

There are over a hundred breeds of dogs and individuals of many of these breeds are capable of doing SAR work, and even excelling in this discipline. Most SAR dogs, however, come from the working, herding or sporting breeds -- but even certain breeds within these groupings are more suitable than others. You will learn that SAR training demands much of a dog -- the dog must be able to work without handler support yet be very biddable. The SAR dog must have a great reward relationship yet not be aggressive in its demand for the toy or must be controlled when working around other dogs. The SAR dog must be agile and have great task endurance. Above all else, the SAR dog must be tenacious in its hunting drive and must be resilient in its ability to withstand rough footing and adverse weather and long hours of work. In short, a SAR dog is a performance animal and not all breeds of dogs -- and not all dogs within a breed -- have the temperament, and the talent, to do the work required. Given the commitment you will make, and the hundreds of hours you will invest in training this dog, it is heartbreaking to work with a dog that does not have the drives appropriate for this work. (We say, in such cases, that the dog is just not "raising his paw for SAR."). So, it is very important to select a dog that will be up to the demands asked of it. Dogs at the extreme ends of the size range (i.e. very small or very large) also tend not to be well suited for this work. The canine-candidate does not have to be a purebred but one advantage of working with a dog with a known pedigree is being able to look at the parents of that dog as a guideline for its temperament and working ability. It is a good idea if you don't already own a dog is to come out to a MACRT training session to observe different breeds before you make up your mind about a given breed or particular dog. Watch what it is that your dog will be asked to do. Talk to different handlers about the pros and cons of their breed in doing search work -- certain breeds may have inherent traits and talents that make them easier (or sometimes more difficult) to train than other breeds. Anyone who has been working with SAR dogs for any length of time has learned a great deal about what is important in a SAR dog and you can gain much by listening carefully to what these more experienced handlers have to say. However, if you are set on a particular breed, you will have a much better chance of success in purchasing a dog that will be able to do the work by buying from a working line and not a show line. Also, you should investigate any genetic diseases inherent in your breed and take all steps possible to ensure you purchase your dog from a bloodline that appears clear of genetic health problems that tend to occur in your breed. A reputable breeder should be able to answer any questions you have about health problems within their bloodlines, as well as the potential working ability of their dogs. Again, you don't want to put years of hard work into training a dog just to find out later that it is not capable of doing the work due to a genetically-linked disease. And, you want to start with a dog that has as much potential as possible to do the work -- and for as long as possible!