

Chinese Customs officers get acquainted with their Australian colleagues at the National Breeding Development Centre.



Cuddly start to rigorous training

After breeding 894 puppies at the National Breeding Development Centre in Melbourne, Customs has produced its first chocolate Labrador puppies. Born in June, the two solid-chocolate puppies were part of a multi-coloured litter - three yellow, one black, one chocolate point, and two chocolate. The male pups have been named Spike, Sarge, and Scout, the female pups Shilo and Sheeba, and the two chocolate pups (also female), Sienna and Shandy.

Dog handlers from China Customs began 12-weeks of rigorous and intensive training with a soft and cuddly start at the National Breeding and Development Centre in Melbourne.

Four trainee dog handlers and one breeding and rearing officer, accompanied by translators and support staff, arrived in Australia in July to learn the science behind breeding, handling, training, and deploying detector dogs.

The Vice Minister for China Customs, Mr Sun, and the Director General of China's Anti-smuggling Bureau, Mr Lu, were on hand to see their staff begin the arduous road to detector dog training qualification.

In formally welcoming the official delegation and the operational team, Acting Regional Director Victoria Jaclyne Fisher said Australia's law enforcement agencies had a long history of cooperation with China in the fight against illegal drugs.

"The cooperation that Australian and China Customs share is more evident than ever with the opening of Australia's Customs office in Beijing in April, and now the visit today by Vice Minister Sun, and the training of his colleagues in detector dog breeding and training techniques," Ms Fisher said.



Vice Minister for China Customs Mr Sun gets to grips with chocolate puppies Sienna and Shandy.

Ms Fisher said China had a very sophisticated detector dog training infrastructure and, that on their return to China, the officers would take with them the skills to establish a successful detector dog breeding model and optimise their efforts in training and deploying detector dogs.

While at the Breeding Centre, the Chinese delegation toured the facilities and watched a demonstration by an operational dog and a five-month puppy.

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet Customs first chocolate Labrador puppies.