

**MARIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
PATROL SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

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**Date: May 3, 1983  
Rev. 11/16/88  
Rev. 6/24/91  
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**CANINE UNIT**

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**PURPOSE**

The Canine Unit shall serve as a supplemental resource to the Department's existing operational systems. The unit is implemented for the purpose of enhancing our operational capabilities to this community, while remaining cost effective relative to resource management and the increasing demands for law enforcement services.

**POLICY**

The intent of this policy is to establish specific guidelines for activation and control of the Canine Unit and the parameters in which it will operate. This policy will address those issues pertinent to a fully operational Police Canine Program.

**PROCEDURE**

- A. Implementation**, direction and control of the Marin County Sheriff's Department's Canine (K-9) Unit shall be in strict compliance with all facets of this policy.
- B. Handler Selection**
1. It is important to select the proper deputy to handle a canine. Criteria for selection as a canine handler shall require the following:
    - a. Applicants must be willing to sign an agreement to stay in the K-9 Program for a minimum of four years.
    - b. Officers may be subject to frequent call out during the assignment period.
    - c. Applicants must have a minimum of two years' law enforcement experience prior to appointment as a K-9 handler.
    - d. Applicants must have finished their probationary period with the Marin County Sheriff's Department prior to appointment, unless prior approval is received from the Sheriff.
    - e. Applicants must be patrol officers. Personnel at the rank of Sergeant or above are not presently being considered for this assignment.
    - f. Applicants must own or be buying their own home, or have written authorization from their landlord authorizing:
      - (1) The housing of the Department's trained canine.
      - (2) The County to build a kennel on the property.

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- g Applicants must also have approval from residents of the neighborhood adjacent to their residence regarding the presence and kenneling of a trained police K-9.
- h. The handler may find that his assigned dog will not be compatible with other animals in the household. Should this problem arise, the handler must be prepared to make satisfactory disposition of other family pets to avoid dangerous conflicts between the animals which could result in serious injury to the handler, members of his family, or the canine.

### **C. Canine Coordinator**

1. The canine coordinator shall be an assigned supervisor designated by the Sheriff.
2. The coordinator shall participate in the selection of canine handlers and dogs. The coordinator shall be responsible for scheduling, notification, and evaluation of training. The coordinator shall maintain records and statistics, order supplies, and shall submit reports as required.
3. The coordinator should approve and schedule all canine demonstrations and insure these appearances are valid and beneficial to the canine program and the department.
4. The coordinator and/or a canine handler shall act as a public information officer for the canine program.
5. The coordinator shall have final responsibility for the proper storage, maintenance, cleanliness and security of unit equipment; and may delegate functional responsibility to unit member(s).
6. The coordinator shall be responsible for preparing a budget and procuring necessary equipment.

### **D. Canine Selection**

1. Selection of an appropriate canine shall be coordinated with those persons whose expertise will ensure that the department receive a canine of approved standards. The dog must be free of dysplasia.

### **E. Training**

1. The K-9 and selected handler shall receive training at a location which specializes in training handlers and canine. Training may include instruction in obedience, protection, all areas of searching, and tracking. Also, health care and grooming will be presented during this course.
2. The handler will, upon his/her return to this Department, and with the aid of the Training Sergeant, develop an on going exercise and training program which is consistent with the training received at the specialized training course attended.
  - a. Upon conclusion of the initial training phase, canine officers are to receive a minimum of eight training hours per month. The training is to insure the efficiency of each dog handler in all phases of their assignment. Each dog handler is responsible for on-duty maintenance training when shift activity will allow.

### **F. Transportation**

1. A standard police sedan will be utilized and shall display highly visible K-9 Unit markings on both sides of the vehicle. The vehicle will be equipped with all standard equipment. A mesh screen shall be placed over the exterior of the left rear window to allow ventilation while maintaining the integrity of the unit. The rear seat will be modified by removing the bottom cushion and replacing it with a platform which will accommodate the canine.

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2. K-9 patrol units are to be kept in good operating condition and the interior shall be clean and disinfected.
3. All regulations pertaining to the use of department vehicles shall apply to the vehicle assigned to the K-9 Unit.
  - a. If a handler wishes to use the assigned unit for any reason other than normal patrol, authorization must be obtained from the Operations commander. Valid reasons may include transporting a canine to the kennels, transporting a canine to the veterinarian, or conducting independent training while off duty.
  - b. The K-9 patrol units are not to be used for any personal business.

### G. Special Equipment and Feeding

1. All necessary training and grooming equipment will be purchased through approved channels during the training program.
2. Feed and nutrients will be purchased pursuant to established County purchasing policies. All expenditures shall be approved by the Sheriff or his designee prior to submittal to the Business Office.

### H. Kenneling

1. The canine shall normally be kenneled at the handler's residence unless the handler is on vacation or the animal is kenneled at a veterinary facility for medical reasons.
  - a. The kennels will be kept in a clean and sanitary condition at all times.
2. The canine will not be taken on trips or vacation without the expressed approval of the Sheriff or his designee. In the event the handler chooses not to have the canine on a trip or vacation, the animal may be kenneled at a local facility that meets the requirements of the department and is approved by the Sheriff or his designee.
3. A shelter and dog run will be constructed at the selected handler's residence on a one time only basis at County expense. Should the handler relocate, the adjoining neighbors must again give approval and the costs of reconstructing the run shall be the responsibility of the handler. The shelter shall be so constructed that it can be relocated without any appreciable cost to the County or handler.
  - a. Canines will be securely kenneled or under the direct control of their handler while off duty.
    - (1) When kenneled, the door will be padlocked shut.

### I. Required Conduct

1. All personnel must realize that special conduct is necessary while working near the handler and the canine. The canine is a friendly animal, but it is trained to protect its handler. The canine only recognizes its handler; therefore, officers shall govern themselves in such a manner that their conduct will not be perceived as a threat toward either the handler or the canine. Officers of the Marin County Sheriff's Department shall adhere to the following:
  - a. Officers will not tease or roughhouse with the canine or the handler in the presence of the canine.
  - b. Do not run in front of the dog when it is responding to an assignment.
  - c. Do not make any aggressive gestures toward the handler or any quick movements.

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- d. Officers will not give the canine any commands. Directions for use of the animal are to be given to the handler for implementation.
- e. Under no circumstances will any officer, other than the assigned handler, attempt to, or feed the canine.
- f. Do not attempt to enter or retrieve anything from within the canine vehicle when the dog is in the or unattended.

### **B. Injury to K-9 Handler**

- 1. In the event the K-9 handler is injured while on duty and is unable to maintain control of his animal, the following procedure shall be utilized:
  - a. Immediately notify the Watch Commander/Supervisor.
  - b. Make contact with another K-9 handler or the agitator (helper) and have them come to the scene immediately.
  - c. In the event both canine and handler are injured and cannot be moved due to the nature of their injuries, a veterinarian will be called to the scene in conjunction with those medical personnel called for the handler.
  - d. In the event the handler is injured and the canine has left the immediate area, it is essential for someone, preferably another handler or the agitator, to locate the animal and take him under control.
  - e. If the above procedures fail and it is impossible to control the animal by any reasonable means; the animal poses an immediate threat to the safety and well being of others; the animal's presence or conduct precludes the administering of aid to an injured officer; then as a last resort, with approval of Watch Commander or higher authority, the animal should be disposed of.

### **K. Control of Canines**

- 1. The canine has become a proven instrument for police work; however, it must be controlled in the same manner as other police tools or weapons.
  - a. The handler will maintain close control of the canine when operating in public. The animal shall be kept on leash or secured in the assigned vehicle.
  - b. The handler shall not permit the canine to run at large either on or off duty. When on duty, and it is necessary for the canine to perform certain hygienic functions, the handler will take the canine to an uninhabited area to ensure for the health and safety of both the canine and the community.
  - c. The handler shall take every precaution to ensure the canine is not provoked, teased, or otherwise abused or aggravated. Particular attention must be afforded to situations where the handler is operating away from the vehicle where the animal is secured.
  - d. While on patrol, a window of the vehicle may be left open so that the canine can enter or leave the vehicle on command. When the officer must leave the vehicle and use of the canine is not anticipated (i.e., lunch, coffee break, extended report), the vehicle shall be locked and windows rolled up. Lowering the screened left rear window will ventilate the vehicle while preventing the canine from placing its head out, or others from placing their hands in.
  - e. The handler shall only allow the canine to enter public establishments such as restaurants, bars, and

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taverns while conducting official police business which cannot be performed by other approved police methods.

f. No formal or informal canine demonstrations will be allowed without the permission of the Sheriff or his designee.

### 2. Canine Bites

a. In the event the canine bites any person or animal, the handler shall:

- (1) Notify his/her immediate Watch Commander or supervisor as soon as possible.
- (2) Ensure medical treatment is provided, when necessary and possible.
- (3) Have photographs taken of the injury sustained, whether or not there is a visible injury.
- (4) Document the incident on an Incident Report and forward a copy to the Bureau Commander.

### D. Use of the Canine

1. The following criteria will provide the necessary guidelines for utilizing the canine. Every incident which results in the use of the K-9 Unit will be documented. It will also be listed on the K-9 monthly report. (Gov. Code 3342)

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

- (1) The individual's age or an estimate thereof.
- (2) The nature of the suspected offenses involved.
- (3) Any potential danger to any other police officers who may attempt to intervene or assist with the apprehension.
- (4) Any potential danger to the public that may result from the release of a police service dog.

2. Apprehension of individual(s):

a. If the canine handler reasonably believes that the individual has either committed or is about to commit any offense, and if any of the following conditions exist:

- (1) There is reasonable belief that the individual poses an immediate threat of violence or serious harm to the public, any officer or him/herself.
- (2) The individual is physically resisting arrest and the use of a police service dog appears necessary to overcome such resistance.
- (3) The individual(s) is believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the canine would pose a threat to the safety of officers or the public.
- (4) 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 reasonableness shall be used to review the

decision to use a canine in view of the totality of the circumstances.

- (a) Note: Absent the presence of one or more of the above conditions, mere flight from pursuing officer(s) shall not serve as good cause for a canine apprehension.

**3. Officer Protection**

a. The canine may be used as a physical force in the following circumstances:

- (1) In situations where the safety of officers or others is immediately threatened and time does not allow use of more appropriate force.
- (2) In situations where the nature of resistance indicates that the use of less force would be ineffective.
- (3) In situations where the circumstances reasonably indicate the use of the canine would alleviate a potential loss of life or serious injury if officers alone were used.
  - (a) In any event, only that force which is reasonably indicated by the circumstances will be employed. The canine is trained to protect its handler when physically attacked by a suspect or the suspect is actually threatening the handler with a weapon, i.e., gun, knife, club, etc. The handler will ensure that the canine does not attack a struggling suspect who is successfully being restrained by another officer(s).
  - (b) When the canine is out of the vehicle guarding a suspect, he may attack the suspect without command to protect his master or if the suspect attempts to effect an escape.

**4. Searching**

a. The canine will search, providing conditions are suitable and searching abilities can be utilized.

- (1) At the scene of a burglary.
- (2) At the scene of a robbery.
- (3) At the scene of a rape.
- (4) For suspects who have recently fled after abandoning a vehicle (stolen or hot pursuit).
- (5) In locating missing or lost persons.
- (6) Or any incident the handler believes the canine may further law enforcement's efforts without unnecessarily reducing the unit's ability to react to a more serious incident.

**5. Open Area Searches**

- a. Officers requesting or backing up an open area search by a canine unit are to secure the perimeter and remain out of the search area.
- b. Canine deputies will direct all back-up units before initiating the search.
- c. One deputy will remain with the handler and provide cover for the canine operation.

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- d. The canine may only be allowed off leash in those situations where the perimeter of the search is secured or within range of sight and voice control of the handler. In situations where more than one animal is searching the same area, they must be on leash.
6. Apprehension of Fleeing Suspects
    - a. The canine may be used to apprehend fleeing suspects in cases when the handler determines it necessary to accomplish the arrest. The handler must take into account the immediate circumstances, including the nature of the case, the character and behavior of the offender, the safety of himself and fellow officers. Release from leash restrictions may only occur when close sight and voice control is possible.
  7. Building Searches
    - a. Deputies requesting a building search by a canine unit are to secure the building area to be searched, allowing no one to enter until the canine and handler arrive.
    - b. Back-up officers assigned to assist a canine unit in a building search should not enter the building while the search is in progress unless directed to do so by the canine officer.
    - c. Deputies entering the building are to remain with the handler and provide cover for the canine operation.
    - d. The canine officer will position all back-up officers.
    - e. Back-up officers are not to grapple with the suspect until the canine is under direct control of the handler.
    - f. Prior to building entry, the handler will give the following warning.
      - (1) "This is Officer (name) of the Marin County Sheriff's Department K-9 Unit. If you do not come out within (set a reasonable time), I will send my dog into the building to search for you."
        - (a) Note: This warning will not be given in those situations when the handler feels such warning would endanger the safety of others, i.e., there is reasonable cause to believe the subject is armed.
        - (b) Upon apprehension of the suspect, the assisting officer may take custody of the prisoner and escort him out of the building at the direction of the K-9 handler. If necessary, the K-9 officer may escort the prisoner out of the building.
    - g. Lost of missing persons.
    - h. Conducting suspect and/or evidence searches.
    - i. Providing for public relation appearances and demonstrations.
    - j. Crowd control - Canines may be used in crowd control situations when authorized by a watch commander.
  8. Transportation of Prisoners
    - a. In the event that a prisoner can be transported by a canine unit, the handler will evaluate the situation and determine if the prisoner could be safely transported.

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- b. When transporting, the handler shall advise the prisoner about his/her conduct in the unit.
  - c. The canine will be secured to avoid an accidental bite.
  - d. The K-9 Unit shall not transport any violent, intoxicated or mentally ill prisoner.
  - e. When a K-9 handler makes an arrest, he/she shall give the transporting officer all information required to complete the booking form. Whenever possible, the K-9 Officer shall complete the booking process themselves.
9. Assisting Other Agencies
- a. The Marin County Sheriff's Department will provide canine/handler team service to neighboring police agencies when requested, provided assistance does not interfere with the duty priorities within the County of Marin.
  - b. The watch commander shall review and authorize requests for assistance received from neighboring police agencies.
  - c. The canine handler shall follow the policies and procedures of the Marin County Sheriff's Department when assisting outside agencies.
  - d. Outside assistance requests shall be honored only when a suspect is confined in an area where apprehension can be best handled by the canine.
10. Off Duty
- a. The canine and handler are representatives of the County, and, as such, should not become involved in conduct that would bring discredit to the Marin County Sheriff's Department.
  - b. The handler shall obey all state and local regulations pertaining to canines and should avoid violating these laws, except in the performance of official duties (i.e., leash laws, excessive barking, dog license).

**INDEX AS:**

- A. This order may be indexed as:

- 1. Canine Unit
- 2. K-9 Unit

By Order of

ROBERT T. DOYLE  
SHERIFF