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THE RELEASE – ALWAYS A CHALLENGE?



Introduction

- Police dogs have to keep hold of a suspect by biting him
- To keep the injury as small as possible, the dog handler needs to be able to stop the bite at any time
- But this often leads to problems

Possible Reasons

- Dogs associate „the release“ with loss of resource, because
 1. Most of the time the handler takes the toy away
 2. After “the release” the dog has to perform the next exercise before it gets the toy again

Possible Reasons

1. Classical Conditioning
Loss of resource = frustration
Out = loss of resource
Out = frustration
2. Working harder after “the release” is an information, that the performance was not good enough

Both informations = negative punishment

Possible Reasons

- In training dogs learn:
 - Movement of the decoy = trigger to bite
 - Decoy stands still → dog is asked to perform “the release”
- People being bitten by a dog often are not able to “freeze”
- There is a mismatch between training and real scenarios

Possible Reasons

- To solve this problem positive punishment is often used, for example choking dogs out of suspect
- This can lead to following problems
 1. Health: K. Grohmann et al. (2013) showed that strangling dogs can cause serious brain damage

Possible Reasons

2. Dogs can associate the context with the loss of oxygen (the command, grabbing the collar , approach of the dog handler, decoy standing still) → possible reaction:
 1. Flight
 2. Avoiding the situation
 3. Aggressive behavior directed towards the handler

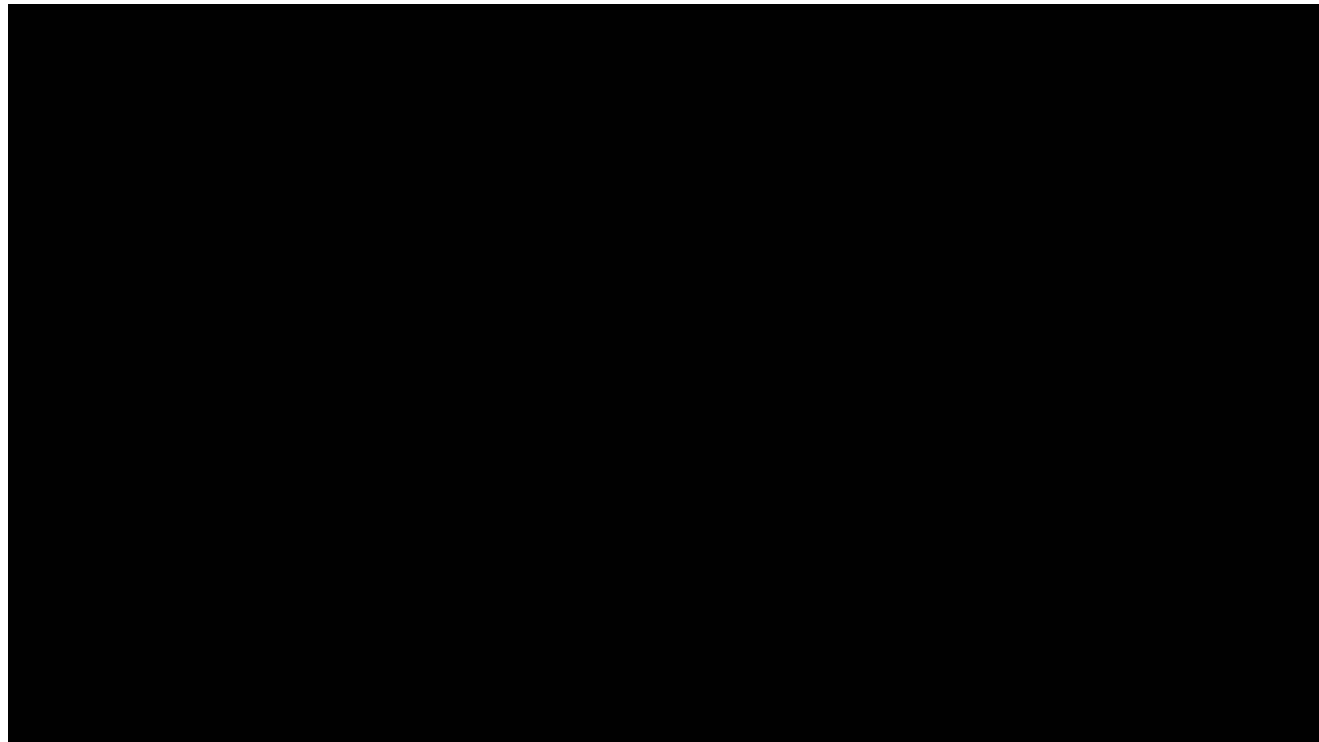
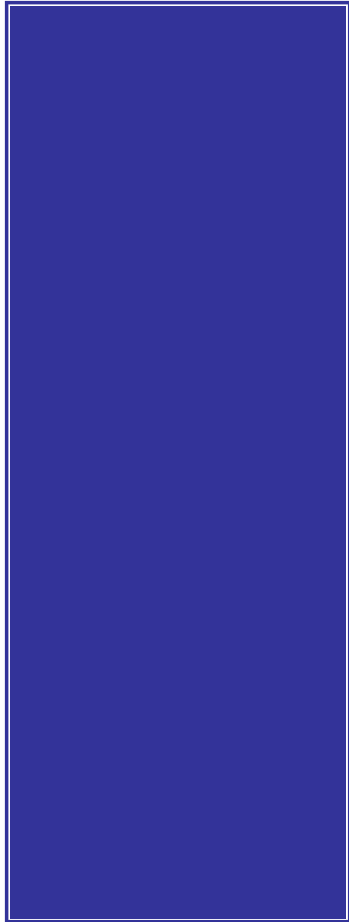
Possible Solution

1. Step: Classical Conditioning: „Out“ = you will get something pleasant
 - The place of expectation is important (first: dog handler, second: decoy)
2. Step: Operant Conditioning: Opening the mouth → reinforcement (place of reinforcement is important)
3. Step: Increasing the value of resource

Possible Solution

- Due to the place of expectation you automatically will get two outcomes:
 1. Position in front of the decoy
 2. Garding phase





Remaining Problems

1. Purchase of adult dogs, that already have problems
2. Short time to train dogs (combination of 1 and 2)
3. Moving suspect in real scenarios

Possible Solution

- The following suggestion is not a replacement for training a proper release
- It is a tool for buying time → training a proper release and protection work parallel
- This device can be used in operation for:
 1. Dogs that should not perform an “Out” in operation
 2. In case of emergency

Study

Question/Aim

1. Does the use of the device cause stress in dogs?
 2. Does the use of the device cause injuries?
- At this moment only field reports exist

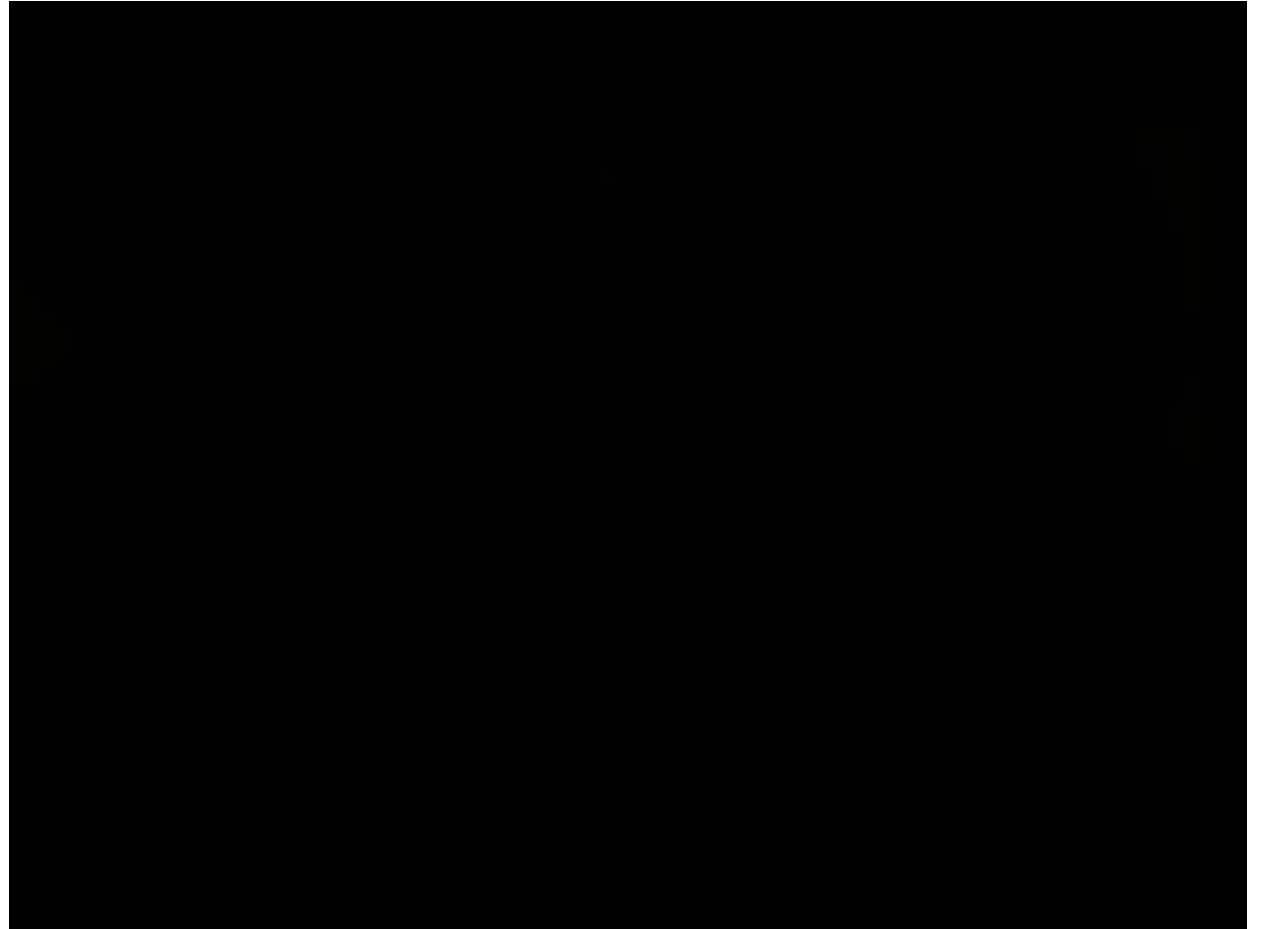
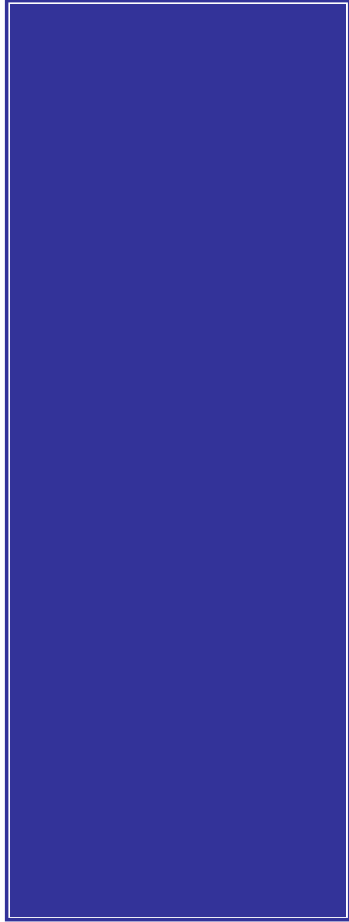
Study

- Collaboration between the Lupologic GmbH and Bundeswehr School of Dog Handling
- N= 6 German Shepherds
- The dogs had to “release” the protection sleeve
- The entire sequence was filmed to evaluate the body language
- The buccal cavity was examined immediately after the release and under anesthetic

Study

- Inside the buccal cavity no lesion was found
- No evidence of stress was found
- Future prospect: increasing the number of dogs for the study





Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Bundeswehr School of Dog Handling der Bundeswehr for the collaboration. Without their help this study would not have been possible.



Thank you for your attention!