



**I AM  
TUCKER,  
DETECTION  
EXPERT**

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Chicago, Illinois

## About Detector Dogs

When you think of airports, you might not think of dogs. But like they do in so many other places, our canine friends help us there too. Guide dogs help people who are visually impaired get to their gates on time. Therapy dogs help anxious travelers feel calmer before boarding. Others work as detector dogs, sniffing out things that don't belong. You may have seen a Belgian Malinois, like Tucker's friend Atlas, patrolling at a security checkpoint. Detector dogs of this kind work with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to help keep passengers safe by sniffing out illegal substances or dangerous devices.

Tucker and the Beagle Brigade protect in a different way. They work with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to sniff out food and other plant and animal products that could bring harmful pests and diseases into the country. Sniffing out fruits and meats might not seem as important as sniffing out weapons or dangerous substances. But there's a reason all international airports across the United States employ these dogs.

With new technology, travel around the world has

never been faster and easier. While this is great for connecting people, it can also bring pests and diseases to new places more easily. Once these are introduced into an environment, they can wipe out crops and make animals sick. Dogs like Tucker help keep this from happening.

Beagles are the perfect dogs for the job. Because they're small, they can easily get around the airport baggage claim—even tucking themselves between bags to get a good sniff when they need to. As scent hounds, they have great noses, and, like Tucker, a high food drive, which helps them find exactly what they're smelling. Not to mention, they're cute! Beagles' nonintimidating looks help people feel more comfortable as the dogs search.

But beagles aren't the only ones who do this important work. Outside of airports, larger dogs, such as terriers and Labs, search planes, post offices, ships, and other places where harmful diseases carried by plants and animal products could enter the country. Together, these USDA detector dogs work every day to keep our agriculture and environment healthy. It's a big job to take on, but that's what superheroes do!

Becoming part of the Beagle Brigade is a big commitment. Unlike some jobs that allow dogs to begin training with their owners, detector dog work requires the dog-in-training to start a whole new life. For this reason, most members of the Beagle Brigade are rescues, or dogs looking for a new home, like Tucker.

Every member of the Beagle Brigade is trained at the National Detector Dog Training Center in Georgia. Here the dogs have thirteen weeks to master their sniffing skills. Meanwhile, their handlers learn all about their canine partners. By the end of the program, not only does each dog need to identify the correct scents, each handler must know just what their partner is telling them. It's a tough process, and it's not for everyone. Dogs who don't make it through are matched with good homes and become pets. For teams that do make it through, they are assigned an airport and begin their important work.

At the age of nine, Beagle Brigade dogs retire. Most are adopted by their handlers, while others are found loving homes in which to live out their well-earned retirements.

### Beagle

The beagle traces its history back to hare hunters of England from the 1500s. Today, their keen noses make them great working dogs, and their sunny attitudes make them the most popular hounds around.



**Height and Weight:** Under 13 inches, under 20 pounds; 13–15 inches, 20–30 pounds

**Life Span:** 10–15 years

**Coat:** Black, tan, and white

**Known for:** Friendliness, curiosity

### Belgian Malinois

This breed was first brought to the United States to work as a police dog. Today, these hardworking dogs serve many roles, including TSA detector dog.



**Height:** 22–26 inches

**Weight:** 40–80 pounds

**Life Span:** 14–16 years

**Coat:** Brown, black, and tan

**Known for:** Confidence, smarts, strength

Breed information based on American Kennel Club data. For more on these and other breeds, visit [www.akc.org/dog-breeds/](http://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/).