

'Loyal employees' who never complain or call in sick

◆ Considered an integral part of the Fire and Rescue Department's K9 unit these canines play an important role due to their heightened senses, speed and agility in saving the day

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JET and Mansell are workers any employer would love to have.

"They never call in sick and they love coming to work. Neither do they complain," said their immediate superior P. Ravi.

The duo are among 40 canines that are part of the Fire and Rescue Department's K9 unit and Ravi is the unit supervisor.

Together with men and women in the department, they have no hesitation when it comes to putting their lives on the line in the event of a disaster.

Their heightened senses, speed and agility also make them better at searching for evidence, missing persons or bodies faster than their human partners.

For Jet, a seven-year-old Labrador and Mansell, an English Springer Spaniel, the day begins like it does for everyone else, clocking in at the office.

Jet's handler Megat anak Junau and Mansell's handler Pitears Godou then bring the two dogs some treats. While the staff meeting proceeds, both dogs take a nap but the action starts when they hit the streets.

In a recent demonstration theSun witnessed the dogs, comprising Labradors, Border Collies and English Springer Spaniels, showing complete discipline and obedience, thanks to their intense daily training.

It is an essential part of their work as it involves search-and-rescue operations, fire investigations, especially arson, and drowning cases.

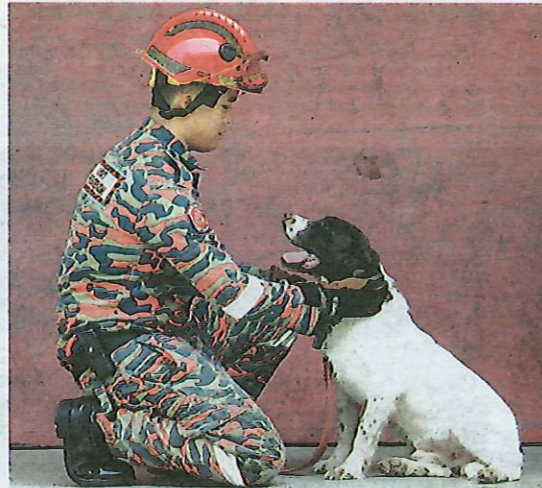
In the event of a fire, for instance, the dogs have to search for evidence or people who could be trapped just by zeroing in on their odour.

They are also trained to trace flammable liquids or hydrocarbon-based fuels such as gasoline, kerosene, diesel and other solvents.

K9 unit chief, Donny Chap, said the dogs are usually deployed in fire-related incidents and disasters such as landslides.

When they are not out rescuing people or searching for clues, they hone their skills in daily training sessions where they are taught to be obedient, enhance their agility and improve their ability to detect alarming behaviour.

The canines are considered "force multipliers" due to their speed, agility and heightened senses, which allow them to do the work of a team



Godou with his dog Mansell. - ASYRAF RASID / THE SUN

of officers in half the time.

Chap said they've proven to be the best evidence-sniffers. Despite their intimidating appearance, these canines have a soft side as well.

Whenever Ravi brings their harness, the dogs know it's time to suit up.

"It's like alerting a commando. They know we need them and they know they need to play a role more than just any dog," he said.

To keep them in shape, care must be taken to ensure their well-being. Chap said when it comes to eating, for instance, they must have enough

time to digest their food before any strenuous activity.

However, the canines do not always get the credit they deserve.

A recent high-profile case involving the K9 unit was the search for three fire victims in Kampung Sungai Isapin, Kuantan.

The dogs managed to find the evidence that led to an early resolution of the cause of the fire, but the dogs were not credited for their effort.

Nevertheless, the dogs have formed a special bond with their handlers.