

In the doghouse: How VIVO Defence uses directional heat to keep military pooches warm while cutting energy costs and carbon emissions

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An innovative scheme to provide directional heat for 240 working dogs at army kennels in Leicestershire while cutting carbon emissions and saving energy costs has been rolled out by VIVO Defence Services.

The completed project ensures the military can heat the space just above each dog's bed area at the facility, which is at the Defence Animal Training Regiment, Remount Barracks, Melton Mowbray.

The kennels were built in 2015 and, since then, new guidelines have been introduced by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) stating that the temperature in this area should not drop below 10C in the winter to keep the dogs comfortable.

The original system was not capable of ensuring this and was, quite simply, producing heat that disappeared straight out of the kennel and the entire enclosure.

Now VIVO has installed infrared heating panels in the ceilings of each kennel, which are not hot to touch, and have cage panels to stop the dogs damaging them or injuring themselves.

These heat the dogs and kennel surfaces much better and, as they provide directional heat, less escapes – cutting a third off heating costs and carbon emissions.

In addition, the infrared heaters are temperature controlled by a black bulb monitor, which checks the

exact temperature just above the bed area rather than the entire kennel, ensuring it never drops below the requirement now in place.

These monitors are connected to digital displays outside each kennel door so dog handlers can see the temperature of each kennel. The project took three months to complete.

Prior to the new heating systems, the kennels were warmed by ceramic units heating the air, but the poor insulation and semi-open nature of the kennels made it impossible to ensure a constant of at least 10C.

The dogs at the kennel are mainly Belgian Malinois and German Shepherds, used for guarding military sites, but also include a few spaniels, which are mainly used as explosives sniffer dogs.

When VIVO was asked to find a solution to heat the kennels for the dogs, it came up with the plan and carried out a pilot scheme to collect data to prove it would work.

In addition, under the new defence guidelines – which came into force in 2017 – the dogs must have a hot and a cold area so they can choose which environment to sleep in. This type of heating ensures that.

Major Ewen Gillies, of the Defence Animal Training Regiment, said: “This innovative project enriches our military working dog’s kennel environment. By providing better control of daily temperatures in our kennel complex, the welfare of our Military Working Dogs will be enhanced in all seasons.”

Jerry Moloney, Managing Director at VIVO Defence Services, added: “As the largest provider of estate services to the MoD in the United Kingdom, the varied range of tasks and projects we carry out on the MOD’s Built Estate is quite something.

“From building perimeter security fences and hangars to providing maintenance to all base infrastructure and carrying out innovative energy saving initiatives, including this new heating system at dog kennels at Melton Mowbray, it’s about working with the UK military to enable the UK’s defence capability.

“Well done to the teams behind this, as well as our supply chain, for devising and implementing this innovative heating scheme for the MOD’s working dogs.”

VIVO Defence Services – a 50/50 joint venture between Equans and Serco –provides maintenance, grounds maintenance and billable works for Service Family Accommodation across the southwest and southeast regions as well as the Built Estate in the southwest and central areas.

It also runs maintenance and housing services for the US air force across eight main United States Visiting Forces (USVF) sites and three associated ones in England.

All this work is carried out on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, which is part of the MOD.