
318 – Sheriff's Office Canine Program

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318.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Sheriff's Office Canine Program was established to augment patrol services to the community. Sheriff's Office canines are used to supplement patrol operations to locate and apprehend criminal offenders.

318.2 GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SHERIFF'S OFFICE CANINES

A Sheriff's Office canine may be used to locate and apprehend a suspect if the canine handler reasonably believes that the individual has either committed or threatened to commit any serious offense and if any of the following conditions exist:

- (a) There is a reasonable belief that the individual poses an imminent threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any deputy, or the handler; or
- (b) The individual is physically resisting or threatening to resist arrest and the use of a 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 canine would pose a threat to the safety of deputies or the public.

It is recognized that situations may arise that do not fall within the provisions set forth in this policy. In any such case, a standard of objective reasonableness shall be used to review the decision to use a canine in view of the totality of the circumstances.

NOTE: Absent reasonable belief that an individual has committed or threatened to commit a serious offense, mere flight from pursuing deputy(ies) shall not serve as good cause for the use of a canine to apprehend the individual.

318.21 PREPARATIONS FOR UTILIZING A CANINE

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

- (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 or threatened resistance, if any, the subject has shown.
- (e) The potential for escape or flight if the canine is not utilized.
- (f) The potential for injury to deputies or the public caused by the suspect if the canine is not utilized.

As circumstance permit, the canine handler should make every reasonable effort to communicate and coordinate with other involved personnel to minimize the risk of unintended injury.

The handler will evaluate each situation and determine if the use of a canine is technically feasible. Generally the decision to deploy the dog shall remain with the handler; however, a supervisor sufficiently apprised of the situation may determine whether or not to deploy the dog.

318.22 WARNINGS GIVEN TO ANNOUNCE THE USE OF A CANINE

Unless it would otherwise increase the risk of injury or escape, a clearly audible warning to announce that a police service dog will be released if the person does not come forth, shall be made prior to releasing a canine. The canine handler, when practical, shall first advise the supervisor of their decision if a verbal warning is not given prior to releasing the canine. In the event of an apprehension, the handler shall document in any related report whether or not a verbal warning was given and, if none was given, the reasons why.

318.23 USE OF NARCOTIC-DETECTION CANINE

A narcotic-detection-trained canine may be used in accordance with current law under the following circumstances:

- (a) To assist in the search for narcotics during a search warrant service.
- (b) To obtain a search warrant by using the detection canine in support of probable cause.
- (c) To search vehicles, buildings, bags, and any other articles deemed necessary.
- (d) A narcotic-detection canine will not be used to search a person for narcotics.

318.24 REPORTING USE OF A CANINE

Whenever the canine is deployed, an incident report shall be completed by the handler and turned in to the Canine Program Supervisor.

318.25 REPORTING CANINE BITES OR INJURIES

If a bite or injury results from the use of the canine, that information shall be documented on a report form. The report should include, at a minimum, the following:

- (a) In all cases of bites or injury resulting from the use of a canine, on or off duty, photographs shall be taken of the bite or injury after first tending to the immediate needs of the injured party. The photographs will be submitted to CSI. If the injury requires medical attention, the subject should be transported to an appropriate medical facility. In the event an in-custody suspect requires medical attention, a deputy should standby with the suspect until treatment has been rendered.
- (b) Whenever a bite results, the handler shall notify the Animal Control Office as soon after the incident as practical.
- (c) If a subject alleges an injury that is not visible, notification shall be made to a supervisor and the location of the alleged injury should be photographed.
- (d) The Program Supervisor will maintain liaison with the Animal Control Department to ensure that information regarding canine bites is not retained by its office. Canines used by law enforcement agencies are exempt from impoundment and reporting requirements to the Animal Control Department (Food and Agriculture Code § 31609(b)).

318.26 REPORTING CANINE INJURIES

In the event that a canine is injured, the injury will be immediately reported to the Watch Commander.

Depending on the severity of the injury, the canine shall either be treated by the designated veterinarian or transported to a designated emergency medical facility for treatment. If the handler and dog are out of the area, the handler may use the nearest available veterinarian.

The injury will be documented on an incident report form.

318.27 ASSIGNMENT OF CANINES

The canine teams shall be assigned to the Law Enforcement Division.

Canine teams should function primarily as cover units. However, they may be assigned by the field supervisor to other functions based on the needs of the watch at the time.

Canine teams should not be assigned to handle matters that will take them out of service for extended periods of time unless absolutely necessary, and only with the approval of the Watch Commander.

318.3 REQUEST FOR USE OF CANINE DOG TEAMS

Personnel within the Sheriff's Office are encouraged to freely solicit the use of the canines. When bureaus outside of the Patrol Bureau request to use a canine team, the request shall be made to the Program Supervisor or the on-duty Watch Commander.

318.31 REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER AGENCIES

The Watch Commander or the Program Supervisor must approve all requests for canine assistance from outside agencies subject to the following provisions:

- (a) Canine teams shall not be used outside the County of Sonoma to perform any assignment, which is not consistent with this policy.

- (b) Upon arrival at the scene, the handler has the ultimate decision as to whether the canine is to be used for a specific assignment.
- (c) Canine teams shall not be called out while off duty or used outside the County of Sonoma unless authorized by the Watch Commander or the Program Supervisor.
- (d) It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to coordinate with outside agency personnel in order to minimize the risk of unintended injury.

318.32 REQUEST FOR PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

All public requests for a canine team shall be approved by the Program Supervisor prior to making any commitment.

Handlers shall not demonstrate any "apprehension" work to the public unless authorized to do so by the Program Supervisor.

318.4 SELECTION OF CANINE HANDLERS

The following are the minimum qualifications for the assignment of Canine Handler:

- (a) Sonoma County Sheriff's deputy (currently off probation).
- (b) Reside in an adequately fenced, single-family, residence (minimum five-foot high fence with locking gates).
- (c) Have a garage that will accommodate a canine unit and which can be secured.
- (d) Live within sixty (60) minutes travel time from the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office.
- (e) Agree to be assigned to the position for a minimum of three (3) years.

318.5 CANINE HANDLER RESPONSIBILITIES

Canine Handlers shall be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

318.51 AVAILABILITY

The handler shall be available for call-out under conditions specified by the Program Supervisor.

318.52 CARE FOR THE CANINE AND EQUIPMENT

The handler shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions. The handler will be responsible for the following:

- (a) The handler shall maintain all Sheriff's Office equipment under his or her control in a clean and serviceable condition and, when off-duty, maintain the canine unit in a garage, secured from public view.
- (b) When a handler takes a vacation or extended amount of days off, the canine vehicle shall be maintained at the Sheriff's Office facility.
- (c) Handlers shall permit the Program Supervisor to conduct spontaneous on-site inspections of affected areas of their residence as well as the canine unit, to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.
- (d) Any changes in the living status of the handler which may affect the lodging or environment of the canine shall be reported to the Program Supervisor as soon as possible.

- (e) When off-duty, canines shall be maintained in kennels, provided by the County, at the homes of their handlers. When a canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock. When off-duty, canines may be let out of their kennels while under the direct control of their handlers.
- (f) The canine should be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family for short periods of time and under the direct supervision of the handler.
- (g) Under no circumstances will the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the Program Supervisor or Watch Commander.
- (h) When off-duty, handlers shall not involve their canine in any activity or conduct unless approved in advance by the Program Supervisor or Watch Commander.
- (i) 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 shall give reasonable notice to the Program Supervisor so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

318.53 CANINES IN PUBLIC AREAS

All canines shall be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions would include specific police operations for which the canines are trained.

- (a) Canines shall not be left unattended in any area to which the public may have access.
- (b) When the canine unit is left unattended all windows and doors shall be secured.

318.54 HANDLER COMPENSATION

The canine handler shall be compensated for time spent in the care, feeding, grooming and other needs of the dog as provided in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The compensation shall be prescribed in the members Memorandum of Understanding.

318.6 MEDICAL CARE OF THE CANINE

All medical attention shall be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency as provided in Policy Manual § 318.62.

318.61 NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Non-emergency medical care will be coordinated through the Program Supervisor.

Any indication that a canine is not in good physical condition shall be reported to the Program Supervisor or the Watch Commander as soon as practical.

All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the canine Supervisor file.

318.62 EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

The designated emergency medical treatment center or canine veterinarian shall render emergency medical treatment. The handler shall notify the Program Supervisor as soon as practicable when emergency medical care is required.

318.7 TRAINING

Before assignment in the field, each canine team shall be trained and certified to meet current POST standards. Cross-trained dog teams or those dog teams trained exclusively for the

detection of narcotics and/or explosives shall be trained and certified to meet the standards established for such detection dogs by the California Narcotic Canine Association or other recognized and approved certification standards.

318.71 CONTINUED TRAINING

Each canine team shall thereafter be re-certified to POST canine standards on an annual basis. Additional training considerations are as follows:

- (a) Canine teams shall receive training as defined in the current contract with the Sheriff's Office canine training provider.
- (b) Canine handlers are encouraged to engage in additional training with approval of the Program Supervisor.
- (c) To ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer, or outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is contrary to the policies of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office.
- (d) All canine training shall be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the Program Supervisor or Watch Commander.

In the event a Sheriff's Office canine team misses three (3) or more maintenance training days with the master trainer (8 hour monthly trainings), that team is not to return to duty at any capacity until the following occurs:

- (a) The canine team participates in a "Return to Duty" evaluation for both patrol and narcotics detection conducted by the master trainer.
- (b) The canine team is cleared for duty by the canine sergeant and/or lieutenant.

Once the canine team is re-evaluated and cleared for duty, documentation will be placed in the canine training file clearing the team for full duty. In the event a team does not successfully complete the re-evaluation, a training plan will be developed by the master trainer and canine sergeant to bring the team up to an acceptable level.

318.72 FAILURE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE POST TRAINING

No canine team failing POST canine certification shall be deployed in the field until certification is achieved. When practical, pending successful certification, the canine handler shall be temporarily reassigned to regular patrol duties.

318.73 TRAINING RECORDS

All canine training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's training file.

318.8 CANINE PROGRAM SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Program Supervisor shall be appointed by staff, and shall supervise the Canine Program. The Program Supervisor is directly responsible to the canine Lieutenant. The Program Supervisor shall be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- (a) Maintain liaison with the vendor kennel;
- (b) Maintain liaison with Administrative Staff and functional supervisors(s);
- (c) Maintain liaison with other agency canine coordinators;
- (d) Maintain accurate records to document canine activities;

- (e) Recommend and oversee the procurement of needed equipment and services for the unit;
- (f) Be responsible for scheduling all canine related activities; and
- (g) Ensure the canine teams are scheduled for continuous training to maximize the capabilities of the teams.

318.9 CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE TRAINING AIDS

Controlled substance training aids are required to effectively train and maintain the Sheriff's Office drug detecting dogs. Further, controlled substances can also be an effective training aid during training sessions for law enforcement personnel and the public.

Health & Safety Code § 11367.5 provides that any Sheriff, Chief of Police, the Chief of the Bureau of Controlled Substance Enforcement, or the Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol, or a designee thereof, may, in his or her discretion, provide controlled substances in his or her possession for training purposes:

- (a) To any duly authorized peace officer or civilian drug detection canine trainer working under the direction of a law enforcement agency; and
- (b) Provided the controlled substances are no longer needed as criminal evidence; and
- (c) Provided the person receiving the controlled substances, if required by the Drug Enforcement Administration, possesses a current and valid Drug Enforcement Administration registration which specifically authorizes the recipient to possess controlled substances while providing substance abuse training to law enforcement or the community or while providing canine drug detection training.

318.91 PROCEDURES

Due to the responsibilities and liabilities involved with possessing readily usable amounts of controlled substances and the ever-present danger of accidental ingestion of these controlled substances by the canine, the following procedure shall be strictly followed:

- (a) All necessary controlled substance training samples shall be acquired from the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office evidence personnel or from allied agencies authorized by Health & Safety Code § 11367.5 to provide controlled substance training samples. All controlled substance training samples shall be weighed and tested prior to dispensing to the individual canine handler.
- (b) The weight and test results shall be recorded and maintained by this agency.
- (c) Any person receiving controlled substance training samples pursuant to Health & Safety Code § 11367.5 shall maintain custody and control of the controlled substances and shall keep records regarding any loss of, or damage to, those controlled substances.
- (d) All controlled substance training samples will be inspected, weighed, and tested quarterly. The results of the quarterly testing shall be recorded and maintained by the Canine Program Supervisor with a copy forwarded to the dispensing agency.
- (e) All controlled substance training samples will be stored in locked metal boxes at all times, except during training. The locked metal boxes shall be secured in the trunk of the canine handler's assigned patrol unit, or stored in a locked evidence locker. There are no exceptions to this procedure.

- (f) The Canine Program Supervisor shall periodically inspect every controlled substance training sample for damage or tampering and take any appropriate action.
- (g) Any unusable controlled substance training samples shall be returned to the Property Bureau or to the dispensing agency.
- (h) All controlled substance training samples shall be returned to the dispensing agency upon the conclusion of the training or upon demand by the dispensing agency.

318.92 IMMUNITY

Under Health & Safety Code § 11367.5(b), all duly authorized peace officers, while providing substance abuse training to law enforcement or the community or while providing canine drug detection training, in performance of their official duties, and any person working under their immediate direction, supervision, or instruction, are immune from prosecution.

REVISION HISTORY

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