, dig) or passive (i.e. sit or lie down at the source). Again the secondary reinforcement is given when the dog goes to the source and the reward comes with the final alert. The use of this reverse chaining of behavior creates a stronger scent commitment.

The next step in the progression is to enlarge the search area and conceal the scent source. The training aid is above ground, and concealed in grass or brush in an area approximately 30 yards by 30 yards. Again the handler initially is aware of the location of the source. When the handler develops confidence in reading the dog, he works a similar problem with the training aid location unknown to him. A trainer accompanies the team to prevent reinforcement of false alerts; however, the trainer is careful to make sure he does not indicate the source location to the K-9 team.

The formulation of the training aid should be changed periodically to insure that the dog will respond to the entire spectrum of odors. We alternate from Sigma Pseudo`' Corpse Scent- Formulation II to Sigma pseudo'" Corpse Scent Formulation 1, and then introduce Sigma pseudo"" Distressed Body Scent. Because we introduce a variety of odors, the dog will indicate a victim, either deceased or in shock and non-responsive.

Once the handler has adequately grasped the concepts of properly timed reinforcement and reading the dog, we proceed to search for buried scent.

The first exercise is performed in an area approximately 25 yards by 25 yards. We select an area with a relatively open soil i.e.. gravel, if possible. Several holes are dug to a depth of 8"-10" and the impregnated gauze pad is buried in one of them. Again, the handler is aware of the location of the source before the start of the exercise. The dog is properly reinforced when it indicates the area and rewarded when it indicates the exact location of the scent. Even if the eventual alert is to be passive, the dog is encouraged to dig to the source, if it desires.

When the dog is reliably locating the shallow buried source, the area can be enlarged and the source buried deeper. The handler then proceeds to teach the desired alert at the source, altering the dog's behavior if desired. When the handler is comfortable with his ability to read the dog, the team commences to search for buried sources without knowledge of the location. Again, they are accompanied by a trainer to supervise the exercise.

When the dog, is alerting reliably at the source and the handler has correctly grasped the concepts and shown he can read the dog, training proceeds to larger areas with realism added to the scenarios. The types of problems should be varied. The dog should be able to locate the source, and should not search just for a buried source while ignoring a "victim' hanging from a tree.

Training scenarios should be set up allowing time for a scent cone and pool to develop. The dog will be able to work under more realistic circumstances if the scent has had time to duplicate the scent conditions caused by a victim remaining in an area for an extended period of time.

Evaluation has been made of a large number of dogs initially trained using Sigma pseudo"' Corpse Scent formulations, then tested on actual human remains. The dogs have all successfully located the actual materials. Teams trained using the progression have been responsible for numerous successful searches since the program's inception.

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This publication is intended for use as an aid in canine training efforts. This is not intended for use as a product manual.