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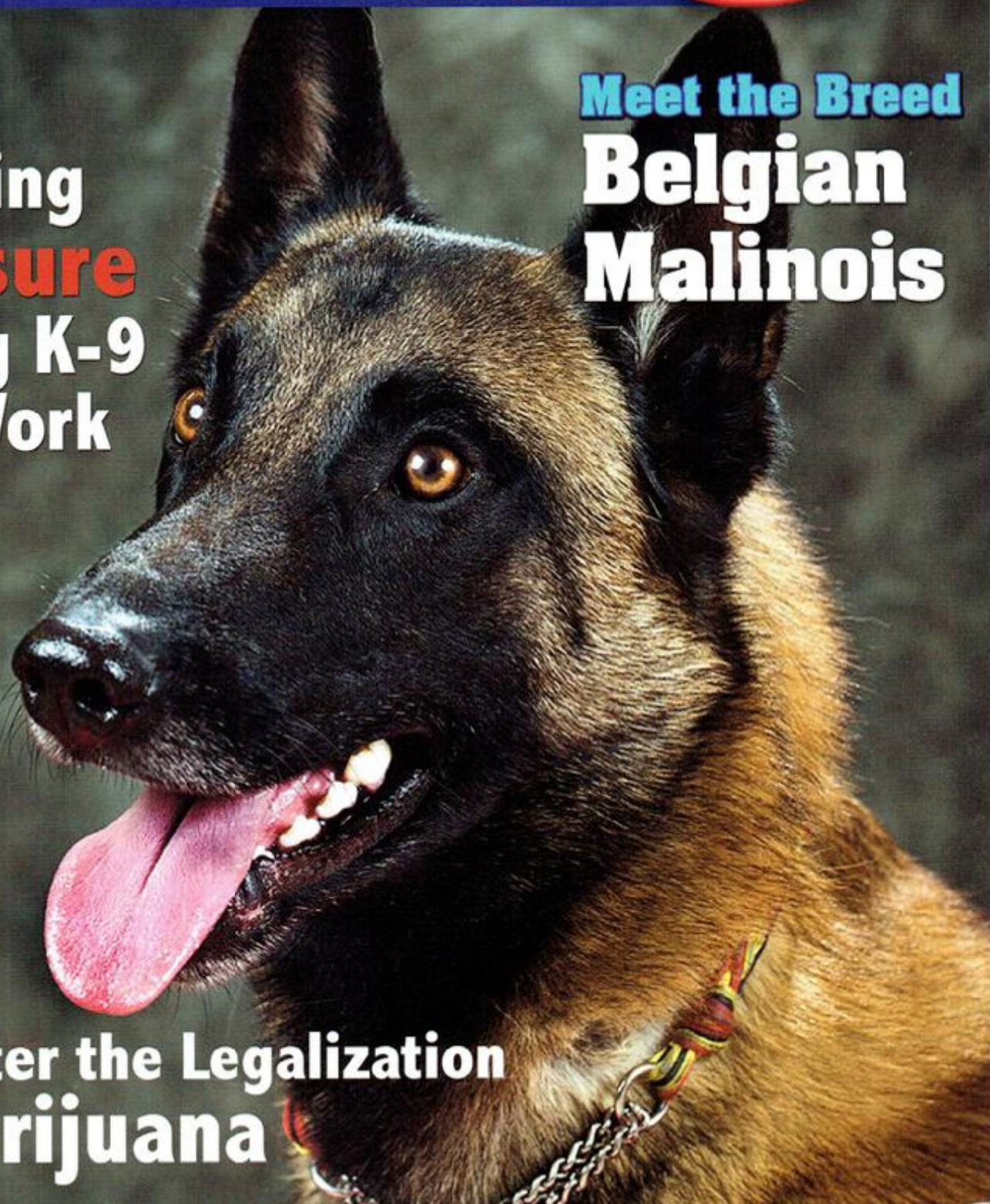
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Applying
Pressure
During K-9
Bite Work

Meet the Breed
**Belgian
Malinois**

K-9 After the Legalization
of **Marijuana**



MEET THE BREED

Belgian Shepherd Dog (Malinois)

The Malinois /mal-in-wah/ or Belgian Shepherd Dog is a breed of dog, sometimes classified as a variety of the Belgian Shepherd Dog classification, rather than as a separate breed. The Malinois is recognized in the United States under the name Belgian Malinois. Its name is the French word for *Mechlinian*, which is in Dutch either *Mechelse*

herdershond or *Mechelse schep* (both meaning: shepherd dog from Mechelen) or *Mechelaar* (one from Mechelen). It is used as a working dog for tasks including detection of odors such as explosives, accelerants (for arson investigation), and narcotics; tracking of humans for suspect apprehension in police work; and search and rescue.

APPEARANCE

Like all Belgian Shepherds, the Malinois is a medium-sized and square-proportioned dog in the sheepdog family. The Malinois has a short mahogany coat with black markings. It has black erect ears and a black muzzle. It has a square build in comparison to the German Shepherd.

COAT AND COLOR

Due to its history as a working dog (i.e., being bred for function over form), the Malinois can vary greatly in appearance. The acceptable colors of pure-bred Malinois are a base color fawn to mahogany and tan with a black mask and black ears with some degree of black tipping on the hairs, giving an overlay appearance. The color tends to be lighter with less black agouti or overlay on the dog's underside, breeching, and inner leg. White markings are also allowed on the tips of the toes and the chest, as long as the white on the chest does not extend up to the neck.

The other varieties of Belgian Shepherd are distinguished by their coats and colors: the Tervuren is the same color as the Malinois but has long hair, the wire-coated Laekenois is fawn and lacks the black mask and ears, and the Groenendae (registered as Belgian Sheepdog by the American Kennel Club) has long hair and is solid black.





■ LEFT: Cher Car's "Dooley", male Belgian Malinois.

Photo: Cher Car Kennels
www.dogsports.com



■ RIGHT: Cher Car's "Current", female Belgian Malinois.

Photo: Cher Car Kennels www.dogsports.com

SIZE

Male dogs are about 61–70 cm (24–28 in), while females are about 56–61 cm (22–24 in) at the withers. Female Malinois are said to average 25–30 kg (55–66 lb), while males are heavier at 29–34 kg (64–75 lb). Dogs under 23 inches or over 27 inches are to be disqualified, as are females under 21 inches or over 25 inches.

TEMPERAMENT

Well-raised and trained Malinois are usually active, friendly, protective, alert and hard-working. Belgian Malinois exhibit energy levels that are among the highest of all dog breeds. A typical Malinois will have puppy-like energy until the age of three, though it is not uncommon for them to exhibit this energy level until the age of five. Many have excessively high prey drive. Some may be excessively exuberant or playful, especially when young. They can be destructive or develop neurotic behaviors if not provided enough stimulation and exercise. This often causes problems for owners who are unfamiliar with the breed and are not prepared to provide the exercise they require or a job for them to do. They are medium sized, strong dogs that require consistent obedience training, and enjoy being challenged with new tasks. They are known as being very easy to train, due to their high drive for rewards.

WORKING DOG

In Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries, as well as in the United States, Canada, Australia and Hong Kong, the Malinois is bred primarily as a working dog for personal protection, detection, police work, search and rescue, and sport work (Belgian Ring, Schutzhund, French Ring, Mondio Ring). The United States Secret Service and Royal Australian Air Force use the breed along with other working lines such as Dutch Shepherd, and also GSD. In the United States Armed Forces, Malinois (along with German Shepherds) are preferred breeds for use as working dogs.

The dog is also used extensively by Unit Oketz of the Israel Defense Forces. Oketz favors the slighter build of the Malinois over that of the German Shepherd and Rottweiler which were employed formerly. Malinois are the perfect size to be picked up by their handlers, while still being able to attack their enemies, and their shorter coats and fair and neutral colors make them less prone to heatstroke. A Malinois

MEET THE BREED



Photo: Cher Car Kennels
www.dogsports.com

■ ABOVE: Six-week old Current x Dooley puppies.

named Posy is the only canine in the Israel Defense Forces ever to receive the Medal of Distinguished Service. According to a member of the Unit Oketz, Posy left her handler and burrowed beneath a collapsed six story building and located two Mossad agents that had been trapped beneath the rubble for several days. Though she suffered a badly broken front leg while searching for the bodies, Posy remained with the two agents for over twelve hours while earth moving machines cleared the debris.

United States Navy SEALs used a Belgian Malinois war dog named Cairo in Operation Neptune Spear, in which Osama bin Laden was killed.

The TV show *Person of Interest* features a Malinois named Bear as a regular cast member.

ACTIVITIES

Malinois can compete in dog agility trials, obedience, showmanship, flyball, tracking, and herding events, and are one of the most popular breeds used in protection sports such as the Belgian Ring, Schutzhund, French Ring, and Mondio Ring. In America herding is a popular activity. Herding instincts can be measured at noncompetitive herding tests. In 2011 alone, the AKC awarded 39 new herding titles to Belgian Malinois.

HEALTH

The average lifespan of the Belgian Malinois is 12-14 years. Notable health problems prevalent to the Malinois include cataracts, epilepsy, thyroid disease, progressive retinal atrophy, hip dysplasia, and pannus, although these problems have been minimized through selective breeding. ■



Photo: Tact Kennels www.tactkennels.weebly.com