

# A DOG'S NOSE *knows*

**TONI KRASICKI  
DISCOVERS NEW  
REASONS WHY DOGS  
REALLY ARE MAN'S  
BEST FRIEND.**

**AT PET RESORTS AUSTRALIA'S** Dural property in NSW, a group of dedicated and talented dog trainers are hard at work transforming ordinary dogs into extraordinary canines. The team, led by Dave Levy, includes well-known trainers Steve Austin and Glenn Cooke who have built their solid reputations from years of experience in the dog training industry. Although the team at Pet Resorts Australia offer standard obedience training for pooches who need guidance, what they are world-renowned for is actually their detection training.

Dog detection training is big

business. The Australian Army and conservation organisations call on Dave and his team to prepare canines for detection work. Their biggest customer is the Australian Army which requires trained dogs to detect explosives. 'The dogs get sent over to Afghanistan to help the soldiers clear any explosives, roadside bombs or any suspicious items around the area,' says Glenn. 'We basically do the start up work. They [the army] will take the dogs to their kennels and train them to be ready to be deployed and away they go.'

Dogs are also trained for the Cheetah

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**THE DOG ABSOLUTELY LOVES IT. IT'S A LOT OF ENDURANCE BUT THE DOG FEELS LIKE THEY ARE IN DOG HEAVEN GETTING TO DO THIS SORT OF WORK – THEY ADORE IT!**

Conservation Fund in Namibia and are an integral part of the 'cheetah catch' program. Detecting dogs help conservationists locate cheetahs as part of their research and education program, which aims to keep check of their dwindling numbers.

Closer to home, dogs are used for termite and cane toad detection, and National Parks and Wildlife use them for things such as finding penguin rookeries for their monitoring programs, and protecting foxes from eradication. In Europe, these skilled canines are even used for detecting timber that has been illegally smuggled over borders. 'The dogs are deployed on the borders to detect trucks from the timber mills that are carrying mahogany timber, which has been sold and distributed illegally,' explains Glenn.

Of course, Europe, Africa and the Middle East are a long way from Dural to source working canines. Glenn assures me that it's 'mainly through Steve's reputation as a trainer and the results he is producing with the dogs' that attracts

international interest. 'Actions speak louder than words here. People are seeing results with the dogs and realise that we produce results and high standard dogs. They are very keen to get their hands on a good dog who will save them a lot of man-hours and a lot of trouble with having all this undetected timber going through, or missing a cheetah they could have found.'

So, what does it take for a dog to get a job like this? Glenn compares finding and training a detection dog to coaching an athlete for the Olympic Games: one in a thousand will make the grade. 'We focus mainly on the ability of the dog and the places where the dogs are going. They could be any breed as long as they have detection ability and the endurance required,' he says.

'Steve's been fantastic with them; actually, our whole organisation has been. We've been reaching out to everybody including a lot of dog pounds, looking for dogs who are, basically, on their last legs. We've got a little one who we rescued who had a day's notice left

on him and he is proving to be one of the best dogs we've had. And this was a dog who was knocking on death's door!'

Over ten per cent of a dog's brain is dedicated to scent. Their olfactory lobe is extremely sensitive compared to that of a human, having more than 220 million olfactory receptors in their nose, while humans only have five million; Glenn says that in some cases dogs can detect on the molecular level of an item. Scientists are still vague about just how accurate and precise a dog's nose is, but 'a dog can actually break it down [the odour] and itemise one chemical from within a group of chemicals!'

It takes around three to four weeks to teach a dog to successfully detect an odour, although this varies from dog to dog. 'A dog who has come from a shelter might be a bit bewildered about where it is and may need to get over some social issues first,' says Glenn. Once the basics are ironed out, training begins and a particular odour is introduced.

Although not trained for these specific tasks at the Pet Resorts Australia ([www.petresortsaustralia.com.au](http://www.petresortsaustralia.com.au)), detection dogs are also used to retrieve bodies at disaster sites and, most recently, they have even been known to detect cancer and malignant melanoma in patients. 'They may not have a higher level of cognition, like humans, but they do have the intelligence necessary to successfully undertake all these types of tasks.'

It's very easy to see how these four-legged creatures have earned their title of man's best friend.



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