



FERAL DOG DATASHEET

- Species Name: SomeDog
- Reverse Engineer: Kathryn Matlack
- Site of Community Interest:

North River Wastewater Treatment Plant
 The 28-acre, \$119-million rooftop Riverbank State Park, located approximately 5 blocks away from a treatment plant emitting dangerously high amounts of oxides, is home to three pools, an amphitheater, athletic center, skating rink, restaurant and sports field. (highly public place) In 1999, the treatment plant nearby ranked among the worst 20% of facilities in the US for nitrogen oxide emissions. All sources: In 1999, emitted 129.85 tons carbon monoxide, 564.96 tons nitrogen oxides, 27.40 tons sulfur dioxide, 39.15 tons VOC's (highly toxic place) Releasing the feral robots at the Riverbank State Park has several advantages:

high public visibility because of location at athletic fields
 ascertain whether emissions from the 725 W 135th Street location were present at the park even though the Wastewater facility itself might not be responsible for the emissions
 the combination of the variability in dog sensor effectiveness, and a possible discrepancy between published ratings and actual ratings, would illustrate the importance of wind drift in determining sources of toxins
 if nothing is detected, public confidence in the area might increase and perhaps influence desirability of the surrounding neighborhood

An interesting technosocial question inspired by my particular robot is that of public response towards socially relevant technology. The point of the feral dog release was to convey information to the public in a mediagenic way. Dogs are the perfect instrument for this strategy: man's best friend is cute, usually friendly, and has been known to risk life and limb for humans since cave man days. However, the disarming nature of a canine robot may have been complicated by its coupling with a military robot. Militaristic robots have entirely different connotations: When one sees a toy tank at FAO Schwartz, they are more interested in its performance abilities, especially capabilities for destruction, than in its "cuteness," as would be likely with an Aibo or a Poochi. At the moment, all things military are en vogue, both in actual support of the USA's many military involvements overseas as well as in a propaganda sort of way. Military represents authority and often trust, as the armed forces are the good guys, the ones the rest of us depend on to defend our ways of life. But so, too, can it represent mistrust, an imposition of force and power. Then, what kind of statement is Askim making? I like to think of him as a bearer of good news, Mercury with a wagging tail. He combines the faithful connotation of a dog with the powerful, imposing figure of a tank, thereby becoming a tool of instruction and information.