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Sheriff

HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY

Canine (K9) Unit

Distribution:	All Employees	Policy Number:	OPS 0202		
Responsible Unit:	Special Operations Division	Rescinds:	MAN2600		
Original Issued Date:	09/08/21	Revision #:	1	Latest Revision Date:	06/12/24
Latest Required Review was Completed:	06/12/24	Next Review Due:	06/12/27		

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 line support to Agency personnel by providing highly mobile, specially trained, police service dogs. The police service dog is primarily utilized as a locating tool, capable of searching for items or people and apprehending criminal suspects while providing additional safety for deputies.

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.

COMFORT DOG: a dog who has received specialized training to comfort and support child victims and their families during active crises and in emergency situations.

CROSS TRAINED DOG: a police canine team trained and certified in multiple disciplines (i.e., Patrol/ Drug Detection Dog, Patrol/ Explosive Detection Dog).

DRUG DETECTION TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to detect and locate controlled dangerous substances (CDS) by scent discrimination.

ELECTRONIC STORAGE DETECTION (ESD) TEAM: a law enforcement canine team specially trained and certified to detect the presence of electronic storage media or other digital evidence such as hard drives, USB drives, flash media, cell phones, etc. Teams can also be utilized as therapy or comfort dogs to support child victims and their families.

EXPLOSIVE DETECTION TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to detect the odor of explosive materials and compounds.

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

PATROL TEAM: a police canine team trained and certified to primarily detect, locate, and apprehend criminal offenders who attempt to elude and/or resist arrest; perform tracking; building searches; area searches; evidence searches; crowd control; perimeter control; and public demonstrations.

PASSIVE TRACKING TEAM: a Police K9 team trained and certified to locate suspects and missing persons; utilizing a K9 Team not trained in physical apprehension.

THERAPY DOG: a dog who has received specialized training to comfort and support child victims and their families in non-emergency environments.

4. 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 a canine unit 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. Before assignment to the field, the canine will be licensed through the Maryland State Police (MSP) as required under the Public Safety Article 2-313.

B. Handler Responsibilities

1. A canine handler must bear in mind that in responding to a request for a canine team, he is responsible for determining whether use of the canine is justified and feasible under present conditions.
2. A canine handler 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. While on and off duty, a canine handler will always maintain control of his canine.
4. Canine teams will assist whenever possible in arrest situations but will not take physical custody of, or transport prisoners.
5. If a canine handler makes an arrest, the canine handler will not transport the arrestee in his Agency canine vehicle and must arrange for transport of the prisoner.

C. Assignment of Police Canines

1. Canine teams will be assigned to the SOD, except for the Electronic Storage Detection (ESD) canine assigned to CID.
2. Police canine teams should function primarily as cover units; canine teams will assist Patrol Units in times of high call volumes, as a backup officer.
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 necessary, and approved by a canine unit supervisor. If a canine unit supervisor is unavailable, this can be approved by the Duty Officer.
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.
5. The handler should understand that he may be called out without notice and if available, respond within a reasonable time frame.
6. The police canine handler will be compensated one hour per scheduled workday and one hour per scheduled day off for time spent feeding, grooming, and other HCSO approved needs of the dog, pursuant to law.

D. Patrol Canine Deployment Guidelines

1. Prior to deployment of a patrol canine to search for 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 law enforcement 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 law enforcement or the public caused by the suspect if the canine is not deployed.
2. A patrol 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 a reasonable belief that the individual poses an immediate threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any law enforcement 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; or
 - 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 law enforcement or the public.
3. A search may be conducted for person(s) who do not pose an immediate threat, lost or missing persons, suicidal persons, suspicious persons, or, when in the opinion of the handler it is the best interest of the Agency or the community.
 4. 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 patrol canine.
 5. Mere flight from pursuing law enforcement officer(s) will not serve as good cause for the use of a patrol canine team to apprehend an individual.
 6. Federal Courts consider utilization of the police canine for apprehension to be the use of non-lethal force. Accordingly, the use of police canines for apprehension must follow Agency use of force policies.
 7. The patrol canine will not be used to search for missing persons except under the following circumstances:
 - a. The individual is armed and poses a threat to searching law enforcement; and/or
 - b. Delaying the search is so critical as to outweigh the risk of the missing person being accidentally bitten (i.e., extreme weather).
 8. Any tracking for the sole purpose of attempting to locate missing persons, Alzheimer patients, or lost children should be handled by a passive tracking canine or a bloodhound search team.
 - a. Only with exigent circumstances will a patrol canine be used for a search where a passive tracking canine or bloodhound is preferred.
 9. Canines will be worked on leash for tracking purposes.

E. Building Searches

1. When responding to alarms, open doors, or windows where the investigating deputy's investigation reveals the possibility of a suspect still in the building, the investigating deputy will establish a perimeter to secure the crime scene.
2. When there are signs of forced entry or a suspect is confirmed still inside of a structure, a patrol canine may be utilized at the discretion of the handler.
3. If it is believed that an armed and dangerous person may be hiding in the building, the canine handler will determine if the canine team may be utilized.
 - a. If the canine team is not utilized, the on-scene supervisor will determine if any other specialized unit(s) will be called.

4. If a controlled search is conducted, the handler may request additional deputies to accompany him into the building.
5. Building searches will not be conducted for alarm calls, open doors or windows, unless the owner, occupant, or other responsible party has been contacted and verifies that no one is authorized to be in the building.
6. Canine Warning
 - a. No patrol canine will be used in a building without verbal warnings being given.
 - b. The handler will identify himself, give instructions for surrender, and give notification that a trained canine will be released if the occupants fail to surrender according to instructions.
 - c. A warning will be given twice prior to releasing a canine into the building.

F. Tracking Operations

1. 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.
2. When tracking a suspect, the canine team will be accompanied by at least one other law enforcement officer who will keep other units advised of the direction and progress of the track and protect the handler.
3. A canine team will not search alone.
4. By eyewitness account or positive inference, the handler will attempt to determine the path taken by the suspect or person to be tracked.
5. The path should be free of contamination from other persons or by the investigating deputy as part of the crime scene security.
6. The on-scene supervisor or investigating deputy is responsible for establishing the perimeter; however, the primary responsibility falls on the supervisor to help monitor perimeter units and ensure that they are working in a manner that is helpful to the canine team.
7. If practical, perimeter units will remain in their vehicles, with engines off, and all other law enforcement officers should remain out of the area (to avoid contamination).

G. 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.
2. If there is suspected CDS that has been discarded a search will be conducted at the discretion of the handler to protect the safety of the canine.

H. Crowd Control

1. A patrol canine may be deployed for crowd control or civil disorder at the discretion of the handler or the on-scene supervisor after taking into consideration the facts at hand and the severity of the incident.

I. 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 tracking, at the discretion of the handler.

J. Drug Detection Canine Deployment

1. Vehicle Scan

- a. Deputies requesting a canine scan will not search the vehicle before the canine team arrives.
 - b. The investigating deputy at the scene will secure the vehicle.
 - c. When a canine team is scanning a vehicle, all occupant(s) will be moved to a safe location until the scan is completed.
 - d. The investigating deputy should articulate the reason for the scan / indicators to the handler prior to any scan beginning.
 - e. 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, however, the deputy cannot extend the duration of the stop merely to accommodate the scan.
 - f. If the stop is extended due to the response time of the canine team, then reasonable articulable suspicion will be required.
2. A Drug Detection Team may be used in accordance with current law to:
- a. Assist in the search for drugs during a search warrant service;
 - b. Obtain a search warrant by using the drugs detection canine in support of probable cause;
 - c. Search vehicles, buildings, bags, and any other articles deemed necessary; and
 - d. Search open and public spaces.
3. 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 sufficient law enforcement officers are present.
7. Canine scans of a person shall require a passive alert dog that is trained to scan people.

K. 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 or shell casings, explosive sweeps, pre-determined events; or
 - c. To conduct preliminary scans at large scale events.
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. If 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."

L. Reporting Procedure

1. Whenever a canine is deployed (handler utilizes his canine for a law enforcement investigation), the handler will complete an entry in K9 Trak and will be reviewed by a canine unit supervisor.
2. For a deployment where there is a recovery of evidence, a subject is located, or an arrest is made with assistance of the canine, the handler will complete an On-Call Supplement for all Agency incidents. For outside agency assistance an On-Call incident report will be completed.

M. Bites

1. If a bite or injury results from any **Agency** canine it will be considered either a use of force, as outlined in policy, or an accidental bite and the following measures will be taken:
 - a. Medical aid will be provided as soon as possible;
 - b. Canine handler will obtain as much information about the person bitten as possible, to include if they have their spleen;
 - c. Both the Watch Commander/Duty Officer and a canine unit supervisor will be notified;
 - d. Photographs will be taken of the injuries;
 - e. A SOD supervisor will complete either a Use of Force in the Records Management System (RMS), or in the case of an accidental bite, a Supervisor's Incident Report (SIR);
 - f. The handler will complete a Canine Unit Incident Report (SO-135) to include damage to clothing or personal effects, if treatment was required, the name of the person rendering aid, date, time, and location; and
 - g. In the event of an accidental bite, a written statement will be requested from the victim and any witnesses.
 - i. Should the victim be an HCSO employee they will complete an Employee's Report of Incident ([SO-016](#)).

N. Canine 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:
 - a. Notify a shift supervisor immediately;
 - b. Remove the canine if safe to do so;
 - c. If not safe to do so, contact another handler for assistance; and/or
 - d. If another handler is not available, contact Animal Control.
2. The shift supervisor will notify the canine unit supervisor as soon as possible.
3. If the above methods are not available or practical, a canine unit supervisor will determine the method of removing the canine.

O. Requests for Canine

1. A request for canine unit assistance by allied agencies that are in Harford County will be directed to an on duty canine handler.
2. If the request is determined to be appropriate, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate the requesting agency.

3. A canine unit supervisor / SOD supervisor must approve all requests for police canine assistance from agencies that are outside Harford County.

- a. Police canine teams will not be used outside Harford County to perform any assignment which is not consistent with this policy.

P. Reporting Police Canine/Handler Injuries

1. If a canine/canine handler is injured, the injury will be immediately reported to the canine unit supervisor or other SOD supervisor, if available.
2. If the canine unit supervisor or SOD supervisor is not available, the injury will be immediately reported to the Watch Commander/Duty Officer who will then complete the SIR and disseminate the same 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.
 - a. If the handler and canine are out of the area, the handler may use the nearest available veterinarian.

Q. CID Electronic Storage Detection (ESD) Canine

1. The primary mission of the ESD team will be to assist the Harford County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and their Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) unit with the investigation of child maltreatment and technology facilitated crimes against children. ESD Canine requests can be referred to the CAC.

R. Handler Unavailability

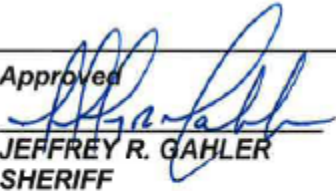
1. If a handler is placed in a modified duty status, flexibility should be built into any assignment he is given so that reasonable care can be provided to the canine.
2. When a canine is not available for deployment, due to an injury, illness, or other reasons, the Division Commander may assign the 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.

S. Prohibited

1. Canine teams are not authorized to respond in the emergency mode (code) 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 anyone be permitted to pet or come into contact with a canine.
4. Employees will refrain from any horseplay with the handler in the canine's presence.

6. Summary of Changes

- A. On 05/23/24 a 3-year review of the policy was conducted in which many revisions were made to make the policy more concise and applicable to the entire agency. The following changes were made:
1. Deleted: Section X. CID Electronic Storage Detection (ESD) Canine
 2. Added: Passive Tracking Team definition.
 3. Deleted: Care for Canine, Drug and Explosive Training Aids, Canine Handler Requirements, Canine Retirement, Training, and Canine Supervisor Responsibilities as these are unit specific.
 4. Added: Various language changes to the Canine Deployment Guidelines and Canine Scans.

Approved

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SHERIFF
DATE 6.12.24