



# TOPLINES

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

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## Officers 2023

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## How Cadaver Dogs Help Find Dead Bodies

By Mara Bovsun

Published: Oct 16, 2021

Sheriff's Deputy Frank Hurst reached down to his 140-pound partner, Radar, and slipped a collar decorated with skulls and crossbones around the Bloodhound's neck. "Where's the Napoo, Radar?" he said.

Radar ran around the item in question — a car in the police impound lot — his nostrils quivering. When the big red dog came to the trunk, which was closed, he sat. It was his signal to Hurst that meant "This is the spot. I found it." What Radar had pinpointed in those moments was the unique bouquet of decaying human bodies. Radar is a "decomposition dog," also known as a "cadaver dog," trained to pick up the scent of death.

The car was part of an investigation into the May 2013 disappearance of David Noren, 49, of Lakewood, Colorado. Noren was not likely to run off without a word. Even more troubling, he had left behind the most precious thing in his life — Olivia, his 12-year-old black Labrador Retriever.

Something bad had happened to him, everyone was sure of that, but there was no way to even guess what it was or where to start looking. Police had nothing until Radar sat in front

Lakewood officers had thoroughly examined the trunk before, but their eyes did not pick up what Radar's nose had — two specks of blood. Investigators looked in the trunk again, this time with a luminescing chemical. "It lit up like the night sky," according to Radar's winning entry for the 2016 AKC Humane Fund Award for Canine Excellence. It was enough to convince police that foul play was involved and to press an investigation. A hiker later found Noren's body, dumped along the side of a wilderness road. The killer, Noren's roommate, is now serving a life sentence.

## Legacy of Vietnam

For centuries, humans have relied on the extraordinary power of the canine nose for patrolling, tracking fugitives and missing persons, or identifying bombs or illegal substances. Their ability to pick up odors is a true superpower. Dogs have about 200 to 300 million scent receptors in their noses, compared to about six million in humans. Scent regions of their brains are roughly 40 times larger than ours.

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# MSCM Christmas Party



**Saturday, December 9, 2023**



Coral Gables Restaurant

2838 E. Grand River Avenue

East Lansing, MI

Ph. (517)337-1311

For the Gift Exchange  
bring a wrapped gift  
marked for a lady or  
man. Limit \$12  
(No alcoholic beverages  
please)

Dinner at 4 p.m.

Open Menu

Business Meeting to follow!

Guests are Welcome!!

Please RSVP by Google Group or E-mail/call  
Karin Jaeger to let her know that you are coming.  
(Karin.j.jaeger@gmail.com) (517-351-0412)

Directions: Take I-96 to Exit 110 (Okemos Rd.) Go North on Okemos Rd. to M-43 (Grand River Ave.) Businesses on that corner include: Bennigan's Restaurant, Marathon Gas Station, BP/Amoco Station. Turn Left on to M-43 (Grand River). After the bridge over the railroad tracks, there is a traffic light at Park Lake Rd. and another at Northwind Dr. (there's a Farmer Jack's on the southwest corner of the intersection). Coral Gables entrance is the 4th on the right following this light (after Tom's Party Store, a Hollywood Video & the new Oriental Market). If you get to the Brookfield Shell gas station, you've gone too far.

From the North: From Business 69 left onto Park Lake Rd. Right (East) onto M-43 (Grand River Ave.) Follow directions from there as detailed **above**.

Nevertheless, organized attempts to use this natural wonder in homicide investigations are relatively new, dating back only to around the 1970s, wrote Cat Warren in [“What the Dog Knows.”](#) It all started when Vietnam War-era Army researchers began mus-

In the early 1970s, New York State Trooper Ralph Suffolk Jr., a Bloodhound handler, worked with the Military Animal Science program at San Antonio’s Southwest Research Institute to test the concept. Suffolk trained a yellow Labrador Retriever as the first “body dog.” (Today, they are referred to as “decomposition dogs” or “cadaver dogs.”)

## Concrete Case

Andrew Rebmann, a co-author of the classic textbook [Cadaver Dog Handbook](#), was among the first handlers in the U.S. He developed training programs for the discipline.

Before he became involved with sniffer dogs, Rebmann was a Connecticut State Police trooper. The department put out a recruiting call for K-9 handlers. Although Rebmann loved dogs, he didn’t apply for the program because he wasn’t sure he was qualified.

Cleo, his family’s pet [Newfoundland](#) at the time, changed that. Rebmann and Cleo competed in [AKC obedience](#) and, one day, the trooper brought his big, fluffy pal to work and showed off some of her moves. Before he could say, “Good dog,” Cleo had launched her owner’s career as a police K-9 handler. Since the 1970s, he has participated in thousands of cadaver-dog searches.

Using cadaverine and putrescine, chemicals produced by decomposing corpses, Rebmann trained his first body dog, Rufus, to pick out the scent of death. These chemicals are among the many tools trainers rely on to teach dogs how to distinguish the telltale aroma.

One of the team’s first major finds was the body of a woman murdered by her husband. Rufus found her buried in the couple’s yard, even though she was down more than four feet, covered in lime powder, and entombed under a brand-new concrete patio.

## Sliver of Evidence

In 1986, Rebmann and Lady, another [German Shepherd Dog](#), helped solve a baffling high-profile case in which a Connecticut flight attendant, Helle Crafts, vanished. Police suspected her husband, but without a body, they had little to go on.

Then a snowplow driver reported seeing something weird around the time Crafts disappeared — a woodchipper by the side of a river, operating during a raging snowstorm in the middle of the night. Lady led investigators to tiny fragments of human tissue, including a sliver of a fingernail with nail polish on it that matched a color the missing woman used.

This physical evidence, only about 3 ounces, was enough to suggest that Crafts had not run away from her bad marriage. The tiny items the dog found contributed to a murder conviction and a 50-year sentence for her husband.

The “woodchipper murder” marked the first time Connecticut prosecuted a homicide case without a complete corpse. “Lady played a really important part,” says Warren. The use of educated sniffers has become a common practice in missing persons and homicide cases and disaster recovery. “Well-trained cadaver dogs are a really good tool,” says Warren.

Although finding a body or parts often requires several different methods — some as high-tech as ground-penetrating radar — dogs offer a unique perspective. In a drowning case, for example, bodies can be deep below the surface and trapped in debris. “A dog can say, ‘This pile of debris here is worth tearing apart.’ That’s where dogs shine,” she says.

Another important role they play is in resetting the perceptions of their two-legged partners. Human brains tend to get stuck in a

But dogs have no preconceived notions. They don’t limit their searches based on crime-scene tape. They know only what their [millions of scent receptors](#) tell them.

Dogs are able to pick up a scent within minutes of death or [years later](#). In some studies, they have found 25-year-old skeletonized remains, buried in an area of 300 by 150 feet. Hurst works with a volunteer group, NecroSearch International, Inc., that brings together specialists from many disciplines — everything from botany, anthropology, and entomology to computer analysis — to help law enforcement solve decades-old cases. Canine sniffers are important in many of these searches.

Warren points out, though, that while they provide vital clues, what dogs find is only one part of an investigation. Another problem is that the information they provide can be hard to interpret. In many cases, they can tell you if a dead human has been in a place, but all the other essential questions — who, how, and when — will require additional digging and analysis by humans.

"Dogs aren't perfect like people aren't perfect," Warren says. "I'd be horrified if someone ended up in prison based only on the word of a dog and handler."

## Gotta Sniff

What kind of dog excels in this serious work? A "jackass," was a trainer's assessment of Solo, the German Shepherd puppy who launched Warren, a North Carolina State University English professor, into her second life as a cadaver-dog handler.

Solo was a singleton puppy, Warren recalls in her book, and so obnoxious she dubbed him the "Little Prince of Darkness." Warren had experience with both the breed and competitive obedience. Still, this wild child was more than she could handle. But he was just hours old when he started "working scent," as the breeder proudly reported to Warren.

Hurst describes Radar as a "nose on four legs," which is not unusual for a Bloodhound. "They were built for it," says Hurst. Everything about them, including their long ears, the folds in the skin of their faces, and their "nasty drool" is designed to help them pull in odors.

But being a sniffing machine is just part of the picture. Solo was pushy and aggressive and had unstoppable drive. All of these characteristics suggested to the trainer that he might be a good search dog. Radar's temperament is also ideal for this work. "You look for a dog who is not afraid to leave the whelping box, a pretty bold dog," says Hurst. Radar was running tracks at 9 weeks old.

When Radar's on the scent, nothing gets in his way. "He's like a 140-pound bowling ball. ... He pulls me around, and I'm a pretty hefty guy," laments Hurst, who outweighs his big red partner by 100 pounds. "He has dragged me down mountains."

Both Radar and Solo would make less-than-ideal household companions, but obsessive drive is what you need when someone goes missing. Radar is trained to search for the living — lost children, Alzheimer's patients — as well as the dead.

To switch gears, Hurst replaces the body harness used in live searches with the skull-and-crossbones collar and gives his command to seek death scent. "Where's the Napoo?" is popular among cadaver dog handlers. It's a bit of World War I British/Australian slang for "finished, done, dead," says Warren.

Does the job of seeking victims of murders and disasters depress the dogs? Not at all, say the handlers. In fact, they often find it too much fun. Dogs can get so charged up when they catch the scent that they run wild or start digging like crazy. There was at least one account of a dog urinating on the spot. That's why one important part of training is teaching a calm, reliable signal, like a sit.

For these four-legged detectives, death is just another aroma, and tracking it down is just another game.

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/family-dog/cadaver-dogs-how-canine-noses-help-find-dead-bodies/>





## Club News:

### 2023 Calendar of Events

November 30–

MSCM Membership expires today, if dues are unpaid

**December 9-MSCM Meeting @ 4 pm, Coral Gables, East  
Lansing**

### 2023 MSCM Annual Awards

If you have a new 2023 AKC Champion or other titles earned, please send the following information to Beth Santure.

1. The complete name of the dog with all of it's titles exactly as they are to be engraved
2. The name and date of the show that the dog finished at
3. The name (s) of all of the dog's owners

Please send your information to Beth by January 15, 2024

Beth Santure  
200 Begole Road  
Milan, MI 48160-9540



### CLUB MERCHANDISE FOR SALE:

**MSCM LOGO DECALS and MAGNETS \$10-\$15**

Contact Debbie H. at [sercatep@yahoo.com](mailto:sercatep@yahoo.com)

**IRON ON RHINESTONE SCHNAUZERS \$10**

Contact Donna G. at [egiles@comcast.net](mailto:egiles@comcast.net)



## How To Get a Puppy to Drop Something



Hint: Your best option isn't yelling or chasing.

It's a perilous moment: You look over and see your puppy has something unusual in her mouth. Maybe it's valuable, maybe it's precious or maybe it's dangerous like a bottle of prescription meds. Whatever it is, it needs to come out of her mouth.

Quiz time. Which should you do?

- 1) Say, "Drop it!"
- 2) Chase the dog and get that item no matter what you have to do.
- 3) Skip off in the opposite direction, jauntily signing a tune.

You should be aware that the approach you use might spell the difference between a dog who constantly looks for "bad" things to pick up in her mouth, and one who never develops that habit. The wrong response to a dog who loves to pick up stuff could very well promote the development of resource-guarding behaviors – a bigger problem than losing a few items to chewing. Serious resource guarding calls for help from experienced force-free training.

### Approach #1: "DROP IT!"

If you have invested time in teaching your puppy that giving something up to you will pay off for her, then you're all set for this key moment. You can calmly use the cue you've taught and your puppy will relinquish the item and receive a reward and you'll be on your way. But what if you're not there yet? Perhaps your "lessons" so far consist of you running after your puppy saying, "HEY! DROP IT!" In this case approach #1 is not your answer!

### Approach #2: YELL AND GRAB

Every second counts when it comes to either damage inflicted to the item or danger to the puppy from ingestion. But, is yell-and-grab really the fastest, safest way to retrieve the item? Nope. Even if it works in this particular moment, you've set yourself up for trouble.

### Approach #3: SKIPPING AND SINGING

If you have not yet taught your dog to "trade" or "drop it", the best way to get the item back immediately is to give it zero attention. The second you see a forbidden item in your puppy's mouth, spring into action ... elsewhere! Make your puppy suddenly think that the item is worthless because 1) you aren't paying attention to it, and 2) you seem to be doing something else that's really exciting.



Leap up. Skip to the kitchen singing the, “I’m getting out the ham” song. Be goofy. This alone (provided it doesn’t happen all the time) can be enough to startle your dog into dropping the item.

If that happens do not run back to the scene of the crime, grab the item and lecture your dog about how he’s never to do this again. Instead, prove to your dog that it always pays to see what you’re up to when you’re acting goofy. Give him some treats. Ask for some sits and spins and downs, and reward that. Do a kibble scatter of the floor that will take him a little time to clean up. Then slip out to quietly grab the item. You can also make a treat train. Make a little path of treats starting right at your puppy’s feet and heading away from the item.

Offering up a special tug toy might do the trick for your tug-obsessed dog. Or, if your dog is in love with a neighbor’s dog, it might work to announce an immediate trip next door for a play session. Your knowledge of your dog will help you figure out what will create the FOMO elsewhere that will make him drop the item.

#### PREVENTION SKILLS

You get an A+ if you take the time to work through one of more of these methods to teach your puppy that he needs to wait for permission to take a treat! Your relationship with your puppy will be stronger and more enjoyable when he or she does something to earn a treat!

## B r a g s

Char’N’Co Wastin Away in Margaritaville UD,NA,NAJ “Rita” owned and shown by Pat Heinzelman, earned her Utility Dog Title at the Sportsmens DTC obedience trial on October 28th.



## SHOW CALENDAR

### Breed/Obed/Rally 2023

Jan. 13-14 Rally  
CDTC  
Flint, MI

Feb. 15-18 BREED  
OCKC & DKC  
Novi, MI

Feb. 23-25 Rally/OB  
Sportsmen's DTC  
Warren, MI

### Agility

Jan. 5-7  
CCDAC  
Whitmore, Lake, MI

Jan. 19-21  
OCKC  
Lapeer, MI

Jan. 25-28  
Weim Club  
Lapeer, MI

Feb. 2-4  
CCDAC  
Lapeer, MI

Feb. 2-4  
Grand Rapids AC  
Cedar Springs, MI

Feb. 23-25  
CCCAC  
Lapeer, MI



### We're on the Web!

**[www.miniatureschnauzerclubofmichigan.org](http://www.miniatureschnauzerclubofmichigan.org)**

### MINIATURE SCHNAUZER CLUB OF MICHIGAN

#### TOPLINES

is a bi-monthly publication

January-February

March-April

May-June

July-August

September-October

November-December

Editor-Susan Quinn

The objective of the Miniature Schnauzer Club of Michigan is to advance the principals and scientific practices in the breeding of purebred Miniature Schnauzers; foster co-operation between breeder, owner, and veterinarian; encourage the exchange of information and experience among the club members and between show-giving clubs; to conduct sanctioned and licensed specialty shows and matches; and to encourage the adherence to the high standards of conduct and to the rules and regulations of the American Kennel Club.

