

The Independent on Sunday

Police dogs are too cowardly, officers admit

By Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent

Saturday, 3 February 2001

The furry face of law enforcement, the German shepherd, is a cowardly beast that frequently suffers from dodgy hips, say police researchers. At least five forces are testing a leaner, meaner breed from **Belgium** as an alternative.

Officers say they are struggling to find enough quality animals to staff their dog sections and they desperately need a more reliable and courageous canine. PC Phil Tyson, a handler from the West Yorkshire force, started research to find the ideal patrol dog after his four-year-old Alsatian had to be destroyed because its hip joints were worn.

"It's not uncommon for German shepherds to have problems with their hips," he says. "The defect has been bred into them by people wanting them as show dogs. They can also be very cowardly. It's known as flight or fight. They will bite someone and wait for a reaction. If it gets too much the dog will run away. They are not totally committed. Dog shows have meant German Shepherds have had the suspicion and boldness bred out of them."

He said it was extremely difficult to find good quality Alsatians and his force had rejected all but 12 out of 175 animals they examined. But PC Tyson believes he has found a replacement. Step forward a 20-month-old Belgian Malinois bitch called Sparky, who is patrolling the streets of Halifax.

Malinois, used by the Dutch and German police, are the same height as German shepherds, but leaner and more muscular. "They are superb animals," said PC Tyson. "There's no flab or waste on them. It's like Prince Naseem [the featherweight world champion boxer] - not a huge build but capable of bringing down a much bigger man.

"When these dogs tackle a man with a knife or a gun they don't hold back. They don't suffer from nerves."

Greater Manchester, the RUC, Hampshire and the West Midlands Police are also testing the **Belgium Malinois**. The Metropolitan police are among several forces considering using the **Malinois** as an alternative to the Alsatian.

The sub-committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) responsible for dog-handling met last week to discuss the shortage of quality Alsatians, which they believe is due to poor breeding and the private security industry buying many of the animals.

Superintendent Clive Helliwell, the secretary, said: "We do detect that the drive, the willingness to work, and courage, has been bred out of German shepherds compared with 30 years ago."

Acpo is researching a breeding programme and looking at alternative dogs, including the **Malinois**. Police had tried Rottweilers and Dobermanns but rejected them as unpredictable and, like Alsatians, prone to fleeing confrontations.

The Essex force, returning to more traditional policing techniques, recently reintroduced bloodhounds as sniffer trail dogs. The saggy-faced hounds were the first dogs to be used by the Metropolitan Police in 1888 in an effort to track Jack the Ripper.

The Met's first official dog section had three Labrador dogs in 1946. German Shepherds made their first appearance in the Met in 1956, and two years later large numbers were brought in, alongside Dobermanns, by Scotland Yard and Surrey Police.

Today the Met's dog section has 180 German shepherds and 30 Springer Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels, and Labradors, which are all used to trace drugs and explosives.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/world/german-police-phase-out-use-of-german-shepherds-because-belgian-dogs-are-better/story-e6frev00-1226120537089>

The Telegraph

German police phase out use of German Shepherds, because Belgian dogs are better

Sorry Inspector Rex, but your time with the German police force is coming to an end.

- *NewsCore* August 23, 2011 2:54PM
- **German police to phase out shepherds**
- **Officers look to introduce Belgian breeds**
- **Dog expert says Belgians "more reliable"**

POLICE chiefs in Germany are phasing out the use of their iconic shepherds as working dogs, and are instead turning to their Belgian neighbours for crime help.

Gunther Bonke, a dog expert for the police in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, said the breed was being replaced by sturdier Belgian Shepherds, which are also known as the **Belgian Malinois**. He said the breed was considered more dependable and robust than its German rival, and could be deployed as sniffer dogs unlike German Shepherds, which are largely limited to security details.

The state, Germany's most populous, only has 26 German Shepherds working with the police, compared with 281 **Malinois**, Mr Bonke said. As well as being a popular working dog around the world, German Shepherds are regarded as loyal pets and were the No.4 breed on the UK Kennel Club's 2011 list of top breed registrations.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/german-shepherds-lose-bite-with-police/story-e6frg6so-1226120550367>

The Australian

German Shepherds out as police dogs

- From: *NewsCore* August 23, 2011 3:10PM

LAW enforcement chiefs in Germany are phasing out the use of German Shepherds as police dogs, news website The Local has reported.

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<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/world/german-police-phase-out-use-of-german-shepherds-because-belgian-dogs-are-better/story-e6freoox-1226120537089>

Courier Mail

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<http://www.thelocal.de/society/20110822-37117.html>

The Local (German News in English)

Police ditching the German Shepherd for Belgian breed

Published: 22 Aug 11 14:47 CET

Police in Germany are phasing out the use of German Shepherds as police dogs in favour of a sturdier Belgian breed.

Günther Bonke, a dog expert for the police in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), said on Monday the trusty German Shepherd, or Alsatian, was slowly being replaced by the **Belgian Shepherd**. The breed, also known as the **Malinois**, is considered more dependable and robust than its German rival.

Bonke said NRW had only 26 German Shepherds still working alongside the police compared to 281 Malinois. He explained that not all German states bred their own dogs, making the often cheaper **Belgian Shepherd** even more attractive when bought in bulk. NRW, which borders Belgium, has been breeding the Malinois since 1988. Over the years, the police discovered the dogs were healthier and more courageous than their German counterparts. **Belgian Shepherds** can also be used as sniffer dogs, unlike German Shepherds, which are largely limited to security details. The trend to **Malinois** has also spread to Germany's federal police, however, they haven't entirely given up on other breeds like the Alsatian.

"We are not planning exclusively with these dogs for the future," said a federal police spokesman. Officials in North Rhine-Westphalia aren't only betting on the Belgian dogs either. The state's police pack of 350 canines includes Dutch Shepherds, Giant Schnauzers, several mutts, as well as one Boxer and one Rottweiler.

DPA/The Local/mry

The Examiner

German Shepherds lose their place as police dogs in Germany

August 24, 2011

When most people think of police dogs, they think of the stately German Shepherd, but one German town is changing pace. The town is North Rhine-Westphalia and the new hot dog on the force is the Belgian Shepherd (sometimes called a Belgian Malinois).

The police there stopped breeding German Shepherds in 2005 and now Belgians now outnumber them 281 to 26. The officers report that the Belgians are shorter and lighter and seem to have better stamina when working.

Guenther Bonke, the man in charge of the police K9s says that this is a trend that is spreading around most of Germany and that "Belgian Shepherd can more often be used as both a guard dog and a tracking dog for drugs and explosives. In the end, those dogs are a better investment for us."

Continue reading on Examiner.com [German Shepherds lose their place as police dogs in Germany - National Dogs | Examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com/dogs-in-national/german-shepherds-lose-their-place-as-police-dogs-germany#ixzz1aFJ9NarU) <http://www.examiner.com/dogs-in-national/german-shepherds-lose-their-place-as-police-dogs-germany#ixzz1aFJ9NarU>

http://article.wn.com/view/2011/08/24/German_Shepherds_lose_their_place_as_police_dogs_in_Germany/

The Examiner

2011-08-24:

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m&c 2011-09-08: Hamburg - German Shepherds are the archetypal police dog, but they are increasingly being replaced by other breeds that are considered more courageous and better able to work under pressure. Their cuddly fur, loyalty and mild nature has put the German Shepherd high on the worldwide list of most favourite breeds. But these facts have become less useful when it comes to police departments, which are gradually reducing their use of the breed in security and... [more »](#)

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/lifestyle/life/features/article_1661618.php/German-Shepherds-no-longer-the-policeman-s-best-friend

m&c Lifestyle

German Shepherds no longer the policeman's best friend

By Julia Waeschenbach Sep 8, 2011, 4:06 GMT

Hamburg. German Shepherds are the archetypal police dog, but they are increasingly being replaced by other breeds that are considered more courageous and better able to work under pressure.

Their cuddly fur, loyalty and mild nature has put the German Shepherd high on the worldwide list of most favourite breeds. But these facts have become less useful when it comes to police departments, which are gradually reducing their use of the breed in security and search operations. The new breed of choice is a **Belgian sheepdog** found to be more courageous and resolute.

But Christian Grube, spokesman for Germany's association for the popular breed, said German Shepherds are in no way cowardly.

'These dogs have strong nerves and in terms of their ability to be taught have the best characteristics,' said Grube. Their big advantage is their versatility. 'They can be deployed as sheepdogs, as seeing-eye dogs, as dogs used in therapies for humans, as sporting dogs, as family pets and of course as rescue dogs.'

But in Germany love of the breed nevertheless has slowly declined. The number of registered births of German Shepherds has dropped by half in the last 12 years. However, Grube points out that 1 million German Shepherd puppies were born around the world in 2010.

Nevertheless, the dogs are being phased out by the police in North Rhine-Westphalia. There are only 26 German Shepherds active in the force compared with 281 sheepdogs belonging to the **Belgian breed Malinois**.

Starting in 1988 animals of both breeds were bred over a period of several years. **On average the Belgian breed performed better than German Shepherds, said Guenther Bonke, a dog handler at the North Rhine-Westphalian state education and research office for the police.**

'A police dog has to be courageous and determined in stressful situations and defend its handler,' said Bonke. The animal must be highly motivated through play and reward in order to sniff out illegal narcotics and explosives. 'The Belgian sheepdogs that we raised showed all of that in greater measures.'

On the whole the **Belgian sheepdog** is not only more robust, but also cheaper than its German counterpart. Because many of Germany's 16 states buy their dogs rather than breed them, the price plays a decisive role, said Bonke.

In any case, however, German police departments have no plans to stop using German Shepherds completely. 'We have amassed a long record of good experience,' said a spokesman for the police department in Potsdam.

Many families also remain true to the German Shepherd and want them as pets. There were 14,500 German Shepherd puppies born in Germany last year, according to a German dog association. That puts it ahead of the ever-popular dachshund and even the retriever.

The police in North Rhine-Westphalia still stand by the dogs. 'Our decision on breeding is not a decision against the dog,' said Bonke. 'Many of our dog handlers would love to have one. We are desperately looking for good dogs for them.'

<http://www.examiner.com/belgian-breeds-in-national/belgian-malinois-photo-1>

Belgians by number for breed and performance

The Examiner

May 5, 2011

The AKC statistics are up for breed rankings and also for titles and awards. The Belgian Laekenois do show up in performance for 2010 but not in the general breed ranking by numbers for popularity as they wait for full recognition.

The **Belgian Malinois** is the most popular of the Belgian breeds in AKC. Malinois ranked #76. This popularity may be due in part to the increased use of Malinois by security forces and police groups. Those dogs may get AKC registrations while many of the **military Malinois** may not. Malinois have moved up almost 20 places on the listing since 2000.