

GET READY FOR WORK.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING AND
INJURY PREVENTION FOR
WORKING DOGS

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met through stringent behavioral training and preventive health care plans. The aspect of the overall performance program that often remains underdeveloped is the conditioning of working dogs as performance athletes. The overall conditioning plan is simple in concept: maximize the working dog's physical potential to make that dog prepared and conditioned to best carry out the expected duty.

performance are internal factors such as anatomy, physiology and psychology. Anatomic/genetic factors are essentially pre-determined at the clinical level, as certain breeds and working drive types are selected during the consignment process. As medical caretakers, however, it is important to remain vigilant for conditions such as fatigue, pain and burn-out, along with handler stress and fatigue (particularly in crisis situations) that can seriously

oxygen demands of exercise are then met by increases in blood flow, hematocrit, oxygen extraction from hemoglobin and to a smaller degree, from myoglobin release of oxygen.

Cardiovascular and respiratory adaptations during exercise ensure delivery of the oxygen supply and nutrients needed for muscular activity and allow for the elimination of metabolic wastes. Endurance

energy production. This would allow the working dog to efficiently utilize the high fat content provided by the standard feeding diet. A final noteworthy effect of increased conditioning is a less dramatic elevation of body temperature during exercise. Much of the energy broken down during physical effort is lost as thermal heat that accumulates in the body. As an illustration, the overall energy output of an untrained dog is

muscles for a controlled period of time,
with a set number of repetitions.

Because dogs are unable to lift weights, so to speak, their own body mass must be used in exertional positions intended to target and build muscle groups. Aerobic fitness can be increased through endurance conditioning programs, and increased endurance is key in allowing a working dog to maintain a high level of

proposing for the dog – will the mechanics of that activity or repetitiveness of the activity lead to injury or exacerbate underlying weaknesses? Dogs must also be monitored very closely for overheating and declining status during training periods. In designing a fitness program, trainers, handlers, and veterinary personnel must work together to assess the capabilities and

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