

***Office of the Sheriff
Contra Costa County***

Canine Operations Manual

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May 8, 2002
Revised May25, 2006

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide the Office of the Sheriff, Contra Costa County, with internal guidelines for the use of Sheriff’s Office canines.

This policy is not intended to provide the standard of care for any civil or other external proceeding. The determination of compliance with this policy is expressly reserved to internal proceedings within the Sheriff’s Office.

The Canine program has been established to provide assistance within policy anywhere within our Office or in support of surrounding public safety agencies.

In order to use the canines safely and without risking loss of public confidence in the program, officers must carefully follow the guidelines and common sense rules provided within the Department’s policies.

Canine Program Mission

The Canine Program mission is to provide assistance to all Sheriff’s Office Divisions whenever necessary and within Department policy, as well as enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Department, along with supporting other Law Enforcement Agencies as needed.

Deputies assigned to the Canine Program are regarded as specialists who work with and for the benefit of all Department personnel.

The Canine Program improves Sheriff's Office effectiveness and enhances officer and public safety through the use of highly trained canine teams in searching, tracking, narcotics detection, protection, crowd control and apprehension techniques.

Demonstrations are performed for public relations and awareness. These and other community forums are a vital part in ensuring the success of the Canine Program.

Program Responsibility

The Canine Program is the operational responsibility of the Patrol Division Commander. The Assistant Patrol Division Commander will manage the daily functions of the program.

Reporting to the Canine Commander is the Canine Supervisor who coordinates the functions of the assigned officers in accordance with the Department needs and policy. Assisting the Canine Supervisor in assessing the canine team's Department suitability, effectiveness and control will be the Department contracted trainer.

Reporting to the Canine Supervisor are the Canine Officers and support personnel as required.

Canine Supervisor

The Canine Supervisor will be a supervisor assigned to the Patrol Division with a minimum of two years at the rank of Sergeant. The Supervisor will report to the Canine Coordinator and be responsible for the following-

- *Shall participate in the selection process for handlers, canines and volunteers in the canine program.*
- *Shall participate in "Canine Bite Review"*
- *Report/document any discrepancies in the canine team performance of either canine or canine handler to the Canine Commander.*
- *Report all canine involved injuries, canine injuries, canine deaths and handler injuries to the Canine Commander as soon as possible.*
- *Scheduling training with and through Department contracted trainer.*
- *To maximize the capabilities of the teams, evaluate the training and training programs when required.*
- *Maintain training programs along with being responsible for the performance evaluations of canine teams.*

- *Act as a liaison officer with other area law enforcement agencies that maintain canine programs to enhance inter-agency communication and cooperation.*
- *Schedule public canine demonstrations, shows and contests, along with ensuring the integrity of the unit and Department.*
- *Act as a liaison officer with the public regarding canine program information.*
- *Maintain and when necessary, establish training, public appearance, medical and any pertinent canine activity records or statistics.*
- *Recommend and oversee the procurement of needed equipment and services for the unit.*
- *Order supplies, investigate the use of potential new products and keep an inventory of same.*
- *Conduct canine equipment inspections on a regular basis to ensure serviceability of all equipment used by canine team members. Report the results to the Canine Commander quarterly.*
- *Act as a liaison with all canine related vendors (veterinary, trainer, equipment, canine supplier).*
- *Maintain a current list of available countywide emergency veterinary clinics and hours of operation (24 hours preferred).*
- *Prepare an annual budget and submit reports as required.*

Canine Handler

Selection Process

The Canine Officer selection process will consist of the following-

- *Letter of Intent*
- *Letter of Recommendation from assigned lieutenant or supervisor*
- *Interview*
- *Performance assessment*
- *Canine Handler evaluation*
- *Review of work history, including attendance, performance evaluations and report writing*
- *Home visit*

The Letter of Recommendation should be completed by the candidate's current lieutenant, or in their absence, the immediate supervisor. A completed questionnaire should be attached to the Letter; (sample found in section).

The interview will normally be conducted by the Canine Commander, Canine Supervisor and the Department Contracted Trainer. A DSA member will be invited to observe the process.

To assure that the candidate can physically meet the challenges that a police service dog handler faces, an assessment of the candidates physical endurance will be given and consist of the following-

- *40 yard dash carrying an 80 lb weight*
- *Lift an 80 lb weight over a six foot high fence*
- *Completion of a 1.5 mile run (not timed)*

The Canine Handler position requires that the handler not only interact with his/her dog, but also other canines from our office as well as outside agencies. Because the canine handler also must role-play during training as a decoy or agitator, the candidate must have an affinity for animals and cannot be intimidated by the canines. To evaluate this trait/ability, the candidate will attend a canine training session, Under the direction and supervision of the contracted Department canine trainer, the candidate will be evaluated on his/her interaction with police service dogs as an agitator, decoy and handler during obedience scenarios. DSA will be invited to attend and observe this segment of the selection process.

To help assure the canine program is successful, the selection process will include a review of the candidate's work history and performance to include; attendance, self-motivation, report writing and performance evaluations. The candidate's supervisor recommendation will be reviewed at this time.

In an attempt to assure the compatibility between the canine, the handler, his/her family, along with protecting the Sheriff's Office property, as well as risk management for the Department, a "Home Visit" will be conducted. The home visit will entail confirming the candidate rents or owns his/her residence. The dwelling has a fenced rear yard and the candidate's family is aware/accepting of the demands of being a canine officer. The yard must be approved by the canine coordinator, as being suitable to safely house the dog. A standardized interview/inspection form will be used and available to the DSA.

Minimum Qualifications

Candidates to be considered must have a minimum of two years experience in the Patrol Division.

Minimum Commitment

*Due to the substantial investment in the purchase of the police service dog, along with the associated costs such as certification training, maintenance training and equipment, a minimum of a **three-year** commitment to the canine unit is required. The handler will be exempt from forced rotation to Detention Division during this time period or up to four years if the K-9 Team remains in good status.*

Canine Unit Work Schedule

The canine Unit will either be assigned to the existing J Team or as a separate unit assigned as support staff to the Patrol Division. In either case, the unit will be deployed to times with both high calls for service, as well as times when the canine is most needed. The Patrol Division Commander will make the final schedule determination. The canine teams shall report to the Field Operations Bureau, but will be deployed throughout the county. When the canine unit is assigned to the J Team, they will work the J Teams schedule and hours.

Canine Handler Responsibility

The canine handler position is one that demands commitment and dedication to the Department, Canine Unit and canine. The handler is required to rent or own a residence with a fenced rear yard. The handler shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection and acceptable living conditions.

When off-duty, the canine shall be maintained in the direct control of the handler or in a kennel. When the canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock. When off-duty, canines may be let out of their kennels while under the direct control of their handlers. Under no circumstances will the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the canine supervisor. When the handler anticipates extended time off that requires boarding of the canine, the canine supervisor will be given reasonable notification to make appropriate arrangements.

When off-duty, handlers shall not involve the police service dog in any activity or conduct unless approved in advance by the canine supervisor.

The canine supervisor shall be notified as soon as practical of any illness or injury to the police service dog.

Through Department sponsored training, each police service dog team shall be trained and certified to meet current P.O.S.T. standards prior to assignment.

Through Department sponsored training, each police service dog team shall be re-certified to P.O.S.T Police Service Dog standards on an annual basis. Police service dog teams shall receive

training as defined by the contracted agreement with the authorized Department canine trainer. Outside vendors, trainers or handlers are not authorized to train Department canines.

The handler shall maintain all Department equipment under his/her control in a clean and serviceable condition. Any deficiency shall be reported to the unit supervisor.

Handlers shall permit the Canine Coordinator or Supervisor to conduct spontaneous on-site inspections of affected areas of their residence and equipment to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.

Any changes in the living status of the handler which may affect the lodging or environment of the police service dog shall reported to the Canine Supervisor as soon as possible.

The police service dog should be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family for short periods of time and under the direct supervision of the handler.

Police Service Dogs in Public Areas

All police service dogs shall be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions would include specific police operations for which the police service dogs are trained. Police service dogs shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access. When the police service dog unit is left unattended all windows and doors shall be secured.

Medical Care of the Police Service Dog

In the event the police service dog is injured, the injury will be immediately reported to the Canine Supervisor, Coordinator or O.D. Depending on the severity of the injury, the police service dog shall either be treated by the designated veterinarian or transported to a designated emergency medical facility for treatment. If the handler and dog are out of the area, the handler may use the nearest available veterinarian.

Non-emergency medical attention shall be coordinated through the Canine Supervisor.

Except in emergencies outlined above, all medical attention shall be rendered by the designated Department contracted veterinarian.

All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the police service dog handler's canine training file.

Training

Before assignment in the field, each police service team shall be trained and certified to meet current P.O.S.T. standards.

Each police service dog team shall thereafter be re-certified to P.O.S.T. Police Service Dog standards on an annual basis, or when needed to correct observed deficiencies.

Police service dog teams shall receive training as defined in current contract with the Department's Police Service Dog training provider.

Police service dog handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with the approval of the Canine Supervisor.

In order to ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer or outside vendor is authorized to train Department canines.

All police service dog training shall be conducted while on-duty or otherwise specified in the employee's current MOU.

No police service dog team failing P.O.S.T. Police Service Dog certification shall be deployed in the field until certification is achieved. When practical, pending successful certification, the police service dog handler shall be reassigned to regular patrol duties.

All police service dog-training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's training file.

Canine Use

Request for the Use of the Police Service Dog Team

Department personnel are encouraged to freely solicit the use of the police service dogs. When bureaus outside of the Patrol Division request to use a police service dog team, the request shall be made to the Canine Supervisor or the on-duty O.D.

Request for Assistance from Outside Agencies

The Canine Coordinator, Supervisor or O.D. must approve all requests for police service dog assistance from outside agencies subject to the following provisions:

- *Police service dog teams shall not be used outside the Department's jurisdiction to perform any assignment, which is not consistent with this policy*
- *Upon arrival at the scene, the handler has the ultimate decision as to whether or not the police service dog is to be used for the specific assignment*
- *Police service dog teams shall not be called out while off-duty or used outside the Office of the Sheriff's jurisdiction unless authorized by the Canine Coordinator, Supervisor or O.D.*

Communications Canine Call-Out Procedure

Communications will handle requests for canine officers as follows:

1. *Use the QL to determine if a canine unit is on duty. If there is a canine on duty, dispatch the unit to the call and ascertain an ETA. If there are more than one canine units on duty, dispatch the closest available unit.*

2. *If there are no CCCSO canine units on duty, check with adjoining jurisdictions for available canine units. If there is an allied agency canine that can respond, request the allied agency unit respond and ascertain an ETA.*
3. *If there are no canine units available from adjoining jurisdictions, contact the closest off-duty CCCSO canine unit. INFO K9 lists the officers' home city, contact information and current work schedule.*

Requests from an allied agency to use a CCCSO canine that is on duty require the approval of the canine unit's area supervisor.

Any request from an allied agency to have a CCCSO canine unit called out from an off-duty status or other issue involving deployment of a canine unit must be directed to the Assistant Patrol Division Commander during business hours and in his/her absence or non-duty hours to the Officer of the Day.

Preparation for Utilizing a Police Service Dog

Prior to the use of a police service dog to search for or apprehend any individual, the police service dog handler and/or the supervisor on scene shall carefully consider all pertinent information reasonably available at the time. The information shall include, but is not limited to the following:

- *The individual's age or estimate thereof.*
- *The nature of the suspected offense.*
- *Any potential danger to the public and/or other officers at the scene if the police service dog is released.*
- *The degree of resistance, if any, the suspect has shown.*
- *The potential for escape or flight if the police service dog is not utilized.*
- *The potential for injury to officers or the public caused by the suspect if the police service dog is not utilized.*

The police service dog handler shall have the ultimate authority not to deploy the dog. The handler will evaluate each situation and determine if the use of the police service dog is technically feasible. Generally the decision to deploy the dog shall remain with the handler; however, a supervisor sufficiently apprised of the situation may decide to not deploy the dog.

Use of Narcotic-Detection Police Service Dogs

A narcotic detection trained police service dog may be used in accordance with current law to:

- *Assist in the search for narcotics during a search warrant service.*
- *Obtain search warrant by using the detection police service dog in support of probable cause.*
- *Search vehicles, buildings, bags and any articles deemed necessary.*
- *A narcotic detection police service dog will not be used to search a person for narcotics.*

Reporting Use of a Police Service Dog

Whenever the police service dog is deployed, a Police Service Dog Use Report shall be completed by the handler and turned in to the Canine Coordinator before going off duty.

Warning Given to Announce the Use of a Police Service Dog

Unless it would otherwise increase the risk of injury or escape, a clearly audible warning to announce that a police service dog will be released if the person does not come forth, shall be made prior to releasing the police service dog. The police service dog handler, when practical, shall first advise the supervisor of their decision if a verbal warning is not given prior to releasing the police service dog.

Reporting Police Service Dog Bites or Injuries

If a bite or injury results from the use of a police service dog, that information shall be documented on a Police Service Dog Use Report. The report should include, at a minimum, the following:

- *In all cases of bites or injuries resulting from the use of a police service dog, photographs shall be taken of the bite or injury after first tending to the immediate needs of the injured party. The photographs will be labeled “Police Service Dog Incident – Do Not Destroy,” and placed into evidence. If the injury requires medical attention, the subject should be transported to an appropriate medical facility. In the event an in-custody suspect requires medical attention, an officer should standby with the suspect until treatment has been rendered.*

- *If the subject alleges an injury that is not visible, notification shall be made to a supervisor and the location of the alleged injury should be photographed.*

Guidelines for the Use of Police Service Dogs

A police service dog may be used to locate and apprehend a suspect if the police service dog handler reasonably believes that the individual has either committed or is about to commit any offense and if the following conditions exist:

- *There is a reasonable belief that the individual poses an immediate threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any officer, or the handler.*
- *The individual is physically resisting arrest and the use of the police service dog reasonably appears to be necessary to overcome such resistance.*
- *The individual(s) is/are believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the police service dog would pose a threat to the safety of officers or the public.*
- *It is recognized that situations may arise which do not fall within the provisions set forth in this policy. In any such case, a standard of objective reasonableness shall be used to review the decision to use a police service dog in view of the totality of the circumstances.*

Absent the presence of one or more of the above conditions, mere flight from pursuing officer(s) shall not serve as good cause for the use of a police service dog to apprehend an individual.

Bite Review

In an attempt to monitor the appropriateness in the use of the canine, as well as identifying training issues, a "Bite Review Board" will review all police service dog engagements. The board will consist of the Canine Sergeant, Lieutenant and contracted Department Trainer. The finding or recommendation will then be forwarded to the Patrol Division Commander for review. By establishing this review, the bite ratio compared to apprehensions can be monitored, thus in effect reducing officer and Department liability. Whenever a dog engages a subject and a bite review form and police report are initiated a copy of those shall be forwarded to Risk Management, attention Sharon Offord, 2530 Arnold Dr. Suite 140.

Force

Use of Force Policy

It is the policy of this Department that officers shall use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary, given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the

time of the event, to effectively bring an incident under control. “Reasonableness” of the force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene at the time of the incident. Any interpretation of “reasonableness” must allow for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second decisions (in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving) about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation.

Factors Used to Determine the Reasonableness of Force

When determining whether or not to apply any level of force and evaluating whether an officer has used reasonable force, a number of factors should be taken into consideration. These factors include but are not limited to:

- *The conduct of the individual being confronted (as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time).*
- *Officer/subject factors (age, size, relative strength, skill level, injury/exhaustion and number of officers vs. subjects).*
- *Influence of drugs/alcohol (mental capacity).*
- *Proximity of weapons.*
- *Availability of other options or resources.*
- *Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual.*
- *Training and experience of the officer.*
- *Potential for injury to citizens, officers and suspects.*
- *Risk of escape.*
- *Other exigent circumstances.*

It is recognized that officers are expected to make split-second decisions and that the amount of an officer’s time available to evaluate and respond to changing circumstances may impact his/her decision.

While various degrees of force exist, each officer is expected to use only that degree of force reasonable under the circumstances to successfully accomplish the legitimate law enforcement purpose in accordance with this policy.

Deadly Force Applications

Use of deadly force is justified in the following circumstances:

- *An officer may use deadly force to protect them from or others from what they reasonably believe would be an immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury.*
- *An officer may use deadly force to effect the arrest or prevent the escape of a suspected felon where the officer has probable cause to believe that the suspect poses a significant threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or others. Under such circumstances, a verbal warning should proceed the use of deadly force, where feasible.*

Refer to Department Policies and Procedures Manual Section 1.06.61

Reporting the Use of Force

Any use of physical force by the police canine team will be documented completely and accurately in a Police Service Dog Use report and, a crime report.

Use of Force Notification to Supervisors

Supervisory notification shall be made as soon as practical following the application of physical force, under the following circumstances:

- *Where the application of force appears to have caused physical injury.*
- *The individual has expressed complaint of pain.*
- *Any application of a less lethal control device.*
- *Where the individual has been rendered unconscious.*

Medical Attention for Injuries Sustained Using Force

Medical assistance shall be obtained for any person(s) who has sustained a visible injury, expressed a complaint of pain, or who has been rendered unconscious.

Equipment & Supplies

Canine handling equipment will be furnished by the Department, but will be the handler's responsibility to monitor and inspect the serviceability of all assigned equipment. Equipment in need of repair or replacement should be immediately reported to the Canine Supervisor.

Canine Patrol vehicles will be assigned to handlers. It is the handler's responsibility to assure that the vehicle is in good repair and is cleaned/vacuumed as needed.

The Department will provide up to \$750, not to exceed actual cost, for a home kennel.

The Department has contracted with private vendors for veterinary, equipment and food services. All purchases must have the approval of the Canine Supervisor prior to the transaction. Purchases outside the contracted vendors are not authorized unless exigent circumstances exist and must have prior approval from the Canine Supervisor.

Uniform

Canine officers, while actively working a canine, may wear a two piece tan colored BDU type uniform with the nametag and badge sewn on. The canine shoulder patch is to be worn on the left sleeve ½” under the Sheriff’s Office patch.

Class “A” uniform is the same as other Patrol members. While in the Class “A” uniform the K-9 pin will be worn above the nametag.

Separation from the Canine Unit

In the event the Department determines the canine handler’s services are no longer needed, the canine will be evaluated for continued service. If after review, it is determined the canine has substantial service life remaining; the canine will be reassigned to a new handler. Reasons for handler separation include but are not limited to:

- *Department contracted canine trainer determines handler is unfit for canine duty.*
- *Handler neglects or abuses canine.*
- *Handler misuses Canine.*
- *Failure to meet the P.O.S.T. certification after sufficient number of attempts.*
- *Health or age prevents canine from performing tasks.*

In the event the canine retires in good standing, the handler may purchase the dog from the Sheriff’s Office at an agreed upon fee.

Canine Selection

The police service dog will be selected, purchased and trained as determined by the Office of the Sheriff.

Handler Compensation

The police service dog handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming and other needs of the dog as provided in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The compensation shall be prescribed in the employee's MOU.

Canine Forms