

Data-Dogs

“ [!toc] Table of Contents

“ [!info] TL;DR {static}

Data dogs, similar to drug detection dogs, are specially trained to sniff out certain metals that are used in electronics and thus in storage media such as USB sticks.

The following is an automated translation from this [german article](#) under the [Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license from netzpolitik.org, as it explains the topic quite well:

The irresistible smell of hard drives

“Data storage detection dogs” are increasingly being used in house searches. They can smell smartphones, hard drives, and even SIM cards. However, the police are keeping their training methods under wraps.

Everyone has heard of police dogs that search for drugs or explosives. There are also dogs that sniff out banknotes in the hunt for tax evaders. At the end of the last decade, a new type of training was added: dogs that sniff out storage media – and the German state of Saxony was a pioneer in this field. In the case of mass child abuse at a campsite in Lüdge,¹ Germany's only “data storage detection dog” at the time was deployed. As a result, the North Rhine-Westphalia police also trained such dogs and presented “Odin,” “Jupp,” and “Ali Baba” on social media. ¹ A small town in Westphalia.

There are several inquiries about data storage detection dogs on the transparency platform FragdenStaat. There, one could have learned more about how the police train dogs to find CDs, hard drives, memory cards, USB sticks, smartphones, and SIM cards. Apparently, storage media have their own unique smell that dogs can recognize when they are conditioned to do so. However, the NRW (North Rhine-Westphalia) police have classified the training of the dogs as “classified information” and redacted it extensively, so instead we have to rely on media outlets such as zooroyal (a German YouTube channel) and their reporting on the “furry noses.”

A report in the Süddeutsche Zeitung (a German newspaper) states that searching for data carriers is much more difficult than searching for drugs, which simply smell stronger than standard hard drives. The Saxony-Anhalt police (the police force of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt) also write in a presentation that data carriers release hardly any odor molecules.

The Saxon service dog handler told the newspaper at the time that the dog could smell the chemicals used to manufacture the storage media. He even had the impression that his dog could find lithium-ion batteries faster than cell phones with chrome-nickel batteries and assumed that “Artus” could smell lithium.

Because the storage devices being sought give off so little odor, the “tracking work” requires “a high level of endurance and physical exertion” from the service dog, according to the documents from Saxony-Anhalt. For this reason, this training “requires focused, objective tracking behavior on the part of the service dog.”

Reward: bite sleeve

The North Rhine-Westphalia police reveal on their website how the search is conducted: “When Hank [the dog] hears the command ‘Track!’, he begins to search. If he remains motionless, Peter Baumeister [dog handler] knows that he has found something. As a reward, Hank gets his favorite toy: a bite sleeve.”

According to this, the additional training of a tracking dog to become a data storage tracking dog takes 20 days, which the dog completes together with its handler. After the training, the handler can then call themselves a “data storage tracking dog handler.” A word that could hardly sound more German.

Version #2

Erstellt: 2026-02-15 16:17:14 UTC von ESC-IT Migration Bot

Zuletzt aktualisiert: 2026-03-18 13:28:57 UTC von ESC-IT Migration Bot