



Happy 4th of July



Riley on left belonging to Adela and Ness on the right belonging to Eve Cecil.

This month we pay tribute to Riley and Ness, two of our pioneer ICF dogs. The picture of them, above, was taken in July 2002. It was only 2 years earlier that we worked our first prehistoric project. We have come a long way since then, including developing certification standards for historic & prehistoric human remains detection (HHRD). We started by looking at current standards for canine search work, other detection disciplines, and reached out all over the country and Europe looking for any existing standards for our work; there were

none. So, we formed a committee, including our forensic archaeologist Dr. Lorna Pierce and other professionals in the field, and gave them those collected standards from other detection work as a starting point. The outcome was the first ever HHRD standards & certification process. Riley and Ness were some of the first dogs to certify to it. As we keep learning, we have continued to fine tune our certification process. Last year, we added "real field experience" that teams must complete before they can be certified..

~Adela~

Follow The Nose

Scent Theory 101



Jasper, with a friend. I think he is wondering what the human is doing and why they are trying to do his job.

I visualize scent like flowing water.

Human remains scent (vapor) travels away from the decomposing body or skeleton by way of diffusion, or vapor transport. Scent will follow the path of least resistance and can flow by means of water movement. Animal activity like burrowing animals, such as rodents, as well as some insects like ants, create channels in the soil that can allow the release of scent to the surface.

Where the dog catches the scent is not necessarily at the exact location of the human remains.



Zia catches human remains scent that is being blown up the crevice of the rocks. Also, the green vine is holding some of the scent.

Scent will flow until it gets trapped or pools in another location. When the wind direction changes it will flow in a new direction. As the sun warms the ground the scent is released and starts to rise, as night comes, the cool temperatures cause the scent to fall back to the ground surface.

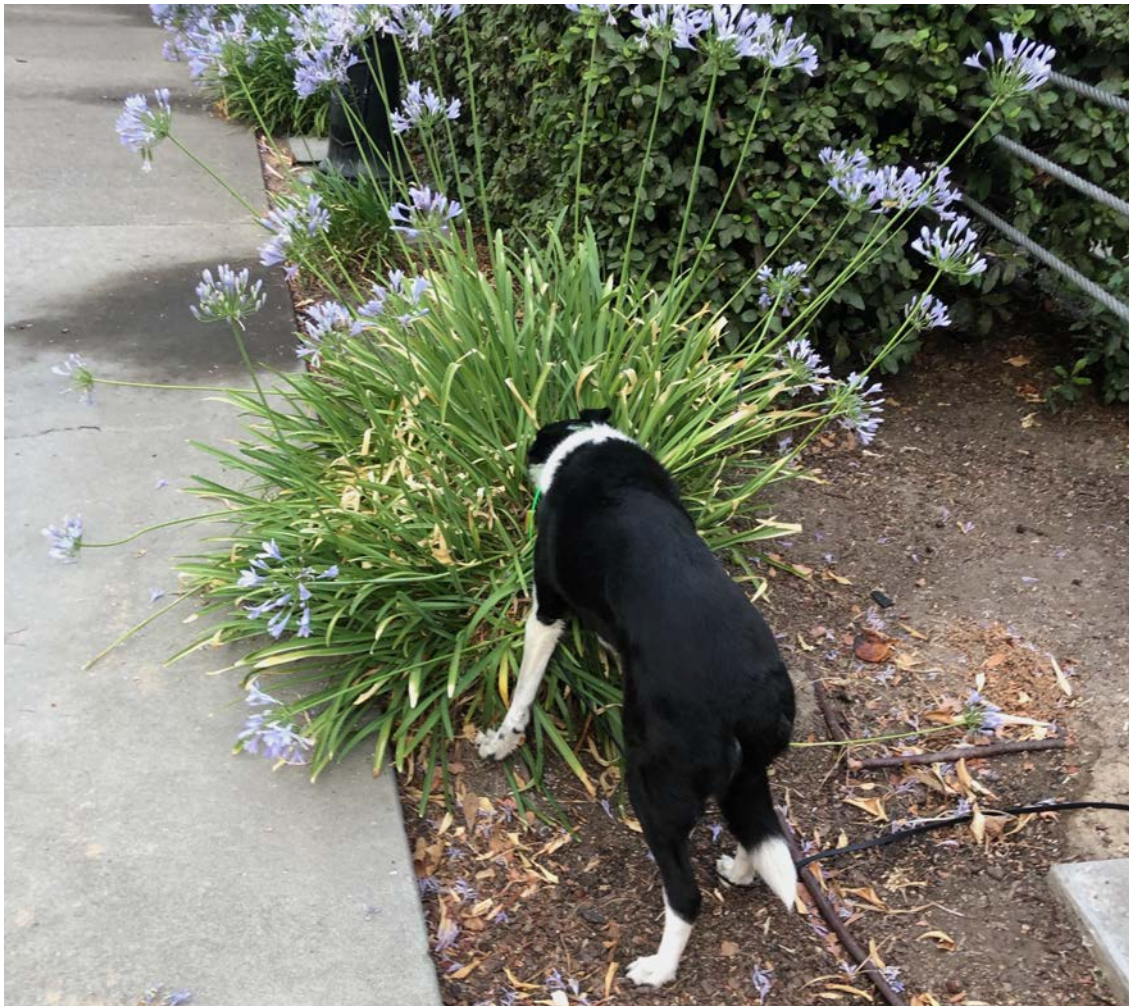
When I see a dog's nose go up, following a tree trunk or rock, I start to think, "Is this a scent pool, something above ground, or is this scent rising as the ground starts to warm up?"



Annie follows the scent through the cracks at a training to find the source. This is a great training problem for young dogs to learn how to follow scent.

Scent can also travel and then be trapped in depressions or obstacles in its path. Dogs will also have different breathing patterns as they get into their target scent. The human's role in the detection team is to make sure the dogs gets its nose into an area where it can get the scent we are looking for. (Well, there are also the tasks we have to do like chauffeur, chef, and maid.) Following scent can be a very finicky thing, it is affected by weather, soil composition, time and being in the right place at the right time.

As handlers, we observe when our dogs come into scent, where they loose it, and most importantly the point of discovery. The point of discovery is where the strongest scent is or they can actually put their nose on the source.



Piper is caught in the plant because it is the strongest location for scent. She then follows the scent back to the source.

Humidity is higher in and around photosynthesizing vegetation because it is transpiring. Scent can be caught in vegetation as it is more available because of the higher humidity around the plants. Thick leaves or downed grasses that are saturated with water can also stop or trap the scent from being released in

the air making it available to the dogs. As handlers, we have to interpret the dog's behavior when we see them in plants, is the scent just stuck at that location or do we need to have the dog search around that area to see if we can find the source.



Clío works a large bedrock mortar following the scent on a rainy, windy day. These are difficult conditions to find burials, not only the wind and rain but there is also tall green grasses that are holding scent.

Wind moves the scent from smooth surfaces and it gets trapped in cracks and vegetation. The handler needs to understand the conditions so they make sure the dog has the opportunity to get their nose in the right place to pick up scent.

~Adela~



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We are happy to talk with you about your project and
how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials.

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