

## **PURPOSE**

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of canines to augment law enforcement services in the community including, but not limited to locating individuals and contraband.

## **POLICY**

The Bemidji Police Department recognizes canine teams are used as a locating tool for suspects, missing people and to collect evidence. It is the policy of the Bemidji Department that handlers and canines meet and maintain the appropriate proficiency to effectively and reasonable carry out legitimate law enforcement objectives.

### **A. PERSONNEL**

1. **Canine Unit Supervisor**- The Canine Unit Supervisor shall report directly to the Police Captain or Designee.
  - i. The responsibilities of the Canine Unit Supervisor include, but are not limited to;
    1. Reviewing all canine use reports to ensure compliance with policy and to identify training issues and other needs of the program.
    2. Maintain a liaison role with command staff and other supervisors.
    3. Maintain a liaison role with canine supervisors from other agencies.
    4. Recommend and oversee the procurement of equipment and services for the canine teams.
    5. Maintain and monitor canine unit records.
    6. Ensuring the canine teams are scheduled for regular training to maximize their capabilities.
2. **Canine Handler Selection** – The minimum qualifications for the assignment of the canine handler include:
  - i. An officer who is currently off probation and has a minimum of three years working uniformed patrol.
  - ii. Residing in a single-family residence with adequate outside area for a kennel as well as a garage that can accommodate and secure a canine vehicle.
  - iii. Residence must be within 30 minute travel time from Beltrami County.
  - iv. Agree to be assigned to the position for a minimum of four (4) years and/or the service life of the dog.
3. **Canine Handler Responsibilities** - The canine handler shall ultimately be responsible for the health and welfare of the canine both on-duty and off-duty. They shall ensure that the canine receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions. The Canine Handler shall be responsible for the following;
  - i. The canine handler or other authorized personnel will always keep the canine under supervision while out of its squad or kennel, either on or off duty.
  - ii. Except during the appropriate deployment, the canine handler shall not expose the canine to any foreseeable risk of harm.

- iii. The canine should not be used in the field when ill or injured.
- iv. In an emergency, the handler shall ensure that the canine receives immediate medical attention and notify the Canine Unit Supervisor.
  - v. The canine handler will make routine veterinarian appointments with a department-approved veterinarian to ensure that all shots are up to date.
  - vi. If applicable, the canine handler will administer any prescribed medications.
  - vii. The canine handler will perform daily grooming and inspection of his/her assigned canine.
- viii. The canine handler is responsive for logging all canine activities including calls for service/deployments, training and demonstrations.
- ix. The canine handler is responsible for maintaining his/her canine's skills through regular training. The canine team will be tested and certified yearly by either the USPCA (United States Police Canine Association) or the NPCA (National Police Canine Association). Exemption from yearly certification will be permitted for medical reasons, and will allow for a one-year grace period. Canine teams certified in narcotics will maintain their certification.
- x. The canine handler will inform the Canine Unit Supervisor as soon as possible of any changes in living status of the canine handler that may affect the lodging or environment of the canine.
- xi. Canine demonstrations must be approved by the Canine Unit Supervisor, Captain or Chief of Police.
- xii. While off-duty, the canine handler shall not involve the canine in any law enforcement activity or official conduct unless approved in advance by the Canine Unit Supervisor.
- xiii. The canine should be permitted to socialize in the home with the handler's family under the supervision of the handler or other authorized personnel.
- xiv. When not in service, the handler shall maintain the canine vehicle in a locked garage, away from public view.
- xv. When a handler is off-duty for an extended number of days, the assigned canine vehicle should be stored at the Bemidji Police Department.
- xvi. Handlers shall permit the canine unit supervisor to conduct spontaneous on-site inspections of affected areas of their homes as well as their canine vehicles to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.
- xvii. When off-duty, the canine shall be in a kennel provided by the city at the home of the handler. When a canine is kenneled at the handler's home, the gate shall be secured with a lock. When off-duty, the canine may be let out of the kennel while under the direct control of the handler.
- xviii. Under no circumstances will the canine be lodged at another location unless approved by the canine unit supervisor or Shift Sergeant.
- xix. Whenever a canine handler is off-duty for an extended number of days, it may be necessary to temporarily relocate the canine. In those situations the handler shall make arrangements for boarding at an approved facility.

4. **Canine Handler Compensation** - The canine handler shall be compensated for the time spent in the care, feeding, grooming, and other needs of the canine in accordance with the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#) (FLSA), and according to the terms of the current LELS agreement.
  - i. The Canine Handler shall be available for call-out under guidelines specified by the Canine Unit Supervisor at the overtime rate established in the LELS agreement.

## **B. CANINE INJURY AND MEDICAL CARE**

1. In the event that a canine is injured, or there is an indication that the canine is not in good physical condition, the injury or condition will be reported to the canine unit supervisor or Shift Sergeant as soon as practicable and appropriately documented.
2. All medical attention shall be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency where treatment should be obtained from the nearest available veterinarian. All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the handler's personnel file.

## **C. HANDLER AND CANINE TRAINING**

1. Before assignment in the field each canine team shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards. Cross trained canine teams or those canine teams trained exclusively for the detection of narcotics and/ or explosives also shall be trained and certified to meet current nationally recognized standards or other recognized and approved certification standards established for their particular skills.
  - i. Each canine team shall thereafter be recertified to a current nationally recognized standard or other recognized and approved certification standards on an annual basis.
2. Any canine team failing to graduate or obtain certification shall not be deployed in the field for tasks the team is not certified to perform until graduation or certification is achieved. When reasonably practicable, pending successful certification, the canine handler shall be temporarily reassigned to regular patrol duties.
3. All canine training shall be conducted while on-duty unless otherwise approved by the canine unit supervisor or Shift Sergeant.
4. All canine training records shall be maintained in the canine handler's and the canine's training file
5. The canine coordinator shall be responsible for scheduling periodic training for all office members in order to familiarize them with how to conduct themselves in the presence of office canines. Because canines may be exposed to dangerous substances such as opioids, as resources are available, the canine unit supervisor should also schedule periodic training for the canine handlers about the risks of exposure and treatment for it.

**D. TRAINING AIDS** - Training aids are required to effectively train and maintain the skills of canines. Officers possessing, using or transporting controlled substances for canine training purposes must comply with federal and state requirements. Alternatively, the Bemidji Police Department may work with outside trainers with the applicable licenses or permits.

1. **Controlled Substance Training Aids** – Officers acting in the performance of their official duties may possess or transfer controlled substances for the purpose of narcotics-detection canine training in compliance with federal laws and if they comply with applicable state requirements (21 USC § 823(f)).
  - i. The Police Chief or the authorized designee may authorize a member to seek a court order to allow controlled substances seized by the Bemidji Police Department to be possessed by the member or a narcotics-detection canine trainer who is working under the direction of this office for training purposes, provided the controlled substances are no longer needed as criminal evidence.
  - ii. As an alternative, the Chief of Police or the authorized designee may request narcotics training aids from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
  - iii. These procedures are not required if the canine handler uses commercially available synthetic substances that are not controlled narcotics.
  
2. **Controlled Substance Procedures** – Due to the responsibilities and liabilities involved with possessing readily usable amounts of controlled substances and the ever-present danger of the canine’s accidental ingestion of these controlled substances, the following procedures shall be strictly followed:
  - i. All controlled substance training samples shall be weighed and tested prior to dispensing to the individual canine handler or trainer.
  - ii. The weight and test results shall be recorded and maintained by this office.
  - iii. Any person possessing controlled substance training samples pursuant to court order or DEA registration shall maintain custody and control of the controlled substances and shall keep records regarding any loss of, or damage to, those controlled substances
  - iv. 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 coordinator with a copy forwarded to the dispensing agency.
  - v. All controlled substance training samples will be stored in locked, airtight, and watertight cases at all times, except during training. The locked cases shall be secured in the trunk of the canine handler’s assigned patrol vehicle during transport and stored in an appropriate locked container. There are no exceptions to this procedure.
  - vi. The canine unit supervisor shall periodically inspect every controlled substance training sample for damage or tampering and take any appropriate action.

- vii. Any unusable controlled substance training samples shall be returned to the Property and Evidence Section or to the dispensing agency.
- viii. 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.

## **E. CANINE IN PUBLIC AREAS**

1. The canine shall be kept on a leash when in areas that allow access to the public. Exceptions to this rule would include specific law enforcement operations in which the canine is trained and the handler has direct supervision over the canine.
  - i. A canine shall not be left unattended in any area where the public may have access.
  - ii. When the canine vehicle is left unattended, the vehicle must be secured in a manner to prevent unauthorized personnel from accessing the canine. The canine handler shall ensure the vehicle remains habitable for the canine.

## **F. REQUESTS FOR CANINE DEPLOYMENT**

1. **Bemidji Police Department** Officers are encouraged to request the use of a canine and handler through the shift supervisor. Requests for a canine from other divisions shall be reviewed and approved by the Canine Unit Supervisor.
2. **OUTSIDE AGENCY REQUEST** - All requests for canine assistance from outside agencies must be approved by the Shift Sergeant and are subject to the following:
  - i. Canine teams shall not be used for any assignment that is not consistent with this policy.
  - ii. The canine handler shall have the authority to decline a request for any specific assignment that he/she deems unsuitable.
  - iii. Calling out off-duty canine teams is discouraged.
  - iv. It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to coordinate operations with agency personnel in order to minimize the risk of unintended injury.
  - v. It shall be the responsibility of the canine handler to complete all necessary reports or as directed.
3. **PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS** – All public requests for a canine team shall be reviewed and, if appropriate, approved by the canine unit supervisor prior to making any resource commitment. The canine handler is responsible for obtaining resources and coordinating involvement in the demonstration to include proper safety protocols.

## **G. CANINE DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES**

1. **PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT** - Prior to the use of a canine, the canine handler and/or the supervisor on-scene should carefully consider all pertinent information reasonably available at the time.
  - i. The Bemidji Police Canine team may be utilized for the following;
    1. Search for lost or missing persons and /or suspects.

2. Search for evidence, articles, or narcotics.
  3. Assist the Paul Bunyan Drug Task Force.
  4. Any other duty deemed necessary by the shift supervisor.
- ii. It is the responsibility of the canine handler to evaluate each situation and determine whether the use of a canine is appropriate and reasonable. The canine handler shall have the authority to decline the use of the canine whenever he/she deems deployment is unsuitable. When practical, the canine handler will advise the on-duty supervisor of his/her decision not to deploy.
  - iii. A supervisor who is sufficiently apprised of the situation may prohibit deploying the canine.
  - iv. Responding officers should establish and maintain a sufficient and secure perimeter. Officers should avoid entering or otherwise contaminating the area to be searched.
  - v. Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, assisting members should take direction from the handler in order to minimize interference with the canine.
2. TRACKING PERSONS – Properly trained canines may be used to track or search for non-criminals (e.g., lost children, individuals who may be disoriented or in need of medical attention). The canine handler is responsible for determining the canine’s suitability for such assignments based on the conditions and the abilities of the canine. When the canine is deployed in a search or other non-apprehension operation the following guidelines apply.
    - i. Absent a change in circumstances that present an imminent threat to officers, the canine or the public, such applications should be conducted on-leash or under conditions that minimize the likelihood the canine will bite or otherwise injure the individual, if located.
    - ii. The canine handler shall be assisted by at minimum one cover officer.
    - iii. The canine handler shall direct the operation by keeping the perimeter personnel updated with location and direction of the track. This is to allow the perimeter personnel to move accordingly in an effort to keep the perimeter secure. The cover officer may perform this function at the request of the canine handler.
    - iv. Throughout the deployment, the handler should periodically give verbal assurances that the canine will not bite or hurt the individual and encourage the individual to make him/herself known.
    - v. Once the individual has been located, the handler should place the canine in a down stay or otherwise secure it as soon as reasonably practicable.
  3. ARTICLE DETECTION – A canine trained to find objects or property related to a person or crime may be used to locate or identify articles. A canine search should be conducted in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of unintended bites or injuries.
  4. NARCOTICS DETECTION –
    - i. A canine trained in narcotics detection may be used in accordance with current law and under certain circumstances, including:

1. The search of vehicles, buildings, bags, and other articles.
  2. Assisting in the search for narcotics during a search warrant service.
  3. Obtaining a search warrant by using the narcotics-detection trained canine in support of probable cause.
- ii. A narcotics-detection trained canine will not be used to search a person for narcotics unless the canine is trained to passively indicate the presence of narcotics.

## **H. CANINE BITES OR INJURIES**

1. Whenever a canine deployment results in a bite or causes injury to anyone, a supervisor should be promptly notified, and the injuries documented in the canine use report. The injured person shall be promptly treated by Emergency Medical Services personnel and, if appropriate, transported to an appropriate medical facility for further treatment. The deployment and injuries should also be included in any related incident or arrest report.
2. Any unintended bite or injury caused by a canine, whether on- or off-duty, shall be promptly reported to the canine unit supervisor. Unintended bites or injuries caused by a canine should be documented in an administrative report, not in a canine use report.
3. If an individual alleges an injury, either visible or not visible, a supervisor shall be notified and both the individual's injured and uninjured areas shall be photographed as soon as reasonably practicable after first tending to the immediate needs of the injured party. Photographs shall be retained as evidence in an administrative or criminal report. The photographs shall be retained until the criminal proceeding is completed and the time for any related civil proceeding has expired.
4. Canines used by law enforcement agencies are generally exempt from dangerous dog registration, impoundment, and reporting requirements (Minn. Stat. § 347.51, Subd. 4).

## **I. CANINE RETIREMENT**

1. Per procedure, the City Council authorizes disposition of a police dog under [City Ordinance Section 2-541](#).
2. The current canine handler will have the first opportunity to purchase the canine.

### **Reference:**

- A.** Minnetonka Canine Policy #308
- B.** Eden Prairie Canine Policy #8.07
- C.** Beltrami County Sheriff's Office Canine Policy #311

### **Revision Date(s):**