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The Dog Enlists

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The Dog Enlists

Uncle Sam is training a new fighter

J. C. McIntire, '43

MAN'S best friend is following his master to war. The use of the dog in war is not new. During the first World War, dogs were used extensively by both sides for various essential tasks, both at the front and behind the lines. Today on the fighting fronts which stretch around the world, the dog is again fighting beside his master.

The exact role of the dog in this war cannot yet be fully described. The war is too close. It will remain for the historian to give the proper perspective to the role of man, machine and animal in waging the war. But to fight and win modern war, a nation must use every resource and talent it can muster. The peculiar talents of the dog are not to be neglected. Recognizing this fact, the United States armed forces have called for dogs to be trained for war duty.

Individual Qualifications

The individual qualifications of the war dog, such as his ability to learn and follow commands, are more important than his particular breed, although some breeds are especially equipped for specific duties. For example, as sentries and messengers the army prefers the Doberman Pinscher, Airdale, Boxer, retrievers, German Shepherd (no alien registration necessary), Great Dane, or French Poodle. The Siberian Husky is best adapted for sledge duty, and the Newfoundland, St. Bernard, Great Pyrenees or Malamute are preferred for pack duty.

To qualify for army service, a dog must be fairly large, in good health, from one to five years old, and have a fearless disposition. He must show no signs of being gun-shy or storm-shy. Dogs of either sex are acceptable, and they must pass a thorough physical examination.

Dogs Secured

The army's procurement agency which supplies dogs for army duty is Dogs for Defense, Inc., a civilian organization of dog fanciers formed to make voluntary contributions of dogs to the war effort. The training program for dogs has its headquarters at the Quartermaster Remount Depot at Front Royal, Virginia. Dogs for Defense, Inc., maintains its headquarters at 22 East 60th Street, New York City, and has regional reception centers in principal cities throughout the country. The procedure a dog goes through to become a member of the armed forces is similar to that his master undergoes. He is sent first to a reception and training center, where he is given a preliminary test for adaptability. If he qualifies, he gets an army registration number and is assigned to advanced training at Front Royal. After four weeks or longer of an intensive training course, he is assigned to the branch or service requesting dog warriors.

Soldiers Trained

Soldiers are also trained in the handling of dogs and taught how to work with them as a team. The most important need for dogs is for guarding camps, posts, beaches, munitions plants and other areas, a service for which their senses equip them better than a human being.

The Veterinary Student
Of particular interest, especially to dog lovers, is the procedure by which dogs are trained for their duties.

**Messenger Dog Training**

The training of the messenger dog differs from that of the other services. In the first place, he must work entirely on his own initiative, even though he is miles away from his keeper. He must know what to do and be able to figure out how it can be done. The only training that approaches this in civilian life is the training a shepherd’s dog goes through, when his master sends his dog up the hillsides with directions to gather in the sheep. But in the latter case the distances are not so great, nor are the difficulties comparable to those encountered in military training. It is necessary, therefore, that the messenger dog be trained in such a way that he takes the keenest delight and pride in his work. With this in view, the dog is gently taught to associate everything pleasant with his working hours. If he makes a mistake, or is slack in his work, he is never chastised, but is merely shown how to do it over again.

**First Lessons**

In the early stages of a messenger dog’s training, he is not expected to travel very long distances, but before he is ready for the field he must be accustomed to carry messages over different sorts of country for three to four miles. The ground over which the dog is to travel is varied as much as possible. He is taught to travel along highways, among horse and motor traffic, through villages, and past every sort of camp and cookhouse temptation. To aid the dog in overcoming these difficulties, all sorts of artificial obstacles are introduced into the route of his journey, over and above those he would meet ordinarily. Obstacles such as barbed wire entanglements, fences, walls, water ditches, and smoke clouds (harmless ones artificially produced) are put in his homeward path, and the dog is induced one way or another to surmount these difficulties, by going over, under or through them. Competition with other dogs is a strong incentive and educator here, and one of the greatest aids to training.

In order to accustom him to gunfire, the young recruit is encouraged by daily practice under rifle or pistol fire, made with blank ammunition. One or two rifles are sufficient at the start, and the number is increased as the dog becomes accustomed to them. The time required to train a messenger dog varies with the individual dog’s intelligence and stamina.

**Sentry Dogs**

The sentry dog can be of great service both in peace and in war. In this case he must be taught that his work is to detect the approach of a stranger and acquaint the soldier sentry of the fact, but he must understand that he has to do this at any given spot, and with any man with whom he is detailed for duty. The sense of possession and mastership is imbued in the animal in the same way as it is in a guard dog, but in a more general sense. This requires a more intelligent and acute disposition in the dog. Sentry dogs require a very careful selection and training, as they represent the highest degree of guardianship.

The qualities required in sentry dogs are acute hearing and scent, sagacity, and a strong sense of duty. Any dog showing these attributes can be developed into a good sentry dog, provided he is the right size. The medium-sized dogs are best for this work—Airdales, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers, and similar breeds. White dogs, for obvious reasons, are not acceptable, and as a whole males are better than bitches. There are exceptions to every rule, of course, but in general males are more aggressive and less self-centered than bitches, which are of a milder and less alert disposition.

**Expert Training**

The training of sentry dogs is carried out at the official training school and must be under expert management. To understand the work properly, the dog must be carefully trained, and the training must be done at night. Training begins at dusk when the dogs are led from their kennels.
by soldier keepers to various posts in isolated spots. Persons representing the enemy are instructed to approach from various directions. Accurate records are kept of the time and the distance at which the dog first takes notice, and how much ahead of the sentry he is in detecting the approach of the enemy. After a course of this training the dog is well aware that he is expected to be on the lookout, and his senses, already naturally acute, are further developed in a remarkable way. The training proceeds rather slowly because it is not possible to stage more than two or three attacks each night.

Train at Night

Day training is not necessary, and it is important that the sentry dog rest at this time, so he may be thoroughly alert when on duty. In any case, the sentry can easily detect the enemy himself in daylight, so he has no need for the dog during daylight hours. Both in training and after training when the dog is drafted into service, he must be kept during the day in a quiet and isolated spot, and not visited by anyone except the men assigned to tend him. The isolation of the dog is a most important point, because if he becomes accustomed to seeing strangers constantly, he loses his alertness and sharpness. His meal must on no account be given at night, but early in the morning when he comes off duty.

Laying Telephone Wire

The dog trained to carry a reel of telephone wire on his back is of great value to the Signal Corps. As the animal moves forward, the reel pays out the wire. For crossing a dangerous zone with speed and thus sparing the lives of signal wire operators, the dog used in this capacity is invaluable. This use of war dogs was highly successful in the first World War.

There are many other war jobs that dogs can perform such as locating and carrying first aid to wounded soldiers on the battlefield, as pack animals and sledge animals. Other jobs for which dogs are being trained remains a military secret. One story which has been received from the Russian front tells of dogs trained to attack German tanks, and by means of high explosives strapped on their backs, to destroy the tanks—and themselves. Later stories told how the dogs were still destroying the tanks but without destroying themselves. The method of attack was not revealed.

When the last battle has been fought, and the stories of the war's heroes are being told and retold, dog heroes, perhaps tank destroyers, will receive their share of glory. However, most of the dog fighters will have done their work unheard of and unsung. Their reward will be the pride which fills every dog-lover with the realization that his "best friend" has aided him and his country in the fight for victory.

CHINA

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job despite limited fundamental knowledge. Most of the technicians were trained by Dr. S. C. Cheng, I.S.C. '24; Dr. C. C. Chen, I.S.C. '24; and Dr. C. S. Lo, K.S.C. Dr. S. C. Cheng also organized the campaigns against foot and mouth disease and rinderpest.

The task of the veterinarian in China is a monumental one. A handful of trained men must serve the veterinary needs of a country almost the size of the United States, supporting three times as many people, and far behind the United States in veterinary and general scientific development. Their work is further handicapped by the changes brought about by the war—the occupation of large areas by the enemy, the consequent movement of livestock, the resultant disease epidemics which accompany every war, and the difficulties of carrying out protective measures in a country waging on its own soil a life-and-death struggle with a powerful enemy. But if China's need for veterinarians is great now, it will be even more so after the war, when the work of reconstruction and rehabilitation begins. Veterinary medicine will play an increasingly important part then in the growth of the new China.