

POLICE CANINE OPERATIONS

WILLIAMSTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE NO. 1.20	EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/23/2022
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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Because of their superior senses of smell and hearing, physical stamina and agility, trained law enforcement canines are a valuable supplement to police manpower. However, utilization of canines requires adherence to procedures that properly control and channel their specialized capabilities.

Police dogs are not infallible. Their effectiveness depends largely upon the intelligent application of their capabilities. Police dogs react as trained to situations.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a set of guidelines for the proper use of police canine team(s) during daily and specialized operations.

This policy will familiarize department personnel with canine operating procedure and policy to ensure the best use of canine teams; the policy will also educate department supervisors on the appropriate uses of canine teams to ensure effective utilization and management in deployment situations.

POLICY

It is the policy of the department to:

- A. Staff, train, deploy, and maintain a canine unit within the department to serve as a support unit in the field to enhance basic patrol and investigative functions.
- B. This department shall utilize regional police agencies' canine teams(s) when it is felt that their use will aid in the apprehension of wanted or

escaped persons, tracking, search and rescue operations, seizure of contraband, discovery of explosives, crowd control, locating articles, arson investigation, public relations demonstrations, and other needs of the department.

DEFINITIONS

1. *Canine Team*: A police officer/handler and a specially trained working dog working as a team.
2. *Canine Team Supervisor*: A designee of the Chief of Police to oversee the Canine Team.
3. *Department Authorized Veterinarian*: A veterinarian authorized by the Chief of Police to provide medical services to the canine.
4. *Canine Handler*: A police officer with a minimum of two years' experience with the department (or an equivalent combination of training and experience) designated by the Chief of Police and specifically trained to handle a canine for police purposes.

PROCEDURES

I. Canine Team Utilization

- a. Only officers trained to handle a police canine and authorized by the Chief of Police may handle a canine.
- b. The handler shall maintain control of the canine to avoid injury to persons as well as to the dog.
- c. The team may engage in assignments not listed here with the approval of the Shift Supervisor.

II. Canine Team Deployment:

- a. The decision to deploy the canine team is the decision of the Shift Supervisor.
- b. The canine handler is responsible for determining whether a situation justifies canine use. The decision on how to deploy the canine team is a decision of the handler. The responsibility for the evaluation of risk and safety of the team lies with the handler.
- c. If the Shift Supervisor disagrees with the handler's tactical assessment to deploy a canine, he may instruct the handler not to deploy the canine. When the handler disagrees with the Shift Supervisor's tactical assessment to deploy a canine, the handler may choose not to deploy the canine.

III. MUTUAL AID REQUESTS:

When another agency requests the use of the department's canine team, if the canine team is currently on duty, the Shift Supervisor

may approve the team's response. If the team is off-duty, the handler shall be contacted at home to check for availability.

IV. INTER-AGENCY REQUESTS:

1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF REQUESTING OFFICERS GENERALLY:
 - a. Minimize noise and confusion at the scene to avoid exciting or distracting the canine.
 - b. Do not follow or get close to a dog that is working, unless instructed to do so by the handler.
 - c. Shut off vehicles in the area if feasible to minimize scent contamination by engine exhaust.
 - d. In the event that a resident has a pet at the scene, request that the owner remove the pet completely away from the area.
2. TRACKING/AREA SEARCH:
 - a. Determine the last known location of the suspect. Secure the area from any further scent contamination.
 - b. Set up a perimeter to prevent the escape of the suspect. Secure the area from any further scent contamination.
3. APPROACHING CANINES:
 - a. Personnel shall not provoke, tease or abuse the canine.
 - b. Employees shall not approach the canine without the consent of the handler.
 - c. Employees shall not feed the canine without consent of the handler.
 - d. Employees shall not provide any commands to the canine.
 - e. Employees shall not show the canine to any person(s) without the consent of the handler.
 - f. Employees shall refrain from making any threatening gestures, engaging in horse play, or making any motions toward the handler while in the presence of the canine.
 - g. The handler shall share in the responsibility of keeping personnel aware of these rules and shall report any violations.

CANINE OPERATIONS

I. TRACKING

- a. Humid, early morning hours with no wind offer ideal tracking conditions.
- b. Wind of twenty miles per hour or more, or heavy rain, makes tracking difficult. Light rainfall frequently provides ideal tracking conditions.
- c. If officers are pursuing or searching for a suspect and contact with the suspect is lost, prior to summoning a canine team the officers

- should try to pinpoint the location where the suspect was last seen, and avoid vehicle or foot movement in that area.
- d. Back up officers should not respond to the scene, but position themselves around the perimeter of the incident to contain the suspect in the search area.
 - e. It is important that the responding officer make certain that no person enters the area used by the suspect to make his departure. Since the subject's odor will be predominant, the entire scene must be free of other contamination. Generally, dogs may be capable of detecting a scent several hours after the suspect has left the area if the scene has not been contaminated.
 - f. If material has been dropped by the fleeing suspect, such material and the surrounding area must not be contaminated, since a dog may detect the suspect's odor from the material.
 - g. Canines used for tracking persons should remain on a leash of sufficient length to provide a reasonable measure of safety to the subject of the search without compromising the canine's tracking abilities. The canine handler may decide to track "off-lead" where the threat level to police officers is high.

II. ROLE OF BACKUP OFFICERS

- a. The canine team handler may request a back-up officer.
- b. A back-up officer's primary responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:
 - The back-up officer(s) should remain close to the handler in a position determined by the handler.
 - The back-up officer(s) shall be responsible for all communication between the canine team, on-scene supervisor, and the perimeter officers.
 - The back-up officer(s) should not go ahead of the canine team unless directed to do so by the handler.
 - The back-up officer(s) may not become physically involved with any suspect(s) unless requested to do so by the police officer/handler.
 - The back-up officer(s) shall respond to the police officer/handler's request and instructions while involved in the operation. The police officer/handler is in charge of the canine team during the operation.
 - Once instructed to do so, it shall be the responsibility of the back-up officer(s) to search the suspect, and remove the suspect from the scene.
 - In case of injury to the police officer/handler, the back-up officer is responsible for obtaining help, and being aware of the canine.

CANINE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

I. CANINE BITES

- a. Whenever a canine bites an individual, whether or not the canine was acting in the line of duty, the handler shall:
 - Examine the injury to determine the seriousness of the bite(s).
 - Obtain medical treatment for the injured person.
 - Notify the shift supervisor.
 - Ensure that color photographs are taken of the injured person showing the injury, affected body areas, and face (for identification purposes).
- b. Reports shall be made for all canine bites regardless of the severity or circumstances surrounding the bite(s).
- c. The handler is responsible for completing a supplementary report to the original incident report.
- d. A member of the command staff shall conduct an investigation and submit the findings to the Chief of Police.

II. AFTER ACTION REPORT

- a. Following the completion of each incident where a canine is deployed, the handler will complete a utilization report detailing the significant events of the deployment as they relate to the use of the canine.
- b. Such records shall be maintained to document the canine's reliability as well as the handler's experience.

III. REQUIREMENTS FOR CANINE HANDLER

- a. A satisfactory work performance, disciplinary and medical leave records.
- b. Being physically capable of performing the rigorous duties of a dog handler.
- c. Being able to work with a minimum of supervision and being willing to take on the responsibilities and risks that the position entails.
- d. Having the ability to provide the proper motivation for the K-9, both verbally and physically.
- e. Commitment to devote some personal time to maintenance, training, care and socialization of the K-9.
- f. Ability to be on call when a canine team is needed, thereby being available to assist, support and cooperate with other departments and personnel.
- g. Having family support to have a police working dog with a secure outdoor area for the canine that conforms to accepted K-9 requirements at the home.

- h. Making a commitment to remain the handler of the canine for at least five years, and preferably for the remainder of the dog's working life.
- i. Possessing a strong desire to work with canines and willingness to care for and train the animal; and
- j. Being able to put the working dog's well-being and physical comfort above his/her own.

IV. TRAINING FOR CANINE HANDLER

- a. Officers assigned as canine handlers shall attend and successfully complete a prescribed training program for handling and caring for the police working dog, with specialized training in the dog's specific discipline.
- b. The Chief shall ensure that the teams receive at least the minimum training necessary to perform their duties and to maintain current certification.
- c. Handlers shall earn annual certification in each specialty from an independent, nationally recognized organization.
- d. They shall participate in other training programs as appropriate.
- e. The Canine Team Supervisor should also be familiar with canine procedures, receive training on legal updates and attend canine-related training programs as appropriate.

V. TRAINING FOR CANINE

- a. The canine must be properly trained prior to being officially assigned to patrol duty and must maintain training to remain on duty.
- b. All training shall be documented on a department-approved form.
- c. In order to maintain the canine's proficiency, it shall be necessary that the handlers have access to appropriate training aids.
- d. The Chief or his/her designee may conduct unannounced inspections of the canine teams for training purposes at any time.

VI. USE OF DECOYS

Persons may be used to assist in training tracking dogs at the discretion of the handler.

VII. REQUIREMENTS FOR CANINES

- a. The dog(s) assigned to the canine unit are the property of the police department.
- b. Department canines shall not be used for off-duty employment or details without approval of the Chief.
- c. Any dog utilized by this department that exhibits a tendency to not be controllable by the handler, or when unprovoked, attacks or bites another person, or poses a threat to an individual or public safety shall be removed from service.

- d. Should the handler retire; be reassigned or relieved from the program for any reason; or should the canine be retired, injured or relieved of duty for any reason, the canine may be reassigned to another handler, removed from duty, or ownership may be transferred to the handler or otherwise disposed of at the discretion of the Chief.

VIII. CANINE CARE

- a. Police canines shall not be used for breeding, participation in shows, field trials, exhibitions or other demonstrations, or for off-duty employment unless authorized by the Chief or his/her designee.
- b. Canine handlers are personally responsible for the daily care and feeding of their animal including:
 - Maintenance and cleaning of the kennel and yard area where the canine is housed;
 - Provision of food, water and general diet maintenance as prescribed by the department-authorized veterinarian;
 - Grooming on a daily basis, or more often as required by weather, working conditions or other factors;
 - Daily exercise (police canines are not permitted to run at large); and
 - General medical attention and maintenance of health care records.
- c. Where the handler is unable to perform these and related duties due to illness, injury or leave, the following may occur:
 - Another canine handler may be assigned to temporarily care for the dog; or
 - At the expense of the Department, the canine may be housed in a department approved kennel when the handler is not available.
- d. Teasing, agitating or roughhousing with a police canine is strictly prohibited unless performed as part of a training exercise.
- e. Handlers shall not permit anyone to pet or hug their canine without their express permission and immediate supervision. Should a civilian express a desire to do so, (s)he should be informed that the police canines are serious working dogs and that they can be dangerous if improperly approached.
- f. A canine handler may apply to take possession of his/her dog under such circumstances as:
 - The dog is retired from duty or relieved due to injury; or
 - The handler is transferred, promoted or retires, and a decision is made not to retrain the dog for another handler.

IX. EQUIPMENT

- a. Specialized canine equipment shall be furnished by the department as follows.
 - Canine team cruiser; The interior of the vehicle shall be modified to accommodate the needs of the canine team. The exterior of the vehicle shall be conspicuously marked, "Police K-9".
 - Fifteen-foot tracking line;
 - Thirty-foot tracking line (optional);
 - Tracking harness (optional);
 - Water/food bowl;
 - Food (supplied at the expense of the department); and
 - medications and supplements as determined by the department veterinarian.
- b. The handler shall be responsible for maintenance and inspection of this equipment.

X. INJURY TO CANINE

- a. Should a canine be injured, the handler shall provide and arrange for appropriate emergency medical care for the canine.
- b. The handler shall notify the shift supervisor.
- c. The handler shall complete a report to the Chief of Police providing the details of the event and injury.

XI. INJURY TO THE HANDLER

- a. DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, approach the dog that is protecting the injured handler or attempt to assist the officer, unless it is apparent that the failure to respond to the officer would result in death or serious bodily injury.
- b. Allow the handler to secure the dog if possible. Follow the instructions of the handler regarding ways to render aid.
- c. The dog may be able to be lured into the K-9 vehicle or secured using snares and safety equipment.
- d. If feasible, make contact with another handler or family member of the handler to remove the dog or control its actions.
- e. Perform other reasonable actions which allow aid to the injured handler while minimizing injury to the canine.
- f. In the unlikely event that all other efforts to respond to the emergency needs of the officer fail, if time permits, contact the department's approved veterinarian, and attempt to tranquilize the dog.
- g. If those efforts are unsuccessful, and the officer is in imminent danger of losing his/her life or compounding an existing injury, the K-9 should be neutralized.

- h. If it becomes necessary to shoot the dog, place the shot carefully in order to reduce the animal's suffering. The dog is dutifully protecting its handler. Although this action may seem heartless, human life comes first.