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Sheriff

HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY

Canine (K9) Unit

Distribution:	All Personnel	Index:	OPS 0202
Responsible Unit:	Special Operations Division	Rescinds:	MAN 2600
DLI Program:	Pending	MD Code:	Public Safety § 2-313

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1. Purpose

To provide members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) with guidelines regarding the Special Operations Division (SOD) Canine Unit.

2. Policy

The objective of the Canine Unit is to provide support with a specially trained police dog.

3. Definitions

BLOODHOUND TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to locate suspects or missing persons utilizing a bloodhound.

CANINE: synonymous with police canine or K9.

CANINE HANDLER: agency member assigned a police canine.

CANINE TEAM: canine handler and assigned police canine.

CANINE TRAINER: a canine handler designated by the Agency who is responsible for coordinating activities of canine operations to include training, record keeping, and other duties as assigned.

CROSS TRAINED DOG: a police canine team trained and certified as a patrol and a narcotics detection dog or an explosive detection dog.

DRUG DETECTION TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to detect the presence of drugs or controlled dangerous substances (CDS).

EXPLOSIVE DETECTION TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to locate and give a specific alert on the presence of explosive materials.

FORCE: the use of a police canine consistent with Agency guidelines on use of force to accomplish an Agency objective is recognized as non-lethal force.

PATROL TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to primarily locate and apprehend criminal offenders; perform tracking; building searches; area searches; evidence search; crowd control; and public demonstrations.

4. References

Public Safety § 2-313

5. Procedures

A. Ownership

1. All canines are the property of the HCSO and will not be used for purposes other than official duties.
2. All canines will be evaluated by the canine supervisor and/or a canine trainer to determine their fitness for police service.
3. Potential candidates will be examined by a HCSO approved veterinarian to determine their fitness for police service.
4. Canines will not be registered with any society or organization unless directly related to Agency use and, after receiving written approval from the Sheriff.
5. Before assignment to the field, the police canine will be licensed through the Maryland State Police (MSP) as required under the Public Safety Article 2-313.

B. Retirement

1. After a canine has surpassed its usefulness to the Agency due to age or other extenuating circumstances, or where the handler is no longer in a position consistent with canine work and the Agency decides not choose to retain the canine for another handler, the canine will be retired from active service, with the concurrence of the Sheriff.
2. The Agency retains the right to reassign and retrain the canine for assignment to another handler for any reason that it determines is of benefit to the Agency.
3. Whenever a canine is retired, his assigned canine handler will be allowed to complete the "HCSO Waiver of Liability" form and assume ownership of the canine.
 - a. a member of the canine unit must submit a request to purchase his canine through the chain of command.
 - b. the recipient will assume all responsibility, liability, and costs to maintain the canine.
 - c. the canine will not be used for any financial gains and will not be sold or ownership transferred to another for the life of the canine.
4. Whenever ownership of a retired canine is not assumed by the handler and a citizen requests ownership, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. the canine's training and experience must be thoroughly explained to the citizen by a member of the Canine Unit.

- b. the citizen must complete the "HCSO Waiver of Liability" form and must agree to condition B(3)(c).
5. Euthanasia for a serious canine illness is subject to the approval of the Sheriff and will require a written report from the designated veterinarian indicating that the prognosis of the canine is such that euthanasia represents the only humane alternative available.
6. The handler will submit the veterinarian's prognosis via memorandum (SO-212) through the chain of command, with respective endorsements, to the Sheriff.

C. Handler Responsibilities

1. Canine handlers must bear in mind that in responding to a request for a canine team, they are responsible for determining whether use of the canine is justified and feasible under present conditions.
2. Canine handlers will decline to conduct a specific canine operation when, in their opinion, such an operation is outside the capacity of the canine or would present unnecessary and unacceptable danger to the handler, canine, or other personnel present.
3. The use of a police canine is not regarded as deadly force; however, the utmost discretion will be used when releasing a police canine to apprehend a suspect.
4. Before releasing the canine to apprehend a criminal suspect, the canine handler will determine that the release of the canine is appropriate and within Agency guidelines, that verbal control can be maintained, and that innocent bystanders will not be endangered.
5. In the event that a canine handler makes an arrest, the canine handler will not transport the arrestee in his Agency canine vehicle and must make arrangements for transport of the prisoner.
6. Police canines will not be deployed "off lead" to apprehend fleeing individuals whose only known offense is a minor motor vehicle violation; however, this does not preclude a police canine from being deployed "on lead" to follow or track a fleeing individual until successful apprehension.

D. Canine Handlers Requirements

1. Candidates must:
 - a. have a minimum of five years' experience as a Harford County Deputy Sheriff;
 - b. pass all requirements as set forth by the Human Resources Director in the position posting;
 - c. successfully complete an initial training program and any assigned additional training sessions;
 - d. have a strong desire to work with canines as they relate to law enforcement;
 - e. have a willingness to care for and train a canine with a minimum five year commitment as a handler;
 - f. maintain a residence, after receiving local and zoning approval, with sufficient space for the construction of an Agency provided and approved kennel; and

- g. pass a separate canine firearms course of fire with a 80% passing rate and a timed physical agility test as established in unit SOP PS10-2.

E. General Provisions Applicable to Canine Handlers

1. Canine teams generally will not be dispatched as primary officers to calls for service, except as a backup for other units or in cases of emergency when a regular patrol unit is not available.
2. Canine teams will assist whenever possible in arrest situations, but will not take physical custody and transport prisoners.
3. While on and off duty, canine handlers will maintain control of their canine at all times.
4. Police canines will not be used for crowd control purposes unless directed by a supervisor.
5. The decision to have the canine physically apprehend a suspect by engaging is made by the handler, who should remain within sight of the canine.
6. The canine handler will have the ultimate authority not to deploy the canine; however, a supervisor who has been fully briefed on the situation may also direct the canine handler not to deploy the canine.
7. Before beginning a track or search, the handler or immediate supervisor will designate a second officer to accompany him/her to provide security.
8. The handler should be available for call-outs.
9. A call-out schedule will be established in advanced by the Canine Unit Supervisor.
10. If issued an Agency cell phone, the handler will carry the phone at all times, unless the handler is on approved extended leave.
11. The police canine handler will be compensated for time spent in HCSO approved care, feeding, grooming and other needs of the dog, pursuant to law.
12. On the handler's day off, he will be given reasonable compensation, pursuant to law.

F. Assignment of Police Canines

1. Canine teams will be assigned to the SOD.
2. Police canine teams should function primarily as cover units; however, they may be assigned by the Watch Commander/Duty Officer to other functions based on the needs of the shift.
3. Police canine teams will not be assigned to handle matters that will take them out of service for extended periods of time, (i.e., motor vehicle crashes, incidents which involve investigations) unless absolutely necessary, and only with the approval of the Watch Commander, Duty Officer, or Unit Supervisor.

4. In the event the police canine teams are working overtime to supplement manpower needs, or are working overtime on a special detail, they may be assigned as deemed necessary by the supervisor in charge.

G. Canine Unit Supervisory Responsibility

1. The Unit Supervisor will be appointed by the Chief of the Police Services Bureau after consultation with the SOD Commander, and will supervise the Police Canine Program.
2. The Unit Supervisor will report directly to the SOD Traffic Sergeant.
3. The Unit Supervisor will be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. maintaining a liaison with the vendor kennel;
 - b. maintaining a liaison with command and functional supervisor(s);
 - c. maintaining a liaison with allied agency canine coordinators;
 - d. maintaining accurate records to document police canine and canine training activities;
 - e. recommending and overseeing the procurement of needed equipment and services for the unit;
 - f. scheduling all police canine related activities;
 - g. ensuring the police canine teams are scheduled for continuous training to maximize the capabilities of the teams; and
 - h. holding annual inspections of the canine patrol unit and canine's kennel and documenting the findings of those inspections.

H. Patrol Canine Deployment

1. Prior to deployment of a police canine to search and apprehend an individual, the police canine handler and/or the supervisor on the scene will carefully consider all pertinent information available at the time, including:
 - a. the individual's age or estimate thereof;
 - b. the nature of the suspected offense;
 - c. any potential danger to the public and/or other deputies at the scene if the canine is released;
 - d. the degree of resistance, if any, the subject has shown;
 - e. the potential for escape or flight if the canine is not utilized; and
 - f. the potential for injury to deputies or the public caused by the suspect if the canine is not deployed.

2. The patrol canine will not be used to search for missing persons except under the following circumstances:
 - a. if the individual is armed and poses a threat to searching deputies;
 - b. if delaying the search is so critical as to outweigh the risk of the missing person being accidentally bitten; or
 - c. if approved by the incident supervisor to do so.
 - d. Any tracking for the sole purpose of attempting to locate missing persons, Alzheimer patients, or lost children will be handled by bloodhound search teams.
3. Canine's will be worked on-leash for tracking purposes.

I. Deployment Guidelines

1. A police canine may be used to locate and apprehend a suspect if the handler reasonably believes that the individual(s) has committed, or is about to commit, an offense, and if any of the following conditions are present:
 - a. there is reasonable belief that the individual poses an immediate threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any officer, or the handler.
 - b. the individual is physically resisting arrest and the use of a police canine reasonably appears to be necessary to overcome such resistance.
 - c. the individual(s) is/are believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the police canine would pose a threat to the safety of the officers or the public.
2. Situations could occur which do not fall within the provisions set forth in this policy and in such a case, a standard of reasonable objectiveness will be used to review the decision to deploy a police canine, in view of the totality of the circumstances.
3. Mere flight from pursuing officer(s) will not serve as good cause for the use of a police canine team to apprehend an individual.
4. The federal courts consider utilization of the police canine for apprehension to be the use of non-deadly force. Accordingly, the use of police canines for apprehension must be in compliance with Agency use of force policies.

J. Building Searches

1. When responding to alarms, open doors or windows, and the responding deputy's investigation reveals the possibility of a suspect still in the building, he will establish a perimeter to secure the crime scene.
2. If it is believed that an armed and dangerous person may be hiding in the building, the on-scene supervisor will determine if the canine team may be utilized, after consultation with the handler, or if any other specialized unit will be called.

3. If a controlled search is conducted, the handler may request additional deputies to accompany him into the building.
4. Canine Warning
 - a. no canine will be used in a building without verbal warnings being given.
 - b. the handler will identify himself, if practical through the use of a bullhorn or PA system, and give instructions for surrender, and give notification that a trained canine will be released if the occupants fail to surrender according to instructions.
 - c. the warning will be given twice prior to releasing a canine into the building.

K. Tracking Operations

1. The following factors must be present in order to conduct a successful tracking operation:
 - a. by eyewitness account or positive inference, the handler will attempt to determine the path taken by the suspect or person to be tracked.
 - b. the path should be free and clear of contamination by other persons.
 - c. on a criminal suspect track, the immediate establishment of a crime scene perimeter may be the single most important factor that determines success or failure.
 - d. on scene deputies are responsible for establishing the perimeter.
 - e. when tracking a suspect, the canine team will be accompanied by at least one other deputy who will keep other units advised of the direction and progress of the track and protect the handler.
 - f. other deputies should remain out of the area to avoid contamination.

L. Article Search

1. A canine team may be requested if there is reason to believe that a suspect has discarded evidence by dropping the item while in flight or has attempted to hide the item in a field, wooded, or other open area.

M. Vehicle Search

1. When there is a request for a vehicle search, the deputy/officer at the scene will not search the vehicle before the canine team arrives.
2. The investigating deputy/officer at the scene will secure the vehicle.
3. When a canine team is searching a vehicle, the suspect(s) may be secured until the search is completed.

N. Bloodhound Deployment

1. In cases involving a search for an unarmed missing person not wanted for criminal activity, the Agency bloodhound team will be utilized.
2. If the Agency bloodhound team is not available an attempt will be made to utilize other resources such as an outside agency bloodhound team, volunteer search and rescue organizations, or man tracking units.
3. Bloodhounds may also be utilized for fugitive apprehension, at the discretion of the handler.

O. Narcotics Detection Canine Deployment

1. A narcotics detection team may be used in accordance with current law to:
 - a. assist in the search for narcotics during a search warrant service;
 - b. obtain a search warrant by using the narcotics detection canine in support of probable cause;
 - c. search vehicles, buildings, bags, and any other articles deemed necessary;
 - d. search open and public spaces; and
 - e. the canine handler will be responsible for confirming that the requesting deputy has obtained either consent to search or has probable cause, prior to any search.
2. The Harford County Task Force Canine Team will operate under the parameters set forth in the Special Investigations Division (SID) Passive Narcotics Canine Standard Operating Procedure.
3. Generally, a canine scan will not be conducted if the violator has given consent to search the vehicle or if the deputy has probable cause to search.
4. If no drugs are found after a probable cause search, a scan may be performed only if the deputy can articulate that there may be a hidden compartment.
5. The safety of deputies and the canine must be considered prior to conducting a scan and the handler may refuse to conduct a scan if he believes it is unsafe to do so.
6. A canine handler will not conduct a drug scan unless at least one additional law enforcement officer is present.
7. A deputy may request a canine scan of a vehicle's exterior at any time during a traffic stop without the requirement of reasonable articulable suspicion (RAS), however, the deputy cannot extend the duration of the stop merely to accommodate the scan.
8. A canine report must always be completed and must contain the reason for the scan.
9. The reason for the scan must not be based on a factor that would be disparate to any racial or ethnic group.
10. Canine teams may not scan people.

11. The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) will be notified of all complaints involving the legality of scans.

P. Explosive Detection Canine Deployment

1. An explosive detection team may be deployed for any of the following situations:
 - a. to search a building, vehicle, or open area for explosives.
 - b. to search for a firearm.
2. The responsibility for deploying the explosive detection team rests with the canine handler.
3. The team's responsibility is to locate an explosive device and if a suspected explosive device is located prior to deployment, the State Fire Marshal's Office will be contacted and the canine team will not be used.
4. At no time will a deputy touch any suspected explosive device.
5. Once on the scene, the handler will assume responsibility for the following:
 - a. the necessity of a search based upon the information available;
 - b. the extent of the search; and
 - c. when applicable, coordinating an evacuation of the premises prior to the search.
6. In the event that the explosive detection team does not discover any suspected explosive device, the handler will state in the report only that the "Canine did not indicate the presence of an explosive."

Q. Reporting Procedure

1. Whenever a canine is deployed, the handler will complete a Canine Unit Incident Report (SO-135) and forward same to the Unit Supervisor in accordance with Agency time lines.

R. Bites

1. Any time a person is injured by a HCSO canine, the following measures will be taken:
 - a. medical aid will be provided as soon as possible;
 - b. both the Watch Commander/Duty Officer and the Canine Unit Supervisor will be notified;
 - c. photographs will be taken of the injuries;
 - d. a supervisor's incident report will be completed; and
 - e. an employee or handler will complete a Field Based Report (FBR) of the incident.

2. The person conducting the investigation should interview persons with information as soon as possible after the incident.
3. It is the preferred practice to record the interview by video or audio means for preservation (ex. in-car camera recording, precinct video recording, approved handheld devices, etc.).
4. If the interview is not recorded, the investigating supervisor should have the witness write and sign a statement or take detailed notes of the interview.
5. Persons to be interviewed should include the following:
 - a. the person bitten or injured;
 - b. the canine handler;
 - c. other deputies present at the scene of the incident being investigated;
 - d. any other persons present at the scene of the incident being investigated;
 - e. emergency medical services personnel who responded to the scene of the incident being investigated;
 - f. deputies or others who transported the injured person from the scene of the incident being investigated;
 - g. hospital personnel, including admissions personnel, nurses, physician's assistants, and doctors who saw, treated, or otherwise have personal knowledge of the condition of the injured person; and
 - h. Harford County Detention Center personnel, including booking deputies and medical staff who saw, treated, or otherwise have personal knowledge of the condition of the injured person.
6. Deputies will make no statements as to fault or liability, except when responding to an inquiry into the bite.
7. As soon as practical, handlers will file written reports of canine bites and any other injury or any damage to a person's clothing or personal effects as a result of any action on the part of the canine.

S. Canine Officer/Handler Contingency Procedure

1. In the event a handler becomes incapacitated, injured, or otherwise is unable to control his canine and it becomes necessary to remove the canine from the scene, deputies at the scene will notify shift supervision immediately.
2. Shift supervision will notify the Canine Unit Supervisor as soon as possible.
3. It will be the Canine Unit Supervisor's responsibility to determine the method of removing the canine.
4. If the Canine Unit Supervisor is unavailable, another handler will be contacted to remove the canine.

5. A field supervisor will contact Animal Control if no other handler can be notified.
6. Any attempt to remove a canine which may result in the canine being harmed or destroyed, should be considered ONLY as a last resort.

T. Requests for Canine

1. A request for Canine Unit assistance by an outside agency will be directed to the on-duty Watch Commander, Duty Officer, or the Unit Supervisor.
2. If the use of the Canine Unit is determined to be appropriate, the Watch Commander or Duty Officer may approve the request and every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the requesting agency.
3. The Watch Commander, Duty Officer, or the Unit Supervisor must approve all requests for the police canine assistance from outside agencies, subject to the following provisions:
 - a. police canine teams will not be used outside Harford County to perform any assignment which is not consistent with this policy;
 - b. police canine teams will not be called out while off-duty or used outside the County unless authorized by the Watch Commander, Duty Officer, or the Unit Supervisor; and
 - c. all public requests for a police canine demonstration are subject to the approval of the Canine Unit Supervisor or his designee.

U. Training

1. Before assignment to the field, the canine team will attend and successfully complete a police canine course.
2. If possible, canine training will be conducted by the Agency under the direction of an Agency canine trainer, unless resources for the team are not available.
3. Canine teams will attend a minimum of sixteen hours a month of retraining per canine assigned to the handler.
4. Handlers will not be restricted from performing additional training when normal duty assignments permit sufficient time.
5. If, at any time, a canine team fails to meet the standard certification requirements, additional training and recertification by the canine trainer may be required prior to returning to active duty.
6. Initial training and retraining will be conducted by a designated HCSO Canine Trainer.
7. Successful completion of basic patrol training or specialized training will be demonstrated to the approved canine trainer.
8. Only assigned handlers who successfully complete canine training, and attend regular canine retraining dates, will be authorized to deploy their canine.

V. Reporting Police Canine/Handler Injuries

1. In the event that a canine/handler is injured, the injury will be immediately reported to the Canine Unit Supervisor or other SOD Supervisor, if available.
2. If they are not available, the injury will be immediately reported to the Watch Commander/Duty Officer and a supervisor who will complete a Supervisors Incident Report (SIR) and disseminate through the appropriate channels.
3. Depending on the severity of the injury, the canine will either be treated by the Agency 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.

W. Care for Canine and Equipment

1. The handler will ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions.
2. Handlers will permit any supervisor to conduct spontaneous on-site inspections of affected areas of his residence as well as his patrol vehicle, to verify that conditions and equipment conform to policy.
3. Any changes in the living status of the handler, which may affect the lodging or environment of the canine, will be reported to the Canine Unit Supervisor as soon as possible.
4. When off-duty, the canine will be maintained in a secure area (i.e., Agency issued kennel, appropriately fenced yard, inside residence).
5. The police canine may be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family.
6. Under no circumstances will the police canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the Canine Unit Supervisor.
7. Whenever a canine handler anticipates taking a vacation, or an extended number of days off, it may be necessary to temporarily relocate the canine. In those situations, the handler will give reasonable notice to the Canine Unit Supervisor and make appropriate arrangements for the canine to be kept in an agency approved facility or with another HCSO handler.
8. Canines will receive yearly physical examinations by an HCSO approved veterinarian. This veterinarian will also perform routine care.
9. In emergency situations, the canine will be taken to an approved veterinarian facility for treatment.
10. Whether on or off-duty, handlers will be responsible for maintaining the security of his assigned canine and canine vehicle.
11. Canines will not be maintained in vehicles or kennels for excessive periods of time.
12. Canine handlers are encouraged to take their canine out of the vehicle as frequently as possible.
13. Canine handlers will maintain a proper ambient temperature for the canine anytime the canine is in the vehicle/kennel.

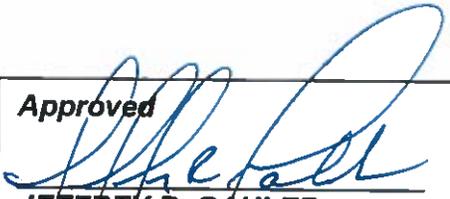
14. Agency issued canine vehicles will be equipped with a heat alarm system to protect the safety and health of the canine.

X. Handler Unavailability

1. If a handler is placed in a light duty status, flexibility should be built into any assignment he is given so that reasonable care can be provided to the canine.
2. When a canine is not available for deployment, due to an injury, illness, or other reasons, the Watch Commander, with the consultation of the Canine Unit Supervisor, may assign the handler other duties.
 - a. Those duties will be such as to allow the handler the opportunity to perform any special medical requirements and routine maintenance or care of the canine.
3. The Canine Handler is responsible for all arrangements and notifications required.

Y. Prohibited

1. Canine teams are not authorized to respond in the Emergency Mode for a CDS scan.
2. Employees will not tease, pet, or feed any police canine without the consent of the handler.
3. Only at the discretion of the handler will others be permitted to pet or come into contact with their canine.
4. Employees will refrain from any horseplay with the handler in the canine's presence.
5. Handlers will not demonstrate the canine's ability to react unless in the line of duty, at training, or at an Agency approved public demonstration.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 12/28/17