

Dear Readers,



Specialised dogs are indispensable everyday helpers for people. **Rescue dogs** search for missing or buried people in the most impassable terrain or under rubble. **Sniffer dogs** ensure safety at major political and social events and at airports and railway stations. They also help to combat mould in buildings and detect harmful insects. Very recently, at the veterinary school in Maisons-Alfort, France, promising experiments were carried out with German Shepherds in detecting odour changes caused by the Covid-19 virus in humans (see report on page 14 of this issue). **Visiting dogs** provide people with a welcome diversion and can even help people to recover with the assistance of doctors, medical practitioners and therapists. **Service dogs** are a valuable aid to people with limited mobility. **Alert dogs** can warn people of impending health risks.

Even this small selection of the possible fields of activity of specialised dogs shows that our breed has developed more and more into a universal provider of assistance for people over the course of time. Even if our main activities are primarily found in the field of sport, the breeding of German Shepherds must be oriented towards the practice of 'working dogs' for everyday use by people, regardless of top sporting performance. Whether for herding a flock of sheep; as a *Schutzhund* or a sniffer dog for the police, customs service or the armed forces; or as a rescue dog in disaster control organisations, German Shepherds are bred as working dogs for everyday 'use' by people. Without this principle in mind, we would no longer be engaged in German Shepherd breeding.

To put it clearly, we do not train tactical units, but rather a cynological aid for use by people, and we refine and promote their capabilities through training and strive to consolidate skills acquired by their offspring through planned breeding. Use for the protection of people predominates, and its requirements reflect the world's rapid development. Specialised dogs also have an increasingly demanding task in the protection of natural resources, for example in the detection of harmful insects. We meet these challenges, which not only require a high degree of flexibility at all levels, but also the constant development of handling and tactics. New threats and the obvious increase in natural disasters with large-scale effects are expanding the range of applications for specialised dogs and will continue to shape it more heavily in future. We are therefore preparing for new challenges in the training of specialised dogs.

With the participation platform of the representatives from the federal groups, a pool of experts from the various specialist areas has been opened up and supplemented by an information tool. The opportunities to contribute to decision-making are an essential motivational factor in the Specialised Dog Training Committee. The structures and decision-making processes are transparent in order to promote regular exchange and knowledge transfer. The idea of our founder was that the association should enable the exchange of experience and provide impulses for a high-performance working dog. In this sense, the Specialised Dog Training Committee will actively accompany the further development of the German Shepherd as a universal working dog. In doing so, we will above all contribute with the knowledge of our active members at all levels and actively represent their interests in the main association, nationally in the VDH and in the other associations and interest groups in and outside the EU as well as in the public sphere. We are creating opportunities for exchange and further training at all levels of specialised dog training, adding momentum, presenting proven training models and initiating new projects for a secure future of our club.

Andreas Quint
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