

Foreword

Some people swear by practice alone, whilst others only deal in theory. The International Rescue Dog Organisation (IRO) is an organisation that predominantly favours practice.

It has always been understood, however, that there is no theory without practice and vice versa. This is also the case when it comes to working with rescue dogs. It was for this reason that, some years ago, we became firmly convinced that the only way forward was to deepen our knowledge of canine science and practice with findings from the different scientific disciplines specialising in the field of rescue (working) dogs – veterinary medicine, psychology, stress research, medicine, history, sociology, kinesiology, canine behaviour, nutrition research and so on.

The Board of Directors of the IRO therefore set up an interdisciplinary Commission for Science and Research. A fundamental aim of the Commission is to promote and support the coordination, consolidation and optimisation of interdisciplinary research in the field of rescue dog work. It has not been easy to convince everybody of the need for this.

Today it is with delight that I note that the first scientific work backed by the IRO is now available to us in the form of the so-called “Dubai Study”, an investigation into the stress placed on rescue dogs by search work in hot climate zones. Until this study was carried out, we had no access to scientific answers to practice-related questions from dog handlers on the following subjects: For how long can dogs reliably be expected to work? How much recovery time is realistically necessary? Are allowances to be made for differences between breeds under extreme stress? How important is fitness training? How much does the age of a dog affect performance?

Although some of the findings of the study confirm our assumptions based on practice, we now also have expert scientific evidence and answers to back them up. The greatest value of the study is without doubt the fact that its findings can be applied immediately. The findings of Dr. Michaela Schneider and her team mean that we can go about our work with the rescue dogs more confidently and save the maximum number of human lives.

Our work would not have been possible without the great material and logistical support provided by colleagues from the “Dubai Police”, an IRO member organisation under the leadership of Major Al Shamsi. Our warmest thanks are therefore extended yet again at this point! Similarly, we must also express our thanks to all the dog handlers who took part, all the members of Dr. Schneider’s team and the University of Munich.

The Commission for Science and Research is certain that the promotion of scientific work is the right path for us to take. We will continue to follow this path!

Ljubljana, 09.03.2009

Head of the Commission for Science and Research

Univ. Prof. Dr. Dušan Nečak, *1st Vice-President of the IRO*

