



**A DOG CAN COVER
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Dog Patrol

By Dave Hawrys

While most dogs are still dreaming happy thoughts, slumbering in their beds, my 2 year old Golden Retriever Murdoch is waking me up with excitement, anticipating the work day ahead. When Murdoch was just a puppy, I decided that I wanted to train him to become an avalanche rescue dog. At just 6 months old, we enrolled into the CARDA program and began our adventure of training towards becoming a Certified Avalanche Rescue Dog Team.

The CARDA program is a volunteer non-profit charitable organization whose goal is to train and maintain a network of highly efficient avalanche search and rescue teams across Canada. Their aim is to train dogs and handlers to ensure they are prepared to save human lives in an avalanche.

Being a Professional Ski Patroller at Fernie Alpine Resort, I am lucky to have the opportunity to bring my dog to work with me each and every day. On top of my regular duties of avalanche control and first aid, the rest of my day usually

consists of training with Murdoch. We work on obedience, mountain travel, and mock avalanche scenarios, so that if the call comes of an avalanche anywhere in the province we'll be ready to respond.

We live in an area where avalanches are prevalent and having an Avalanche Dog respond to an incident can save precious time in a rescue. A dog can cover more ground effectively in 20 minutes than an 80 person probe team can in 4 hours. Some dogs smell food from a mile away, whereas an avalanche dog can smell the faintest of human scent under many meters of snow.

We are lucky to have four avalanche rescue dog teams within Fernie. Two are 'Fully Validated Dog Teams' consisting of Steve Morrison & Mojo, and Kirk Gutzman & Lily. Our two additional 'In Training Teams' are Jen Coulter & Farley and myself & Murdoch. Both Jen and I and our dogs will be traveling to Whistler this month to attend our final validation course. As January is Avalanche Awareness Month, I bid you safe travel in the backcountry this winter, and invite you to attend our Avalanche Dog Demos at Fernie Alpine Resort on Saturday, January 13th. ❄️

