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It's Not Just a Bite Suit

Your dog's training and the agitator's experience will determine which bite suit you should purchase.

BY RODNEY SPICER



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■ **Above:** The right bite suit allows the decoy to get up off the ground without assistance.

MANY DIFFERENT TYPES of bite suits are available, and it pays to choose carefully, because the right bite suit can help determine both your success and your safety as an agitator. Before purchasing a bite suit, consider the following questions:

- What is the K-9's foundation training background?
- Who is going to wear the bite suit the most?
- Is the bite suit flexible?
- Are the bite suit arms tapered at the hands?

The reason that it's important to know and understand your K-9's background and foundation training is because bite suits were made and developed for individual working dog

sports wherein the dog is trained to target the bite. Following is a brief discussion of specific working dog sports that use bite suits, plus some tips for choosing the most functional suit for your purposes.

French Ring

Three types of bite suits are used in French Ring training and competition. The French Training Suit allows the agitator to work in comfort with good mobility. It has sufficient padding and is loose fitting, allowing the dog to bite the lower legs, thighs, crotch area, back, chest, arms, and armpit area. The French Training Suit is good for everyday use and inexperienced agitators.

The French Semi-Competition Suit has less padding than the French Training Suit. It is very mobile, light, and loose fitting, and the dog can bite the same locations he can bite on the French Training Suit. Because it is less well padded, however, only experienced agitators should wear the French Semi-Competition Suit.

The French Competition Suit is the thinnest and lightest of all bite suits and allows the agitator the greatest mobility. The Competition Suit generally is worn only in French Ring Competitions and should be worn only by the most experienced agitators. In French Ring, dogs generally bite the legs and crotch area as well as the arms. The fullness of the grip is not critical.

Belgium Ring

The Belgium Ring Suit is the only bite suit allowed in its competitions, and two styles are used. The suit is designed to take bites on the forearms and on the legs from the knee down for maximum points. It fits tightly to the body so that the dog can feel the agitator. The suit offers good mobility, but it has very little padding on the thighs, crotch area, back, chest, and armpit area. Only experienced agitators should wear the Belgium Ring Suit for dogs whose foundation training was in Belgium Ring.

The second style of suit is the Belgium Kimono, which offers good mobility and padding. It is similar to the French Training Suit, except that the Belgium Kimono is tight fitting so that the dog can feel the agitator. The fullness of the K-9 grip in Belgium Ring is judged very critical.



■ **Above:** When a canine is biting the back of the suit, the decoy's hands should be in front of him to keep the dog from letting go of the posterior or legs and biting a hand.

Mondio Ring and KNPV

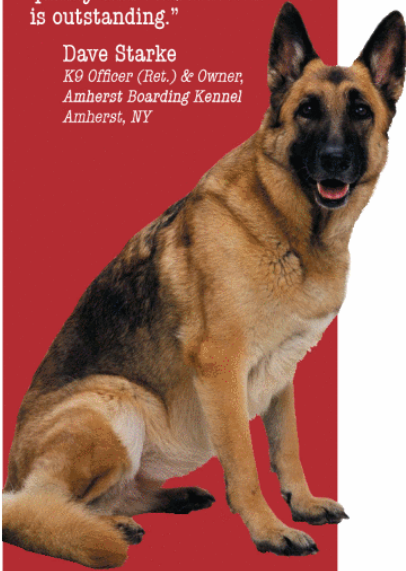
The sport of Mondio Ring generally uses a loose-fitting suit that gives the agitator maximum mobility. The dog can bite both upper and lower body. The judge is not critical of the fullness of the grips.

The suit used in *Koninklijke Nederlandse Politiehond Vereniging* (KNPV) is loose fitting, and the agitator generally wears an Ace bandage wrap on his or her arms, with leather gauntlets over the wrap, followed by the suit. The dogs

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generally bite the inner armpit, back, and calf area of the leg. The fullness of the grip is not critical in KNPV.

Bite Suit Tips

When purchasing a bite suit, remember that you should not wear a French Ring Competition Suit with a dog that was trained in Belgium Ring. Nor would you wear a Belgium Ring Suit for a KNPV-trained dog. You also should consider the following:



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■ **Above:** A bite suit should allow the agitator to move easily.



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- The sleeves of a properly fitting bite suit should go to the first knuckle of the thumb, allowing you to use your hands to grab or hold something if necessary, or to pull your hands into the suit by making a fist to avoid accidental contact.
- If you fall down when wearing the bite suit, get up as fast as you can and keep moving the part of your body that the dog has a hold on, especially if you are not an experienced agitator.
- For hard-biting dogs, wear a Neoprene or wetsuit arm under the bite suit arm. Inexperienced agitators should keep their hands in fists before and while the dog is biting. If the dog is biting the agitator's shin area, the agitator's hands should be behind his or her back. If the dog is biting the back of the leg, the agitator's hands should be in front of the body, which will help prevent the dog from letting go of the leg and biting the hand.
- The agitator should be able to put the bite suit on without assistance. If not, you probably have the wrong suit.
- When wearing the bite suit, you should be able to get up off of the ground without assistance. If you cannot, again, you probably have the wrong suit.
- A hard-biting dog is a hard-biting dog, no matter which bite suit you have. ■

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