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By staff1 on September 12, 2017

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Staff Sgt. Josh Lockwood of the Conservation Officer Service introduces Kilo, the mussel-sniffing dog, at the annual general meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. (Richard McGuire photo)

If you see an all-black German Shepherd sniffing boats coming into Canada at the Osoyoos border crossing, it's probably Kilo, the mussel-sniffing dog.

Staff Sgt. Josh Lockwood, of the B.C. Conservation Officer Service (COS) brought Kilo, not yet 18 months old, to show at the annual general meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) in West Kelowna on Friday.

Kilo has already had success locating invasive mussels brought into B.C. by recreational boaters during his work at 12 mussel inspection stations at roads coming into the province.

In one case, a Quebec driver with a boat had already blown past inspection stations in Manitoba and Alberta without stopping.

He tried the same at Golden, B.C., but Lockwood pursued him and pulled him over.

"Kilo went inside the boat and checked in four locations for the scent of mussels," said Lockwood.

Invasive mussels were found inside the ballast tanks, hoses and on the anchor.

"And that boat was headed for Shuswap Lake," said Lockwood. "The individual was charged with possession of mussels and failing to stop, so it was about \$1,300 or \$1,400 in fines that were issued."

Another time in Cranbrook, Kilo sniffed a boat coming from Manitoba that had already been decontaminated in Alberta.

He checked out cracks in the floorboards and immediately went into a sitting position – his signal that says: "I found mussels."

When the conservation officers removed the floorboards, they found that even though the boat had been decontaminated, that location had been missed.

Not bad for a young dog that only started training on April 28 and finished two months later, starting work on June 28.

"He's been working for almost 90 days on the road," said Lockwood. "He's done an amazing job. Since we hit the road June 28, I think I've slept in my own bed four nights."

Kilo has worked in Osoyoos several times and also did some training here with a dog handler from the Canada Border Services Agency.

Kilo can inspect 15 to 20 boats a day, but he's a multipurpose dog also trained to sniff for firearms and ammunition, do evidence recovery and track human scent if any suspects attempt to flee.

German Shepherds, said Lockwood, are one of the dog breeds that are exceptional at scent detection.

"If you and I walk into a kitchen, we smell a stew," explained Lockwood. "If Kilo walks into a kitchen, he smells beef, potatoes, carrots, onions, gravy – so it's all different. He can distinguish between scents."

Kilo has no trouble sniffing out some mussels at a display table at Friday's meeting, even though they are embedded in plastic.

With black fur over his whole body, except a few lighter areas on his legs, Kilo doesn't look like a typical German Shepherd.

"He's still considered a black and tan," said Lockwood. "It's just that his colour came out black. It's kind of like we call them black bears, but they're everything from cinnamon to black."

Kilo had an RCMP trainer initially when he was 11 months old, but Lockwood took over when Kilo was 15. He's now approaching 18.

"So he's not matured yet," said Lockwood. "When he's two years old, he'll be a fully mature dog. But he's amazing for his age."

When the boating season is over, Kilo will do other work such as tracking suspects and recovering evidence during the hunting season.

"What he can do in 20 minutes, an officer would take an hour to search by hand," said Lockwood.

Kilo is friendly with those at the meeting and many stopped to pet him.

"He's people friendly unless he's otherwise directed," said Lockwood. "We've let people pet him this year, but that will stop as he gets older."

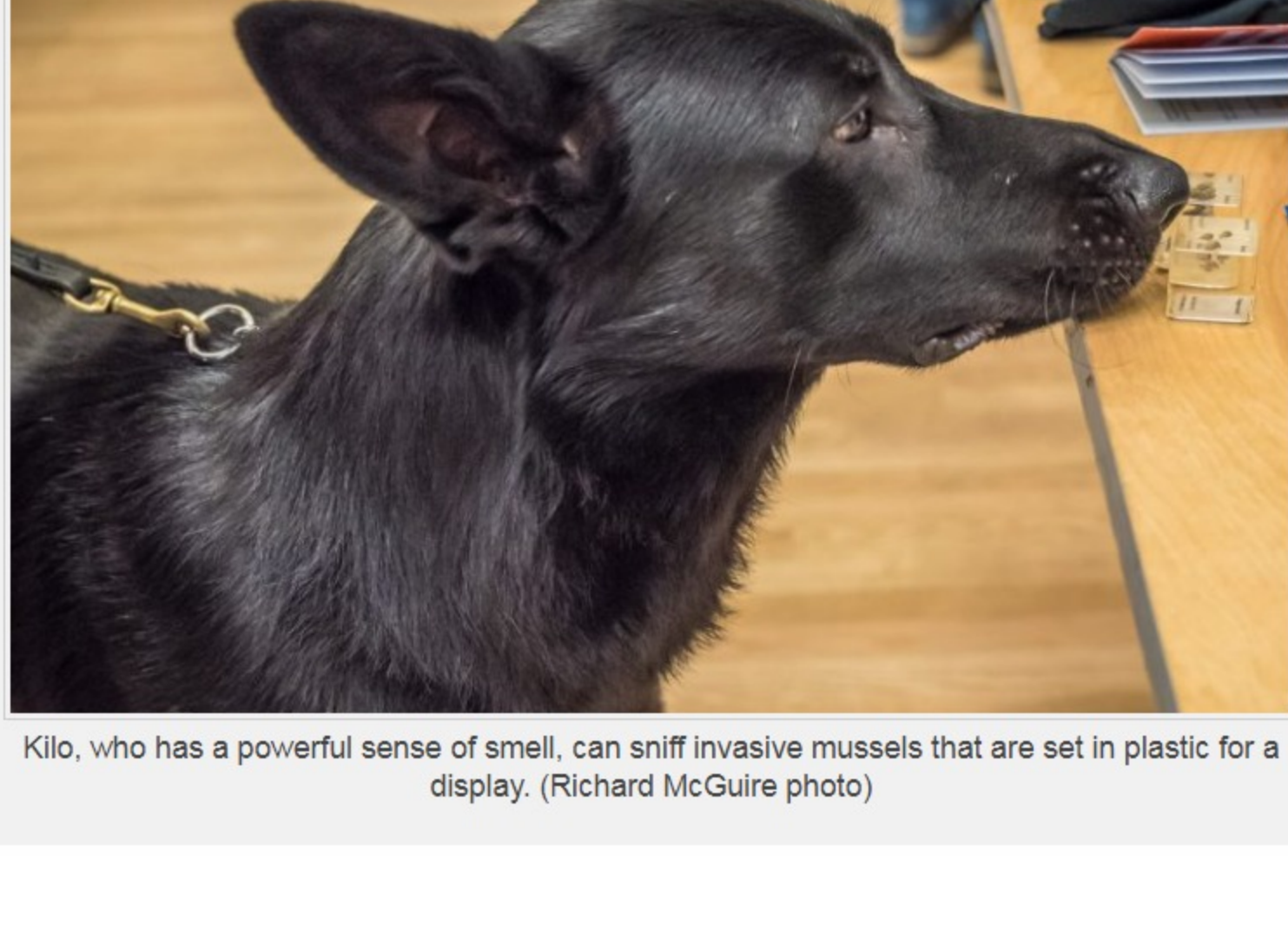
With 12 inspection stations as far as Dawson Creek and only one mussel-sniffing dog in B.C., Kilo will be busy with lots of work to do.

RICHARD MCGUIRE

Osoyoos Times



Staff Sgt. Josh Lockwood of the Conservation Officer Service introduces Kilo, the mussel-sniffing dog, to Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. Although she and others couldn't resist petting Kilo, the petting will stop next year when Kilo is older, Lockwood said. (Richard McGuire photo)



Kilo, who has a powerful sense of smell, can sniff invasive mussels that are set in plastic for a display. (Richard McGuire photo)

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