

# TOP DOGS



From clearing land mines in war-torn countries to keeping order in the court to influencing trends via social media, these canine professionals have 9-to-5s that span far beyond the ordinary life of fetch, cuddles, and Scooby Snacks. Meet some of the most highly specialized and hardest-working canine professionals in the world.

by PAUL RUBIO



Opposite: Top Left, @loki\_the\_wilddog/Kelly Lund; top right, @mensweardog/Yena Kim; bottom, willowpix/Stock. This page: top left, David Bathgate/Getty Images; bottom left, Saul Loeb/Getty Images; bottom right, Ysbrand/cosignr/Stock.



Counter clockwise from top left: A demining unit from the humanitarian aid organization, Norwegian People's Aid, combs a minefield near Dubrave, Bosnia and Herzegovina. German Shepherd mine-clearance expert Astra and her handler, Lebanese army sergeant Ahmad Solh, at a demonstration in Washington, D.C. The Belgian Malinois whose intelligence, keen sense of smell, and obedience makes him a popular choice for detecting explosives.



## Mine Detection Dogs

Land mines are a harsh reality in post-conflict countries, perpetuating loss of life and limb, long after war is over. The solution—mine clearance—may sound simple, but this process has traditionally been arduous, tedious, inefficient, and hazardous. Until now, that is.

Say hello to the hyper-intelligent canine graduates of the Global Training Academy (GTA) in Texas and the Mine Detection Dog Center in Bosnia-Herzegovina who are changing the face of land mine clearance. These graduates are of an elite group: official Mine Detection Dogs (MDDs), who've diligently trained to sniff out the explosive "off-gas" in land mines and mine-related devices. Most often German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois, MDDs are able to clear affected lands 30 times faster than humans (and don't need a metal detector or probe to do it, either).

Working with local, national, and international mine clearance organizations in current and previous war-torn countries, US-based nonprofit organization The Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) procures MDDs for afflicted areas and provides medical assistance, rehabilitative care, and vocational training for land-mine survivors. The lengthy training and deployment of a single MDD averages

\$25,000, a price many post-conflict nations cannot afford. Through donor funding, MLI bears this cost for them. So far, they've donated 214 MDDs to 11 countries throughout the world from Afghanistan to Angola and searched a total of 10,895 acres without a single canine casualty. "By accelerating the rate at which land is cleared, the MDD teams not only save lives but also positively impact the socio-economic growth of fragile post-conflict countries and the likelihood that these countries will remain at peace," says Indre Sabaliunaite, a development associate at MLI.

Currently, MLI's top priority is to intensify mine-clearance efforts in recently liberated areas of Iraqi Kurdistan, where more than 60 percent of the Peshmerga casualties have been attributed to land mines and improvised explosive devices, which ISIS planted in the ground upon its withdrawal. Starting this August, working with the Ministry of Peshmerga, MLI will deploy 16 MDDs to help clear liberated areas of remaining devices and facilitate the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees. [marshall-legacy.org](http://marshall-legacy.org) ▸



*Clockwise from top left:* At the time this photo of Abigail was taken in 2011, only 12 of the heroic canines from 9/11 were still alive. Victims of the passing of time, commemorated in a touching series titled *Retrieved* by photographer Charlotte Dumas, who traveled the US, capturing the remaining dogs at home in their twilight years. Abigail and her handler Debra Tosch search the World Trade site for 10 days. An exhausted Bretagne and her handler taking a break from searching. Bretagne in 2011 is featured in Charlotte Dumas' 10-year commemorative series. The Water Rescue Dogs Cup of Poland in Gdańsk Brzeźno on the Baltic Sea, where life-saving dogs have to pass a series of obedience and rescue tests, June 2016. Rescuers search for survivors following an earthquake in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu on April 28, 2015. Polish firefighters from Gdańsk, who took part in the Nepalese search and rescue, bring their dogs back to the ruins for training. Canine search and rescue teams investigate a collapsed five-story building in Ankara, Turkey, in January 2014.



## Search and Rescue Disaster Dogs

When it comes to events of mass casualty such as earthquakes, avalanches, and terrorist attacks, it's hard to imagine any positive outcomes. But indeed there is one: survivors. Under the wreckage and rubble remains the prospect of life, but locating survivors in a timely manner presents a formidable challenge. Enter the special agents to accomplish this daunting mission: Search and Rescue (SAR) disaster dogs.

During 9/11, for example, more than 300 SAR dogs and their handlers rummaged through wreckage of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to seek out survivors. Dogs like Riley, the golden retriever who famously traversed a high wire to infiltrate impassable debris around the North Tower. And Bretagne, another star golden retriever who, for 10 days straight, pulled 12-hour shifts with her handler, Denise Corliss, to search for both survivors and the deceased.

Becoming such a hero dog starts at a very young age and requires years of dedication. Between the ages of 2 months and 18 months potential SAR disaster dogs like Riley and Bretagne worked with their handlers 20–30 hours weekly to perfect their acute sense of smell. They learned how to track the universal odor of humans in the air, how to work independently (off-lead), and completed the requisite training for certification as Canine Search Specialists for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Urban Search and Rescue Task Force.

But even a major job like 9/11 is just another day in the life for these hero dogs. Bretagne, for example, went on to serve in the aftermaths of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Ivan, and retired as a reading assistance dog at an elementary school. She was honored for her valiance at the unveiling of the 9/11 Memorial in September 2014 at Ground Zero; and on June 6, 2016, just shy of her 17th birthday, Bretagne became the final 9/11 SAR hero to pass over the rainbow bridge. ▷

Barcroft/Getty Images; Opposite clockwise from left: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images; Barcroft/Getty Images; NurPhoto/Getty Images; NurPhoto/Getty Images; NurPhoto/Getty Images.



## Influencer Dogs

Step aside, Kardashian clan. Social media's gone to the dogs—literally. There's *@loki\_the\_wolfdog*, an Alaskan malamute who chronicles his adventure travels with his dad on Snapchat, *@manny\_the\_frenchie*, an active Chicago philanthropist with his own product and food line and a very yappy Twitter account, and *@marutaro*, a shiba inu in Japan who has reached 2.5 million Instagram followers for simply being, well, adorable. But it seems that these pooches have not capitalized on their newfound social media fame quite like their peer Bodhi, another famous shiba inu, who's better known as his modeling alter ego, Menswear Dog, *@mensweardog*.

What began as some cheeky fun on Tumblr with regular posts of Bodhi in the latest and greatest human fashion trends quickly became an Internet sensation. Flash forward four years later, and Bodhi has worked on brand campaigns and modeling gigs for the likes of Salvatore Ferragamo, Coach, Jimmy Choo, and Stuart Weitzman. He commands upwards of \$1,000 per shoot and started working the runway during New York Fashion Week and Los Angeles Fashion Week this season. *GQ*, *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, and *cnn.com* have profiled his celebrity status, and he recently “pawed” his first book, *Menswear Dog Presents the New Classics*.

Left, *@loki\_the\_wolfdog*/Kelly Lund; middle, *@manny\_the\_frenchie*/Jon Huang; right, *@mensweardog*/Yena Kim.



According to his mom, Yena Kim, Bodhi is a working “model, influencer, and philosopher. Like most millennials, Bodhi has many job titles.” But Kim has just one these days: his manager. And as his manager, she keeps the talent relevant and happy. To maintain Bodhi’s unofficial title as “the world’s most stylish dog” and his popularity, Kim is highly selective in the brands they partner with and posts new images of her fashion icon son about three times per week, which she usually shoots in a permanent, full-sized studio in her New York City apartment. Her strategy to keep Bodhi’s tail wagging: long walks, open windows, and a combination of music, lots of peanut butter and plenty of flattery when it comes to dress-up time. Then, “we get that wide shiba grin” his fans love so much, she says, and the true media hound within begins to shine.

Clockwise from top opposite: *@loki\_the\_wolfdog*; *@manny\_the\_frenchie*; Bodhi *@mensweardog*.

## Courthouse Facility Dogs

Thanks to the nonprofit organization Courthouse Dogs Foundation (*courthousedogs.com*), professional courthouse facility dogs are becoming part of the criminal-justice system. As emotional support companions, these dogs create a safe and secure space for witnesses and crime victims, namely children, throughout often difficult legal proceedings.

Courthouse facility dogs are schooled by Assistance Dog International-accredited organizations, similar to other service animals like Seeing Eye and hearing-assistance dogs. Courthouse Dogs Foundation works with these organizations to match professional canine graduates with handlers in the justice system like district attorneys, forensic interviewers, and law enforcement officers. They then “train the people” on how best to utilize the dog’s services and how to establish a professional-personal balance with their new daytime employee (and best friend).

To be sure, a courthouse facility dog’s role isn’t to look cute and cuddly in the courtroom. This very serious job requires the ability to sit in the witness box with a traumatized victim for hours without moving, staying calm in the event of disorder in the court—that includes no barking—and being intuitive as to when to provide assistance to victims during forensic interviews, investigations, medical examinations, and prosecution.

As of June 2016, 113 courthouse facility dogs had been integrated into the legal system full time across 34 states. At first this number may seem insignificant, but considering that it was just in April 2015 that Arkansas became the first state to pass a bill allowing certified facility dogs to testify in court with child witnesses, this small number represents a huge victory. ▷

## America's Top Breeds

Every February the American Kennel Club (AKC) reveals the most popular dog breeds in America according to AKC registration statistics. In 2015 Labrador retrievers topped the list for the 25th year in a row while French bulldogs were the greatest gainers, leaping from 9 to 6. Here, the top 10 and a few reasons why they're so well liked.



Clockwise from top left:  
Labrador retriever; golden retriever; beagle; medical detection dog; boxer; bulldog.



**6 FRENCH BULLDOGS** Playful, lazy, and lovable, these non-sporting dogs rarely bark but also require special attention during warm weather because of a short snout.

**7 YORKSHIRE TERRIERS** Energetic, gentle, loyal, and perhaps a bit yappy, these toy dogs make surprisingly good watchdogs and family dogs.

**1 LABRADOR RETRIEVERS** Fun-loving, energetic, athletic, and highly social, these sporting dogs have a good temperament and make a wonderful family pet.

**2 GERMAN SHEPHERD** Intelligent, confident, and loyal, these herding dogs have an exceptional ability to learn commands and are highly protective of their loved ones.

**3 GOLDEN RETRIEVERS** Outgoing, friendly, and playful, these sporting dogs are devoted family pets and love long sessions of fetch in the park.

**4 BULLDOGS** Affable, spirited, and sometimes stubborn (but in the cutest way possible), these non-sporting dogs are great with children but require special attention during warm weather because of their short snout.

**5 BEAGLES** Happy, even-tempered, exceptionally curious, and professional sniffers, these hound dogs love children and family settings.

**8 POODLES** Regal, highly intelligent, and highly active, these non-sporting dogs require lots of daily exercise, a lot of love and attention (more than other breeds), and regular professional grooming for their hypoallergenic coat.

**9 ROTTWEILERS** Loyal and affectionate to their owners but often aloof to strangers, these working dogs require obedience training from an early age and are prone to anxiety if not placed in constant social settings.

**10 BOXERS** Cheerful, frisky, and energetic, these working dogs are great with children and make excellent watchdogs.



## Medical Detection Dogs

No doubt a dog's olfactory senses are considered extraordinary, but could they be strong enough to sniff out cancer? In short, the answer is "yes" according to Medical Detection Dogs ([medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk](http://medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk)), a UK-based charity that's conducting multiple clinical trials of canine cancer detection.

The charity's cohort of more than 20 bio-detection dogs have undergone multiyear training to hone in on an innate ability to distinguish the odor of volatile organic compounds emitted from cancerous cells. The dogs do not interact directly with the patients. Instead these medical canine professionals identify the compound scent primarily through urine samples, which are collected when testing for prostate, kidney, or bladder cancer in human patients. Additionally, the organization is working on a major breast cancer detection clinical trial in which canines are being trained to identify the cancer-indicating compounds through breath samples or skin pads.

If this all sounds a little far-fetched, you should meet Lucy, a Labrador Retriever/Irish Water Spaniel cross, who, eight years into her career, can identify a prostate cancer sample with more than 95 percent accuracy (that's a number on par with, if not greater than, some laboratory results). And Daisy, the fox red Labrador belonging to Medical Detection Dogs CEO Claire Guest, who detected Claire's breast cancer in its early stages.

While there's still plenty of skepticism in the US medical community about the role of medical detection dogs, the UK sings a different tune. In association with major national universities and hospitals, Medical Detection Dogs is currently being funded to carry out multiple, large-scale cancer research studies. ♦

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