



Press Release

Chillybuddy to the Rescue

(Rockville, MD) March 15, 2008--Chillybuddy, the new dog cooling jacket engineered to provide a long-lasting cool environment, has caught the attention of the nation's elite canine forces. FEMA-certified Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Force members and their lead veterinary advisor, Dr. Cynthia Otto of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, have seen preliminary demonstrations of these jackets under simulated disaster conditions. Some Task Force handlers, who were asked for input on the final Chillybuddy design, have since made the jackets standard equipment for their dogs. US&R dogs often encounter severe heat as they search urban areas for survivors of hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, fires and other disasters, and Dr. Otto, who heads a veterinary clinical trial center at Penn, plans to design a study of the efficacy of Chillybuddy as a postwork cooling aid.

Bob Stalick, President and General Manager of PT Bofabs, developed the Chillybuddy prototype for his own sun-shy dogs, Buddy, an Australian Shepherd and Tater, a French Brittany. He investigated a number of synthetic and natural textiles, choosing a nontoxic loose-weave reflective outer fabric with a cotton mesh lining. Both materials are lightweight and allow constant air flow. Stalick then tested the jacket in direct sunshine. A Fluke laser infrared thermometer on a 90°F day showed that wearing a Chillybuddy reduced a dog's coat temperature by almost 30% (from 145°F to 103°F). Dampening the cotton lining lowered the temperature by another 20 degrees. "After I perfected the cooling system, I had to worry about retention. How well would it stay on an active dog? It took a few versions to create a jacket style that covers the surface of a dog's body, with a built-in chest protector to guard against thick brush," he says. Tater, who shares bird-hunting trips with Stalick in the rugged wilderness of West Virginia, Nebraska and Wyoming, tried it out. "It stayed on. And if it stays on her--then an energetic 10-month-old--it will stay on any dog under any conditions."

The shepherds, collies, labs and other breeds on US&R task forces are not allowed to wear anything--not even collars--when actually searching a site. During rest periods, though, they need to cool down quickly, and it is not usually practical or possible to use cooling beds or other aids. Stalick asked Maryland Task Force One members to give Chillybuddy a try. "We work in 12-hour shifts. The dogs usually work a half hour on, a half hour off," says force member John Gilkey, whose canine partner is Bailey. "And the Chillybuddy gets them cooled down fast. So we think [having the jackets] might lengthen the time they can work." Chillybuddy goes on and off easily, Gilkey notes, and its light weight makes it packable for deployment travel, when every ounce of rescue equipment counts.

Some of the Maryland task force worked at the World Trade Center after the September 11th tragedy. Dr. Otto has been tracking the health of those dogs in an ongoing multi-year study. Now she has taken a professional interest in Chillybuddy, with plans to design a study of the jackets. "There are a lot of variables--weather, etc.--where these dogs are deployed, and we need reproducible environments. I'm thinking now of how to design trials, how to test as a postwork cooling aid. Potentially we might also test the cooling effect with canine-athlete dogs, where the work and environment are more controlled and more reproducible. But these are definitely cool jackets," she says.

Each task force handler bears the responsibility of training and caring for his or her individual dog, often supplying gear necessary on the job. Stalick is making Chillybuddy jackets available to any certified rescue dog (urban or wilderness) for a nominal \$20 which includes shipping.

The Chillybuddy jacket, an engineered solution to keep the hottest dogs cool, comes in two styles and nine sizes; custom sizing available. Purchase at select online sites and retailers. Details at www.chillybuddy.com.

The Coolest Dogs Wear Chillybuddy™

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