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Introduction to K9 Anti-Poaching



Module # 1 - Introduction to K9s

Component # 1 - Introduction to K9s

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Module # 3 - Working with your K9s

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Luna Hounds

K9 Wildlife Conservation

Disclaimer

While graduates of this course will certainly receive a certificate of completion, this is not a K9 handling or training qualification.

The advice, recommendations, protocols, suggestions, and instructions provided should be treated **as guidance only**.

This course aims to educate potential K9 handlers and wildlife enthusiasts about the complexities of K9 Anti-Poaching. **However, the tasks of K9 training and handling, as well as Anti-Poaching activities, must be left to qualified and experienced professionals at all times.**

The information contained within this course is the experienced opinion of the author.

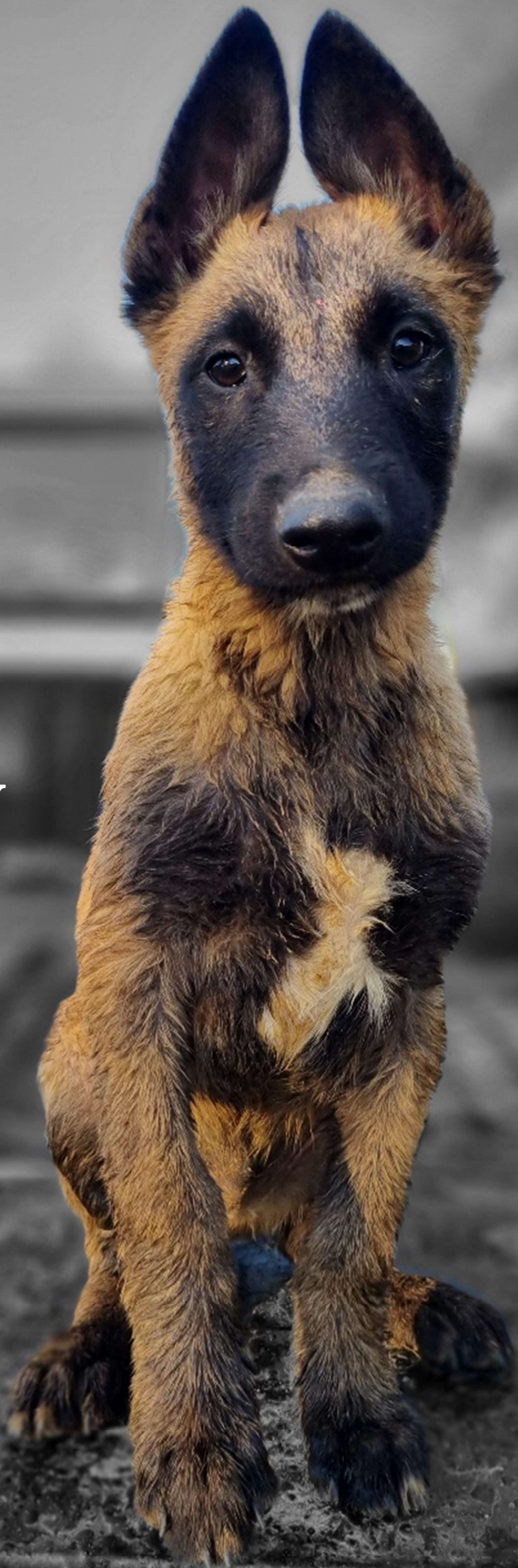
WildlifeCampus and Luna Hounds, take no responsibility for how you may utilise the information contained within this course and any consequences thereof.

Module 1 Component 1

Introduction to K9s



“Life is
undeniably
better with
a dog by
your side”.



About this course and the author

Robynne Wasas - Luna Hounds

In 2012, I embarked on my career in nature conservation during my final year of school. I began as a part-time ranger in training, driven by my childhood dream of becoming a dedicated Anti-Poaching woman, making a tangible impact on the frontlines. Despite facing obstacles, completing my Level 2 Field Guide courses and obtaining incredible experience on the ground working with the Big 5, I eventually secured a spot as one of the sixteen men on a ground-breaking course offered by one of South Africa's first Anti-Poaching Training providers that welcomed women.

Within this field, I thrived and soon secured a position as a Detection K9 Handler in the Timbavati region. Immersed in the company of exceptional trainers in South Africa, I embraced every moment to expand my knowledge and skill set. As my journey progressed, I transitioned to the Southern African Wildlife College, assuming the Operational Manager and Trainer roles at the esteemed K9 Unit. During this time, my abilities as a trainer were refined, and I gained a profound understanding of the significant impact that K9s have in the fight against poaching.

Motivated by my vision, I embarked on creating Luna Hounds, a company dedicated to harnessing the natural instincts of our K9 companions to enhance wildlife protection efforts. This venture allowed me to establish my own path and contribute to safeguarding our precious wildlife. Through the utilisation of working K9s, I have been granted the opportunity to become a relentless advocate and protector for these voiceless beings. Each day, as I witness these incredible dogs' profound impact on our mission, my commitment to their cause deepens.





Robynne Wasas - Luna Hounds

Introduction

Becoming a K9 handler or trainer requires more than just a surface-level desire to work in Anti-Poaching or nature conservation. The connection runs much deeper. When working with these highly specialised, intelligent, and sentient creatures, one must possess a constant yearning to comprehend the essence of each K9's thoughts and emotions. These working K9s are not mere tools that can be stored away and retrieved when needed. They become an integral part of your life, a steadfast companion who shapes every aspect of your day and night. Without the handler's dedicated effort, time, and affection towards their K9 partner, a successful K9 team will disintegrate.

You need to understand:

- What drives them?
- What makes a happy working dog?
- What do they need from you as their handler?



These modules will delve into the fundamental knowledge necessary for entering the working K9 industry. **We aim to provide individuals from diverse backgrounds with enough information to make an educated decision about pursuing this career path and to start this journey a foot ahead of the rest in their knowledge base.**

The characteristics of a good or excellent K9 handler are:

The best characteristics of a K9 handler include a **deep understanding and love for dogs, excellent communication skills, physical fitness and agility, patience, adaptability, and a strong sense of responsibility.**

- 🐾 A K9 handler must possess **the ability to establish a strong bond** with their K9 partner and the patience and persistence required to train and maintain their skills.
- 🐾 **Effective communication** is vital, both in working with the dog and collaborating with other team members.
- 🐾 **Physical fitness and agility** are essential for handling the job's physical demands and keeping up with the K9 partner during operations.
- 🐾 **Adaptability** is crucial as situations can change rapidly, requiring quick thinking and decision-making.
- 🐾 Lastly, a K9 handler must have **a strong sense of responsibility** towards the safety and well-being of their dog, as well as a dedication to the mission and their team.

It is important to acknowledge that certain dogs can be quite intimidating, making it challenging to even approach them for feeding or taking them on a walk. However, possessing the bravery and self-assurance necessary to work with an animal specifically trained and conditioned to project an intimidating image to everyone except their designated handler is crucial.



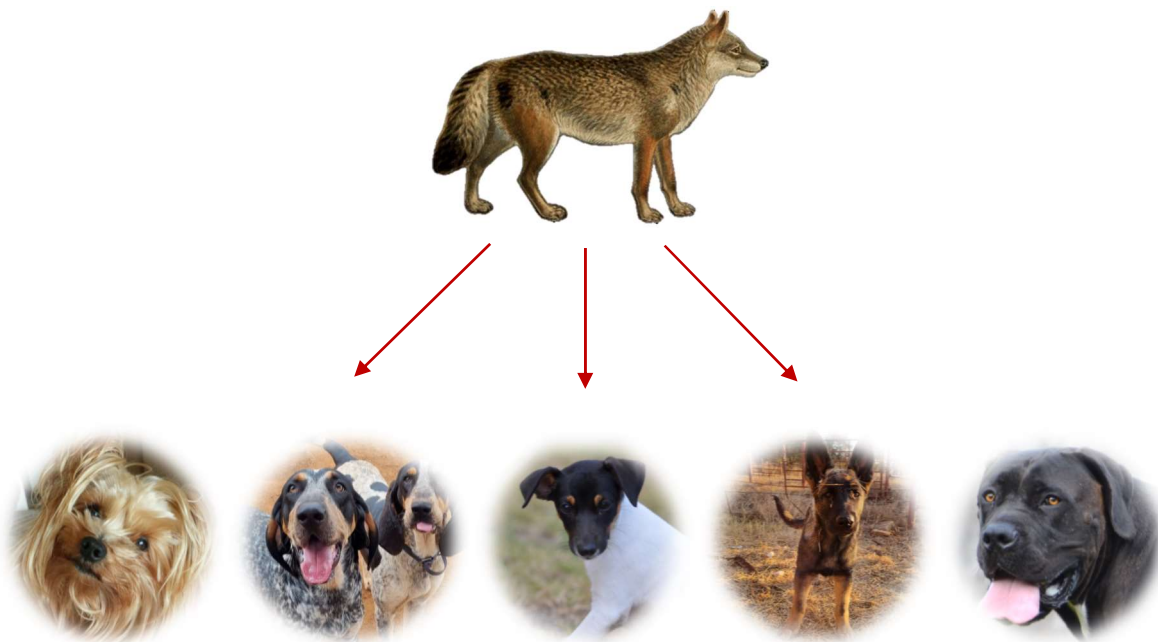
Introduction to K9s

History of dogs

There has been extensive debate surrounding the topic. Yet, certain archaeological evidence suggests that over 30,000 years ago, wolves and humans initiated a profound connection that we now recognise as 'man's best friend.' Initially, this bond developed through acts such as sharing the warmth of a fire to endure the cold or scavenging the remains after a hunt.

Eventually, wolves evolved and transformed into various dog breeds, totalling approximately 360 breeds worldwide. It may be astonishing to comprehend that even the smallest Chihuahua can trace its ancestry back to the grey wolf. Understanding the origins of this remarkable species, *Canis familiaris*, can greatly aid a K9 handler in comprehending their K9's behaviour and original purpose.

Isn't it incredible to think that Tea-Cup Yorkshire Terriers and Chihuahuas are descendants of the grey wolf?



All modern domestic dogs are descendants of the grey wolf

During World War II, a courageous Yorkshire terrier named Smokey served as a war dog, weighing a mere 1.9 kilograms. Smokey's valour was evidenced by her participation in 150 air raids and 12 sea rescues, where she played a vital role in saving numerous soldiers from incoming shells by alerting them when it was safe to move out of cover. In one remarkable instance, when ground teams encountered immense difficulty threading a telegraph wire through a narrow 21-meter pipe with a mere 20mm diameter, Smokey emerged as the saviour. She successfully pulled the crucial wire through the pipe, enabling the troops to establish an essential line of communication during the war. Smokey holds the distinction of being classified as **the first-ever war therapy dog**.



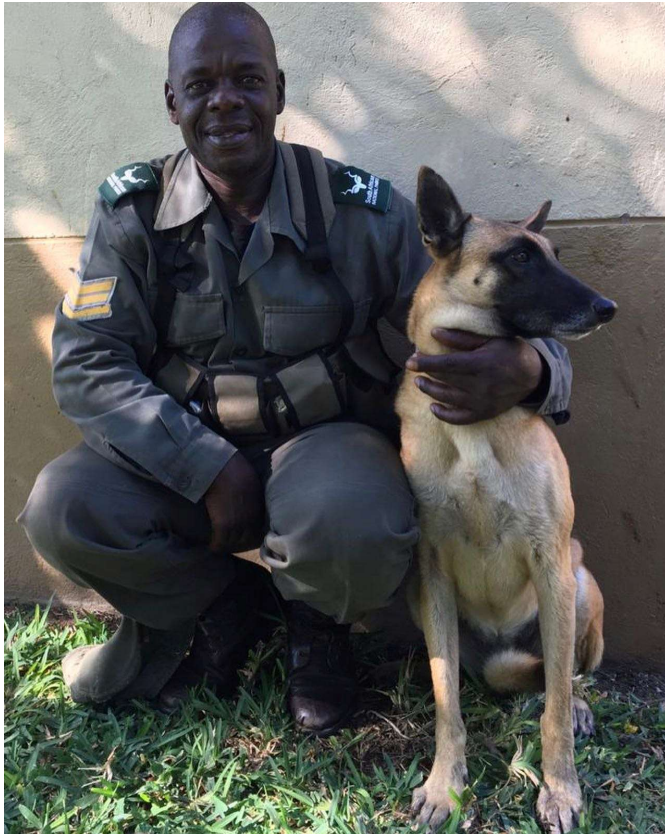
History of working dogs in Anti-Poaching

Before 2010, the concept of dogs operating in heavily populated Big Five areas encountered significant resistance, primarily due to the inherent dangers posed by leopards, lions, and hyenas. However, the narrative took a remarkable turn when a female Belgian Malinois named Ngwenya, guided by her handler, Sergeant Lucky Ndlovu of the Kruger National Park, single-handedly revolutionised the landscape of Anti-Poaching efforts in South Africa and, indeed, throughout the entire African continent.

Their unwavering dedication and fearless commitment to the cause led Ngwenya to apprehend numerous poachers, with her life in constant jeopardy as she tirelessly protected our endangered black and white rhinos. Ngwenya's incredible achievements not only demonstrated the viability of dogs operating effectively in Big Five territories but also shattered the paradigm by showing that these remarkable animals could carry out their tasks during the treacherous night hours. This pivotal moment set the stage for the future of K9 units in Anti-Poaching.

In 2019, Ngwenya peacefully passed away in her sleep, leaving a profound impact on all who knew her. Her legacy and heroism were evident, reminding us of the trials she blazed in the field of K9 Anti-Poaching. The sceptics were compelled to acknowledge that using K9 units was undeniably our best chance to gain the upper hand against the criminal syndicates plaguing our wildlife.

Thanks to the combined efforts of Sergeant Lucky and Ngwenya, today, Kruger National Park boasts more than 50 online tracking dogs, patrol dogs, and detection dogs. This number does not even include the numerous hounds utilised by the Southern African Wildlife College and the supporting K9 units in the Greater Kruger National Park region. Their dedication and sacrifices have ensured a brighter future for the conservation of our precious wildlife.



Sergeant Lucky and Ngwenya

History of poaching in South Africa and Africa

This chapter presents significant challenges both in comprehension and composition. I strongly encourage aspiring Anti-Poaching Rangers and handlers to delve deeper into this subject, aiming to usher in an era of enhanced understanding and, consequently, a new age of prevention.

The utilisation of cut marks found in fossilised animal bones, along with the discovery of arrowheads and spears, has enabled archaeologists to determine the time when early humans first engaged in hunting animals for sustenance. This practice can be traced back to the Palaeolithic Period, approximately 2-2.6 million years ago.

The debate surrounding the onset of poaching revolves more around the distinction between hunting for survival and hunting driven by greed.

Historical records from the early 1800s indicate that certain European Big Game Hunters faced trial and prosecution by African Kings for poaching animals on sacred lands. Subsequently, during the 1900s, when European Colonial States implemented game preservation laws, Africans were prohibited from hunting animals entirely.

During this era, African wildlife gained substantial economic worth. As game populations, including elephants, rhinos, and lions, dwindled and received protection within Royal Hunting Reserves, the demand for illegal wildlife products surged beyond the capabilities of ordinary smugglers. The emergence of monetary value in wildlife created both opportunities for conservation and avenues for exploitation. In the absence of adequate regulations and safeguards, species face the risk of complete eradication from our planet.

The 1970s marked a devastating period for African wildlife, with white and black rhinos and elephants facing severe threats. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly known as CITES, was established in response to this alarming crisis. This pivotal agreement brought together 80 countries to tackle the pressing issue of illegal wildlife trade. As a result, an extensive list of animals from various regions of the world was implemented, imposing a complete ban on their trade. This proactive measure enabled nations to concentrate their efforts on dismantling smuggling networks more effectively.

However, challenges remain, and sustained efforts are required to ensure the long-term survival of African wildlife. By continuing to strengthen international cooperation, supporting local communities, promoting sustainable alternatives, and raising awareness, we can strive to secure a future where Africa's magnificent wildlife thrives in their natural habitats, free from the threat of poaching.

Classification of dogs

All dogs can generally be classified into 6 groups, which helps frame what they were originally bred to do:

- 🐾 **Sporting breeds:** Hunting dogs, also known as 'gun dogs', such as Retrievers and Spaniels.
- 🐾 **Hound breeds:** Used for tracking humans and animals such as Bloodhounds and Blue Tick Coonhounds. This group has a subgroup of sighthounds, which use speed and sight, and scent hounds, which use endurance and scent to catch their prey.
- 🐾 **Terrier breeds:** Usually highly energetic and prey-driven as they were originally bred for rodents and pest control, such as Jack Russell Terriers and Irish Terriers.
- 🐾 **Herding breeds:** Some of the most highly agile and intelligent breeds known for being easily trainable and responsive. These breeds include Border Collies and Australian Cattle Dogs.
- 🐾 **Working breeds:** Breeds of dogs that are suited to perform specific jobs and have been purposely bred for these jobs, such as Bernese Mountain Dogs and Boerboels.
- 🐾 **Non-sporting breeds:** These are breeds that are difficult to classify as they are used to fill companionship roles, such as Poodles and Chow Chows.



Lucy - The Foxy - Fox Terrier

Basic K9 anatomy

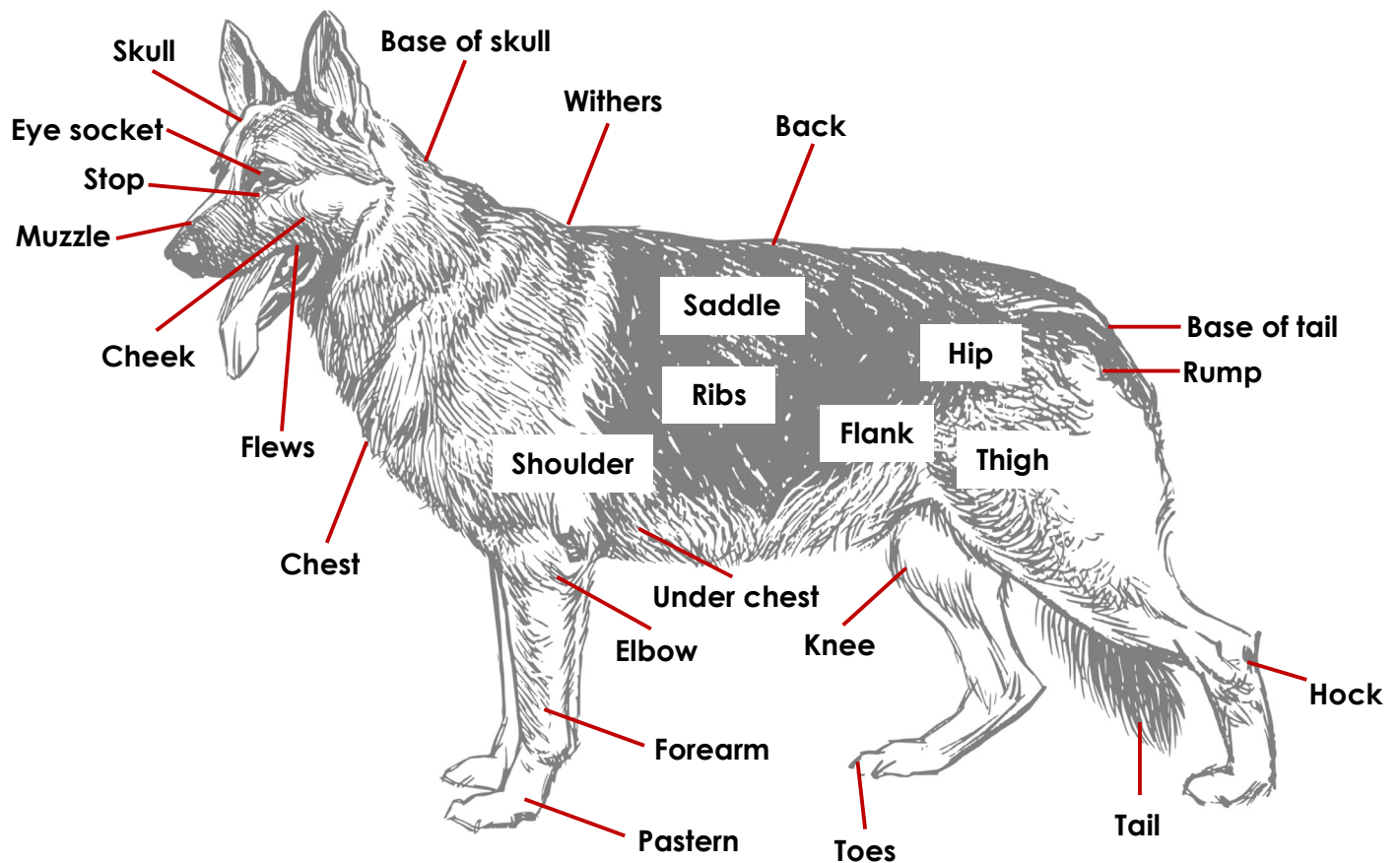


Figure 1. Basic external anatomy of a K9

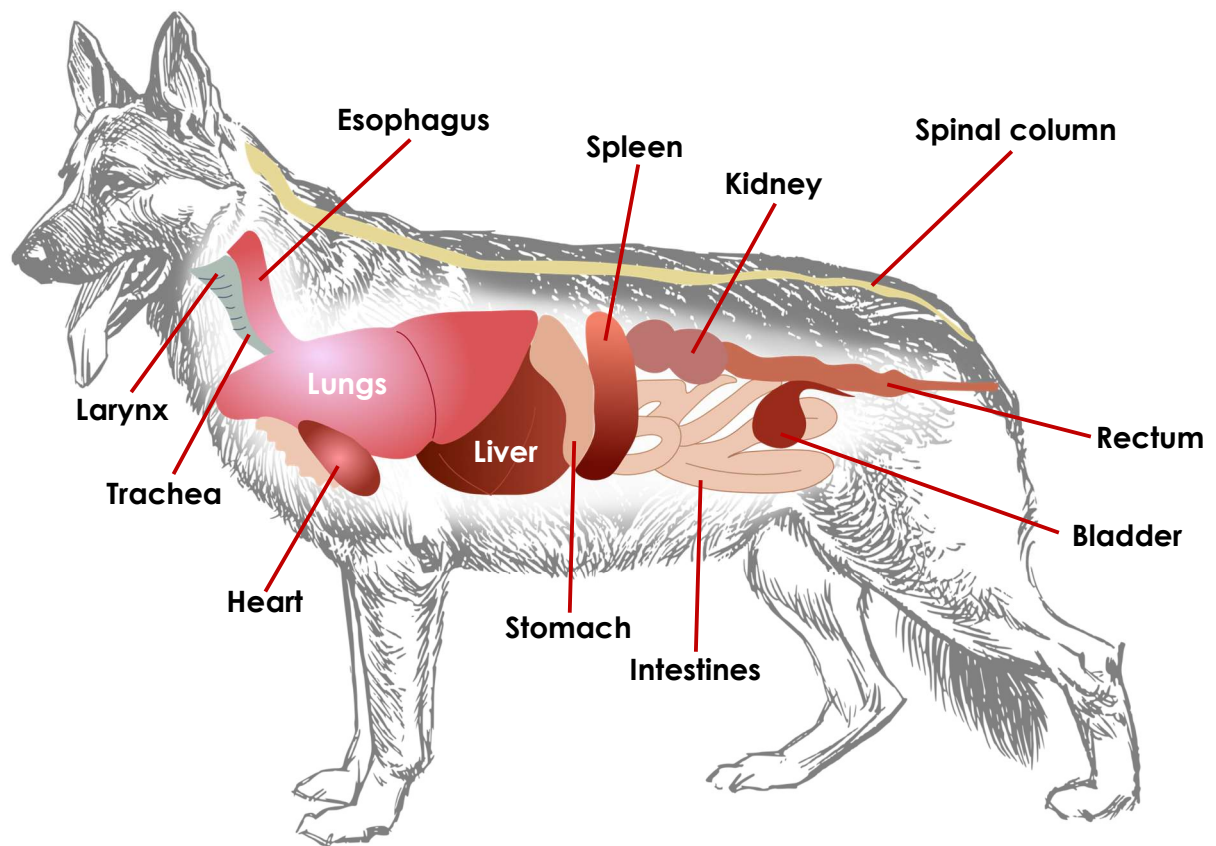
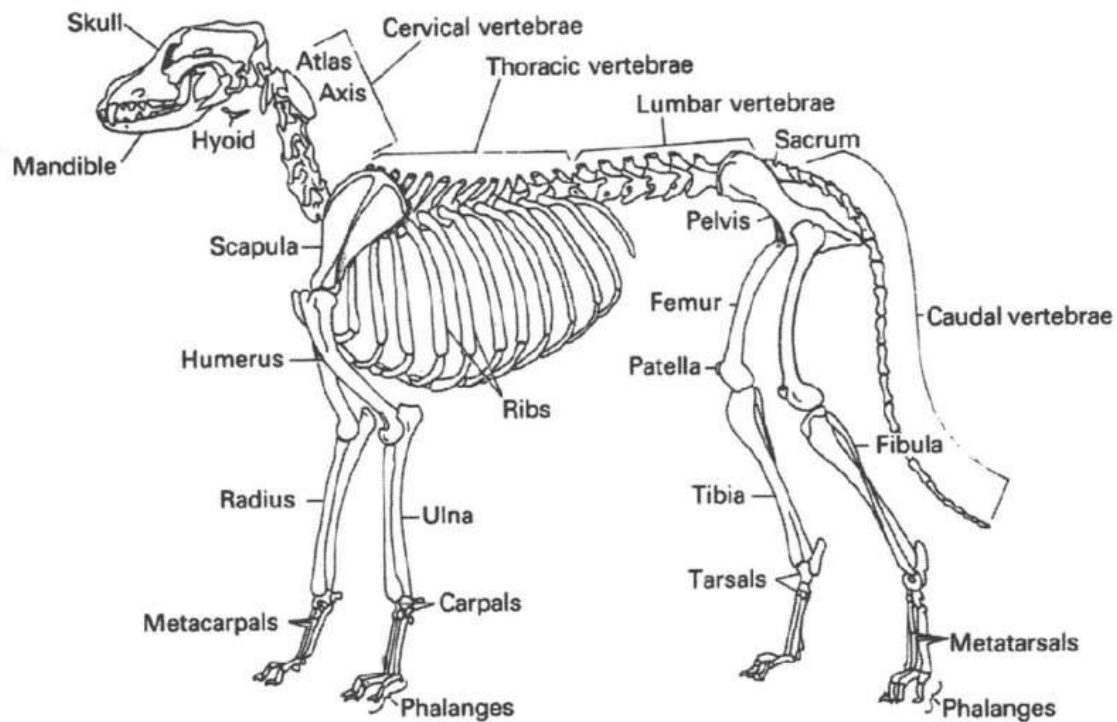


Figure 2. Basic internal anatomy of a K9



**Figure 3. Dog skeleton with major bone elements labelled
(Davis, 1987, p. 54; Reitz & Wing, 2008, p. 364)**