# **DUBLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

# **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

#### SECTION: M-005 CANINE OPERATIONS

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# **I. PURPOSE:**

To establish guidelines and responsibilities pertaining to the selection, use, deployment, training, and care of canine units of the Dublin Police Department.

# **II. STATEMENT OF POLICY:**

It shall be the policy of the Dublin Police Department to use police canine teams as an additional supportive tool in drug detection, building searches, field searches, property searches, vehicle searches, tracking, patrol routes, directed searching and maintaining, participation in department sponsored educational services and public relations. The application and use of a canine unit provides a highly visible and positive deterrent to criminal activity. This has been established through the use of the canine’s ability to locate narcotics, persons, and to reduce the incidence of reported crimes in a canine unit’s assigned area of patrol. The canine unit provides and additional tool to further the objectives and goals of the Dublin Police Department in serving the community.

*Note: It is important that all personnel recognize the liability involved in the utilization of a dog as a law enforcement tool.*

# **III. RULES AND REGULATIONS:**

A. Criteria for the Selection of Canine Officers:

1. Officers must be at a high level of fitness and well being.

2. Officers should display high self-image and notable imagination in performing

their duties.

3. Officers shall have demonstrated a history of good job performance.

4. Officers interested in applying for the canine officer position must submit a letter of interest documenting how they meet the criteria to their immediate supervisor, who must then submit a letter of recommendation to the Chief of Police.

# B. Selection of Service Canine - Dogs purchased from commercial vendors for police service

must be healthy and physically fit for their intended purpose. The commercial vendor must be prepared to replace the canine due to health-related defects that were present when the canine was purchased. Prior to any purchase, a licensed veterinarian must examine all canines. The vendor must certify the canine’s health and hips prior to any sale. Canines donated to the Dublin Police Department canine unit from citizens in the community must be healthy and physically fit for their intended purpose.

1. Prior to accepting any donated canine, it will be tested by a canine officer for suitability of its intended purpose.

2. Prior to accepting any donated canine, the Department will have it examined by a licensed veterinarian to determine the canine is healthy and physically fit. This examination is also to include that the donated dog is free of any hip displacement and heartworms.

# C. Supervision/Schedule – Police canine officers will follow the same chain of command as

any other patrol officer concerning normal patrol problems or requests. In matters that directly concern the individual canine, the handler will notify the Shift Commander, who will, in turn, notify the Assistant Chief with regard to the problem(s). The Assistant Chief will notify the Chief of Police when necessary.

# D. Duties of Canine Units - Police canine units (officer and canine) shall patrol assigned

areas on foot or in vehicles. The canine unit will be responsible for self initiated high profile patrol in designated high-crime neighborhoods, community recreations centers, and playgrounds. The unit shall respond to calls for service when dispatched by the Communications Center or requested by a patrol unit. The canine unit will assist both patrol officers and detectives/investigators in narcotics detection, as well as locating lost or missing children, elderly people, and/or fugitives. The canine unit will assist in department sponsored educational programs and public relations within the community. The final determination as to whether or not a canine will be used in any given situation will rest with the handler.

1. It will be the responsibility of the handler/officer to apply his/her specialized training and knowledge of the canine’s capabilities to evaluate the safety and appropriateness of accomplishing the task requested. All handlers must complete basic canine handler training prior to beginning patrol duties with the canine. Only those officers designated, as a handler, by the Chief of Police, will be allowed to control the canine. If the handler is unable to control the canine, for any reason, any officer in the immediate area may take control of the canine for the purposes of containment only. Upon request of a supervisor or a canine handler any sworn officer may operate the canine vehicle.

2. The handler/officer will be accountable for the actions of the canine. Civil and criminal liability may result from the improper or careless use of a police canine; therefore, the handler must maintain control of the canine at all times

3. Any Law enforcement officer of Laurens County (Sheriff, GSP, Probation, DNR, or Dublin police) may make requests for a canine unit for use within the jurisdiction of the Dublin Police Department and county of said officer. Out of county request must be approved by the Assistant Chief, or his designee, of the Dublin Police Department. A log with the 911 communications department of said department will be kept at any time such canine unit leaves the city. Each K-9 unit will keep a separate log of such requests along with the disposition of the case.

4. An “On-Duty” supervisor must make requests for an “Off-Duty” canine unit, for use within the jurisdiction of the Dublin Police Department. Officers are required to use their respective chain-of-command when making such requests.

5. It is the policy of this Department to provide the assistance of the canine unit to outside agencies when requested, with approval of the Assistant Chief or his designee.

6. Since the handler is a representative of this Department, he/she will be required to abide by all applicable departmental rules, regulations, and general orders of the Dublin Police Department even when outside its jurisdiction.

7. By policy of Mutual Aid assistance, provided by the canine unit, outside law enforcement agencies are subject to those limitations established by the Chief of Police.

8. The Dublin Police Department will not train canine units for outside law enforcement agencies. Those agencies that wish to participate in training exercises with the canine unit must have functioning canine units that have already completed their basic training.

9. Upon arriving at the requested jurisdiction, a wavier of liability form must be signed, by a supervisor of the requesting agency, to secure the assistance of the canine unit.

10. Requests for canine demonstrations should be routed to the Assistant Chief of Police for final approval.

a. Extreme care will be exercised by the handlers to ensure that no harm or risk comes to the handlers, canines, or spectators.

b. Each demonstration will consist of a handler, a canine.

c. At no time will the canine be demonstrated in a manner as to discredit the canine unit or the Dublin Police Department.

d. The handler will exercise caution and maintain control over the canine at all times during canine demonstrations.

# E. Building Searches – When canine units respond to building searches, officers on the

# scene should observe these guidelines:

# 1. The initial responding officer(s) should establish a perimeter around the building to be searched and wait for the arrival of the canine team. In an effort to prevent contamination of the area to be searched, officers should not enter the building prior to canine arrival.

# 2. Officers should not open doors or windows or allow anyone else to enter the building to be searched by the canine team.

# 3. During the search no one is to enter the building except the handler and/or someone at the handler’s request. Officers on the perimeter are to remain at their respective position until relieved or ordered to change their location.

# 4. The canine unit may conduct building searches either on or off lead. (As described in Canine Deployment). Canine officers conducting any building search will observe these guidelines:

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# a. Upon arrival on the scene of the building to be searched, the canine officer should consult officers on the scene and assess the situation.

# b. The canine officer will make every effort to verify that no innocent or authorized person is in the building before commencing the search.

# c. Prior to deploying the police canine into the building, the canine officer will announce his presence, and that the building is about to be searched with a police canine.

d. Before deploying the police canine into the building, a warning will be given prior to releasing the canine. This warning will be given as follows:

“Dublin Police K-9”

e. The canine officer will then notify all on-scene units that the canine has entered the building to begin the search. All perimeter units must maintain their respective position.

# F. Tracking – In tracking situations, the canine unit will follow the ground disturbance that

a suspect leaves while in-flight. During tracking situations, the dog will be on lead, and a tracking harness will be in place.

1. The area where the subject was last seen should be preserved so as to avoid contamination. Officers should refrain from entering this area unless circumstances dictate otherwise, such as hot pursuit.

2. Officers should not touch articles or evidence which may have been dropped or left by the suspect, without first receiving the handler’s permission.

3. The handler will conduct all tracking searches with the canine on lead. The dog being kept on lead is a necessary precaution to maintain control of the canine to ensure the canine is tracking the suspect.

# G. Patrol Routes – In patrol route situations, the canine unit will follow the air scent drive of

canine. The canine will be able to use the suspect’s odor to locate him if concealed in a wooded area, open field or building. During patrol route situations, the dog can be utilized on or off lead depending on the individual situation. This type of searching technique can be utilized when tracking is no longer available. The following situations reflect suitable activities for this type of canine deployment:

1. Searching open/wooded areas for concealed persons when on leash searching cannot be used.

2. Locating concealed persons by utilizing air scent drive in dog and downwind search patterns.

3. Utilized when tracking is not available, such as contaminated area, extreme thick brush.

# H. Directed Searches – Directed searches are to be utilized in searching large open/wooded

areas where a patrol route would otherwise be ineffective. This type of search the canine handler will establish contact with perimeter units as to the start location of this search and to ensure that perimeter units remain with their patrol cars. This search technique the canine will be off lead at all times of the search. The following situations reflect suitable activities for this type of canine deployment searching large open/wooded areas for concealed persons when Patrol Route searching cannot be used. It will be the responsibility of the handler to apply his specialized training and knowledge of the canine capabilities to which type of search is to be conducted. Generally, deployment of Service canines will be on leash as to minimize endangering the service canine, other officers, or innocent third parties. The following exceptions can be off lead searches:

1. Interior vehicle searches

2. Interior building searches.

3. Open area searches or densely vegetated areas.

4. Special circumstances as determined by the handler (thick brush and/or obstacles where leash could become entangled.)

# I. Drug Detection – The Dublin Police Department (normally) maintains one dual-purpose

police canine and one drug canine. In addition to tracking, and locating human scent, these dual purpose and drug canines are trained to detect narcotics.

1. These canines will be able to indicate the presence of narcotics in either an aggressive or passive manner, depending on the canine’s training, as to be determined by the unit trainer.

2. All handlers will maintain a training log of the canine’s narcotics detection work.

3. Under no circumstances is a subject to be searched by a canine for narcotics concealed on his person. The only authorized areas to be searched are buildings (.e. businesses, residences, and/or any other structures), real property, and vehicles. This is not meant to limit the search of any other object or place where illegal drugs might be concealed.

4. It shall be the responsibility of the canine unit handler to oversee all drug detection training. All canine handlers will share the responsibility that any and all substances used for training purposes are handled properly.

# J. Evidence Handling Procedure for Narcotics used for Canine Training:

1. The drugs to be used for canine training will be signed out of the Dublin Police Department Evidence Property and Evidence system, with prior notification of and authorization by the Criminal Investigations Section commander. The involved drugs shall be selected from those prior submissions that no longer have evidentiary value. Prior to taking possession of the drugs, the canine handler shall complete a miscellaneous incident report, with a departmental case number, outlining the type and amount of drugs received for the purpose of canine training. Additionally, the handler will complete a new property and evidence report that reflects the evidence custodian's’ release of the materials to the handler. This property report shall be maintained within the canine training narcotics storage area until it is returned to the evidence custodian for final disposal (only the departmental evidence custodian shall dispose of such narcotics). Upon receipt by the canine handler, the involved drugs shall be taken to the canine training narcotics storage area. The departmental canine handler shall maintain a permanent record of the drugs used for canine training. Only appropriately licensed canine handlers shall have access to this canine training narcotics storage area.

2. The canine training narcotics storage area shall be located within the general canine equipment storage area, located at the Dublin Police Department. The permanent record will be maintained within this narcotics storage area. The permanent log will also provide sufficient space to document each time drugs are removed from storage for training purposes. The individual canine handler will be responsible for documenting the type drugs, the amount of drugs, and the time and date the drugs are removed for training purposes. Upon the return of the drugs to the appropriate storage area, the handler will document such return with the time and date of the transaction within the permanent record.

3. The canine handler that signs the drugs out of the canine training narcotics storage area will be responsible for the drugs while in his custody. While in the handler’s custody, drugs will be stored in the canine officer’s vehicle narcotics safe.

4. Canine handlers will not be allowed to remove the drugs from the canine training narcotics storage area for any purposes other than canine training.

5. In the event that any of the drug(s) are lost or destroyed during training, the canine handler who signed the drugs from the canine training narcotics storage area will write an incident report to document the incident. A copy of the report will be left with the evidence permanent record log within the canine training narcotics storage area. The handler will also personally notify the canine trainer, who assumes responsibility to ensure proper documentation of the lost materials.

6. In the event that any of the drugs are stolen, the incident will be immediately reported to the police department. The canine trainer will personally notify the Captain and the Chief of Police.

K. Canine Deployment – The prompt and proper utilization of a trained canine unit has

proven to be a valuable use of a unique resource in law enforcement. When properly used, a canine team greatly increases the degree of safety to citizens within a contained search area, enhances individual officer safety, significantly increases the likelihood of suspect apprehension, and dramatically reduces the amount of time necessary to conduct a search.

1. The following situations reflect suitable activities or canine deployments:

a. Building searches where there is the possibility of suspects hidden inside.

b. Searches of shopping centers, malls, or other large structures where manpower commitments and search time will be excessive.

2. Canine deployments shall be limited to:

a. Searches for felony suspects, or misdemeanor suspects who the officer has probable cause to arrest and the circumstances of the situation present a safety issue to police personnel who would otherwise conduct a search without a canine.

b. Searches for missing persons, articles, including weapons, narcotics or other property, which may have value as evidence in a criminal case.

c. Generally speaking, searches for known juvenile offenders shall be limited to those instances where the severity of the crime, subject’s age and propensity for violence, whether or not the subjects are believed to be armed, or other critical factors would reasonably justify the use of a canine search team. In these situations, a supervisor must first authorize the use of the canine.

3. There are no other persons, either police or citizens, which will be endangered by release of the canine.

4. If time and circumstances permit, a warning will be given prior to releasing the canine. This warning will be given as follows:

“Dublin Police K-9”

5. The canine has actually seen the offender, and knows that the offender is the person to be apprehended. In situations where the offender may be concealed, the canine must demonstrate a strong alert or indication before deployment. The handler must maintain control of the canine throughout the deployment. In the event control is lost, the handler will take immediate action as to regain control of his canine.

6. If the offender surrenders prior to contact the handler will immediately recall/down the canine.

7. In all situations where the offender is known to be armed, utilization of the canine will be at the discretion of the canine handler.

8. When a canine unit makes an apprehension of a suspect while assisting officers, the suspect is to be turned over to the officer(s) originally dispatched to the call. After a suspect is in custody, it is forbidden to use the canine to intimidate the suspect. It will be the equal responsibility of the canine handler and other officers present to prevent a suspect or other persons present from intentionally agitating a canine.

9. Because of certain liability and safety factors involved, canine units will not normally transport prisoners. In cases of extreme emergency, canine units may transport prisoners.

# L. Canine Officer’s Uniform – Officers assigned to the canine unit shall wear the normal

duty uniform as prescribed by the department SOP. In addition to duty uniforms, canine officers may wear other uniforms/clothing, such as BDU’s, for special assignments at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

# M. Behavior around Canine Units:

1. All officers are reminded to conduct themselves in a professional manner while around a police canine. It is the responsibility of the canine handler to maintain control of his assigned canine while other officers are present.

2. Officers who are out with a canine unit will not engage in any conduct that might agitate the canine. Any question as to what activity is appropriate when a canine is present should be directed to the handler.

3. No officer will strike or fake an aggressive act toward a canine handler while in the presence of the canine except in training and/or public relations demonstrations.

4. At no time will an officer in uniform engage in an aggressive act against a canine or handler for any reason.

5. No officer will touch or pet the canine without the permission of the handler.

6. No employee will attempt to enter or reach into a canine vehicle while the canine is inside.

7. Only the handler will feed or give commands to the police canine.

8. No one will bring drugs into contact with the canine or attempt to have a canine alert or search for drugs other than the handler.

9. Police canines are trained to find a suspect and detain by barking on command, in response to their training, in order to apprehend a fleeing suspect or to protect the handler. Should a police canine confront an officer while on a call, the officer should stand still. Any sudden movement or attempted flight by the officer may cause the canine to respond in an aggressive manner.

# N. Records/Reports Required of Handlers – It will be the responsibility of the handler to

make a written report (statement) of all behavior violations to his/her supervisor.

1. Written statements will be forwarded through the chain of command for further investigation and disciplinary action when necessary.

2. Failure to report behavior violations will result in disciplinary action being taken against the handler, when appropriate.

# O. Canine Unit Training – When a canine is used in any given situation, the handler will

make a Field Report, describing in detail the incident and what activity took place. If the canine was called to the incident location, but not utilized, the field report should reflect that the canine was called, but not used. Reasons for the incident, as in all reports required by officers, should be specific and detailed.

1. In the event that the canine unit participates with other officers on a call, the canine handler is to write a supplemental report using the case officer’s original case number.

2. All canine handlers are to maintain a log of Canine Field Reports. The field reports should include the environment, weather conditions, location, and reason for canine use, subjects/officers present, and the canine’s activity. The canine officer’s supervisor is to review the canine log for each handler on a regular basis.

3. All canine handlers that are working a patrol canine trained to detect drugs are to maintain a drug training activity log attached to the Daily Field Report.

4. The Dublin Police Department will oversee an on-going program of canine training for both the handler and each dog. The training, as determined by the handler and department leadership, is intended to maintain the skill levels of both handler and dog. All training is to increase the abilities and improve the effectiveness of each individual canine unit.

5. Training will consist of planned necessary work on new techniques and methods or on specific weaknesses for any particular canine team as determined by the canine trainer.

6. Canine training will be held on a regularly scheduled basis as determined by the canine handler and department leadership. Each handler will be required to work with his assigned canine at least once a day. Unit training will be scheduled by the canine handlers at intervals, which allow for the canine unit and the department to meet their goals and objectives. Training allows for evaluation of current training status of each handler and canine. While training in this manner, each handler participates in the development and conditioning of each of the unit’s canines.

7. The canine handler is to develop training exercises that will maintain training levels of each canine team. Any changes in the training program, affecting the performance of the canine teams, or the methods/type of training, will be the responsibility of the handler and department leadership. It is the canine handler’s responsibility to inform the department of any changes in unit status, changes in training schedules, up-grades in skill levels, any serious problems, and any other situation that may affect canine performance or qualification.

# P. Injury/Death to a Police Canine:

1. Depending on the circumstances that resulted in the injury/death to the service canine, the handler is to seek immediate medical assistance for the canine. The handler will immediately inform the chain of command of the incident.

2. In the event that the injury to the canine unit was the result of an intentional act of another while in the performance of his duty, the subject(s) involved will be treated as is appropriate, as described in O.C.G.A. 16-11-107, Injuring or Killing a Police Dog.

# Q. Injury of a Canine Officer – In the event that a canine officer is injured to the extent that

the officer cannot exercise control over the canine, any officer on the scene should:

1. Call for another canine officer. These officers are trained in exercising control over another handler’s canine.

2. If the time required for response by another canine officer may jeopardize the injured officer’s life, officers on the scene should first, attempt to notify the Animal Control Officer to respond and take control of the canine until another canine officer can respond.

3. If the options in 1 and 2 are unavailable, the officers may need to divert the canine’s attention in order to reach the injured officer and move him to safety. The canine’s training and dedication to his handler may make diversion extremely difficult. An officer “taking a bite” may be the only successful way of diverting the canine’s attention. When an officer on the scene must take a bite, he should follow these guidelines:

a. Heavily pad the arm to reduce chance of injury;

b. Have other officers standing by with the canine vehicle and give verbal commands for the canine to enter the car. The commands for this are either “LOAD” or “CAR”. If this doesn’t work, have other officers standing by with a rope or leash which can quickly attach to the canine’s choker collar after the attack;

c. Secure the canine to an immovable object such as an automobile, utility pole, or door handle.

1. The use of deadly force against the canine should not be used until all other means have failed and the canine officer’s injuries are life threatening.

# R. Replacement of On-Duty Canine – It will be the determination of the canine handler as

when to replace an on-duty canine. Reasons for replacement may include chronic or poor performance, old age, and/or injuries, which prevent the canine from performing further active duty.

# S. Police Canine Maintenance:

1. Handlers will be responsible for the health and welfare of their assigned canines, both on and off duty.

2. Any illness of a non-emergency nature will be reported to the Assistant Chief or Chief of Police immediately. If it is determined that the canine should be taken to the departmental veterinarian, the handler will make the necessary arrangements.

3. In an emergency situation, the handler shall ensure that the canine receives immediate medical attention. The handler will then submit a statement to the Assistant Chief describing the entire incident.

4. The handler will be responsible for the daily maintenance of the assigned canine. This includes the administration of any necessary medications, grooming, bathing, and the spraying of the canine for fleas and ticks.

5. Medical examinations will be conducted annually or as needed should an injury or illness occur.

6. Canine handlers will be responsible for the care and upkeep of all equipment issued to them for training, control, and transportation of the canine.

7. Canine vehicles are to be kept in good operating order. The interior will be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

8. All department regulations pertaining to the proper maintenance of city vehicles shall apply.