

Scandal Of The 800 Hero Army Dogs Put Down After Military Service.

By Emma Reynolds

Published: 08:32, 6 April 2012 | Updated: 15:44, 6 April 2012

Hundreds of brave dogs who have protected soldiers on the front line have been put down after serving in the army, it has been revealed.

The loyal animals are often seen as too fierce to be retrained as pets later, with 807 destroyed in the past decade.

The number has soared thanks to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to figures from the Ministry of Defence.



End of the road: Animals who have worked in the military are often thought to not be appropriate pets

Twenty canines were put down in 2002, the first full year of the conflict in Afghanistan, but that shot up to 89 in 2003 when the Second Gulf War began.

The number of dogs destroyed rose again to 95 in 2006 when thousands more British troops were sent to Afghanistan.

The figures for 2002 to 2011 peaked at 125 in 2009 when troops were still stationed in Iraq, the MoD revealed in response to Freedom of Information requests from the Daily Mirror.

Labour MP Kerry McCarthy said: 'This is shocking. It seems a great shame that animals are destroyed in this way. We need to make sure that every effort is made to find them new homes.'

Sniffer dogs who have completed years of service in the army usually go to live with their handler's family.

But those trained to guard bases often are not thought to make good pets, and even healthy animals are often put down.

The MoD said that around half of the dogs destroyed in 2009 and 2010 were put down because of behavioural issues or old age.

A spokeswoman said the military animals are given retraining in the hope of finding them a new home, but that it does not always work.

She said: 'Military working dogs play an invaluable role in Afghanistan and are much loved by troops.'

'The increased number being put down reflects the greater numbers of dogs helping to protect our troops on the front line.'

She added that serious illness and injury often made it necessary to have them put down.

The animal welfare charity the Dogs Trust has come out against the 'premature euthanasia' of working dogs when retired or no longer able to perform their duties.

It said that rehoming and retirement programmes should be encouraged, but admitted that rehoming is not always an option.

In the past few years, canine post-traumatic stress disorder has become a subject of debate.

More than five per cent of the 650 deployed by U.S. combat forces last year had PTSD, and of those about half were likely to be retired from service.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2125974/Hundreds-army-dogs-thought-fierce-pets-serving-time.html>

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