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Canine Operations			

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of guidelines for the management, utilization, operation, training, maintenance, tactical deployment, supervision and certification of police canines and their handlers. By adhering to proper procedures that control their use, a highly trained Canine Team can enhance the department’s objectives by providing safer, effective and more efficient results in the prevention, control and detection of crime and community relations.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Billerica Police Department to utilize canine teams to the greatest extent possible. The K9s psychological deterrence to crime, superior speed, agility and scenting ability can be a valuable asset when necessary to successfully conduct building, field searches, tracking, evidence recovery, search and rescue missions, narcotic, explosive, cadaver detection and community relations.

The police canine can promote officer safety during hazardous field operations in areas where a canine is specifically trained and comfort to persons in crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to familiarize department supervisors and line officers with canine operating procedure in the appropriate use of canine teams in deployment situations.

III. Definitions

1. Patrol (K9): a dog trained and certified to perform police duties.
2. Comfort (K9): a dog trained for comforting persons and community relations.
3. K9 Handler: a police officer trained and certified to care, maintain and utilize a police canine.
4. K9 Team: a canine handler and his/her assigned K9.
5. K9 Unit Commander: an officer of sufficient rank as determined and selected by the Chief of Police who shall be responsible for overall operations, management and supervision of a canine team.

IV. Commander Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the K9 Unit Commander shall include, but not be limited to the following;

- A. Will be responsible for the overall operation, management and supervision of all canine teams.
- B. Shall serve as a liaison with department supervisors in order to ensure the efficiency of all canine teams.
- C. Review and maintain accurate reports and records documenting canine team activities.
- D. Oversee the procurement of equipment and supplies necessary for each canine team.
- E. Assign all requests for public demonstrations and seminars.
- F. Maintain a liaison with other Local, State and Federal agencies.
- G. Conduct periodic inspections and inventory of all training aids stored by K9 teams to ensure adequate control and supply.
- H. Ensure that all K9 teams are scheduled for continuous training and are maintaining a desirable level of proficiency.
- I. Periodically inspect all K9 team assigned equipment.
- J. Review work performance of K9 teams and identify areas that need improvement.
- K. Maintain familiarity with K9 procedure, legal updates and related training programs when necessary.

V. Canine Operations

The OIC should assign Patrol K9 teams to a general area patrol (roving) when manning allows. This will help facilitate with response and deployments to calls. On duty K9 teams should advise the OIC of the K9 team's availability to respond to in progress crimes, and advantages of the K9.

In order to achieve maximum effectiveness in utilizing K9 teams, officers should evaluate the need for a K9 team at the earliest possible time. The OIC should strongly consider the use of a K9. This includes notifying off duty K9 teams of developing incidents that potentially will require K9 deployment. All personnel should avoid contaminating the area or structure to be searched. If police personnel or others have entered a search area prior to the arrival of a K9 team, officers on scene shall ensure that all persons are cleared prior to any K9 team conducting a search. The nature of any contamination to the area to be searched shall be explained to the K9 handler. Any persons, including law enforcement

personnel, who have entered the search area, should be kept on scene. This will allow for scent elimination by responding K9 teams.

Whenever a K9 team is requested to conduct a track or search, a patrol supervisor should, if possible, be dispatched to the scene to coordinate the operation. Once an area or structure to be searched has been determined, officers on scene shall maintain a perimeter and they shall not enter or permit anyone else into the area or structure until the search has been completed, unless otherwise directed by the K9 handler.

Unless the safety of the handler and officers on scene would be compromised, before committing a K9 off lead to apprehend, an announcement should be made that a police dog is present and it will be released unless he/she surrenders. The handler should deliver more than one warning if the environment or other conditions exist where the suspect may not reasonably be expected to hear the initial warning, (for example, large areas, multi-level structures, partitioned or large single level structures).

A K9 handler, at his discretion, may request another officer to accompany the team into a search area. The officer will be responsible for providing cover for the handler and communications between the K9 team, supervisor on scene and perimeter officers. The handler shall determine the tactical position of the accompanying officer and instruct the officer not to become physically involved with any suspect(s) unless directed to do so. If manning allows, K9 teams can request a Billerica Police Officer to accompany them on mutual aid calls to other jurisdictions. This is beneficial for the K9 team due to the familiarity of officers with K9 operations and substantially increases the safety of the K9 team.

K9 handlers may request additional K9 teams to respond with the approval of the OIC to assist on calls, if the handler deems it necessary.

In circumstances where the use of a K9 team is being considered, the final decision to deploy a K9 shall rest with the individual K9 handler, as only the handler truly knows the abilities and limitations of their canine and their ability to safely and legally perform the task at hand.

In the event of a pursuit that K9 team is not directly involved in, the K9 handler should closely monitor the pursuit in the event that K9 deployment becomes necessary.

(Refer to **Vehicular Pursuit**)

At no time will a Billerica Police K9 be utilized to search for any type of animal, domesticated or wild.

Comfort K9 function provides interactions with the public to reduce anxiety and increase communication between the police and members of the public. The Comfort K9 provides comfort for people during times of crisis, and provides comfort for individuals, groups and communities impacted by violence, tragedy and traumatic events. Comfort K9 should be assigned to these tasks when needed and appropriate.

A. Tracking/Trailing

Whenever contact with a suspect being pursued is lost, and the services of a K9 team would be advisable, officers should:

1. Identify and stay clear of the area where the suspect was last seen until the arrival of a K9 team.
2. Secure the perimeter of the area to be searched.
3. Shut off engines, if feasible, to minimize scent contamination by engine exhaust.
4. Avoid vehicle and foot traffic in areas where the suspect(s) was last seen
5. Protect clothing and any other items that will be used for **scenting** from being handled.
6. Officers should not touch articles of evidence which may have been dropped or left by the suspect(s).
7. Supervisors will consult with the handler prior to the tactical use of the K9.
8. When the physical capability of a K9 is at issue, supervisors will be guided by the recommendations of the handler.
9. All personnel should minimize noise and confusion at the scene in order to avoid exciting or distracting the K9.
10. K9 handlers, consistent with training, may decide to conduct a track off lead if the threat level to police officers is high.
11. Once a perimeter is established, and the K9 handler is on scene, the handler is responsible for any adjustment.
12. Perimeters should be held in place until the K9 handler indicates otherwise.
13. Cruiser Blue lights should remain on unless otherwise directed.

B. Building Searches

K9s can be used to locate hidden subjects or clear a building quickly and efficiently. Whenever a K9 building search is anticipated, officers on scene shall observe the following guidelines:

1. Officers shall not open doors or windows
2. Officers shall take reasonable steps to ensure no authorized persons are in the building.
3. When practical an attempt should be made to ascertain the layout of the building.

When a K9 Team responds to conduct a building search, the handler should consult with the on-scene supervisor/officers and assess the situation. The handler should inquire what steps were taken to verify that no innocent or authorized persons are in the building before commencing the search. The decision whether the search should be conducted on or off lead will be at the discretion of the handler based on information available at the time. (Some building searches such as schools **may** best be searched on lead.) K9s should not be used to search a building that contains substances potentially harmful to the animal unless the overriding risk to human life is present.

C. Crowd Control

K9 teams may be used to control crowds at civil disturbances/unlawful assemblies to protect officers, and other security type situations under the following guidelines;

1. K9 teams may be deployed to control crowds upon supervisor approval.
2. K9 teams shall not be deployed for crowd control at peaceful demonstrations.
3. K9 teams shall allow open avenues of escape to the crowd.
4. K9 shall not be unleashed and sent into a crowd.
5. When more than one team is working, each team shall be assigned an area of responsibility.
6. K9 used in a crowd situation to protect officers are at a high level of agitation. Therefore, officers must maintain a safe distance from the dog.

D. Detection

Detector K9s are trained to detect specific odor. Detector K9 may be used in accordance with state and federal law to:

1. Establish probable cause to obtain a search warrant.
2. Assist in the search for specific odor during a search warrant service.
3. Sniff vehicles, areas, buildings, bags, and any other articles deemed necessary.

A detection K9 shall **NOT** be used to search a person unless it is specifically trained in that process.

When conducting a sniff of a motor vehicle, all appropriate steps should be taken to ensure the safety of the K9 (for example: moving a vehicle off the road.)

E. Evidence Recovery

K9s trained in evidence recovery may be utilized to locate evidence discarded in an area. An officer believing evidence has been discarded in a specific area or route of travel may request the use of K9.

1. It is imperative that K9 is contacted without delay for this type of search as human odor will quickly dissipate.
2. Officers should avoid contaminating the area with foot and/or vehicle traffic.

F. Comfort and Community Service

The Comfort K9 may be utilized for the following conditions:

- A. **School Support:** to assist school officials during time of mental health crisis, bereavement counseling or any other appropriate request from the local school district.
- B. **Victim/Witness Comfort:** prior to an interview the Comfort K9 may meet with the victim/witness in the lobby or waiting area of the building where they will be interviewed to reduce anxiety.
- C. **Critical Incident Mental Health Support:** The Comfort K9 can help bridge the gap between a traumatic event and the connection to mental health support. A compassionate presence leveraging the human-canine bond can help restore a person's emotional and cognitive equilibrium. It can help establish an effective helping relationship and increase the person's receptiveness to further help.
- D. **Critical Incident Stress Management:** to aid the Stress Management Team with debriefing or diffusing first responders that were involved in a traumatic event.

G. Equipment

Each K9 handler is assigned a police vehicle modified and equipped to accommodate a K9. This vehicle should be clearly marked with warnings of Police K9 or Comfort Dog. If a handler is issued an unmarked vehicle a magnetic warning sign should be made available to be used when needed. The handler is responsible for the cleanliness of the vehicle. Mechanical maintenance will be performed by the town vender. The department will furnish specialized equipment necessary for the proper maintenance, care and deployment of the K9.

K9 officers will wear an approved canine uniform, presently the BDU type style, while assigned to the regular work schedules.

H. Training

All canines must be properly trained and certified prior to officially being assigned to duty. All K9 teams shall be re-certified in accordance with training programs specific to the dog's discipline. Each certified K9 team shall train a minimum of two (2) days each month and one (1) additional day for certified detector canines. Comfort K9 Teams will be provided with appropriate days to maintain certification(s).

Each handler will maintain a written record of all training exercises and applications.

In order to maintain K9 proficiency and certification in detector dogs, it is necessary that the handler have access to appropriate training aids such as controlled substances, pseudo narcotics or other materials. Therefore, K9 handlers are authorized to check out these materials as required in accordance with department policies and procedures.

In the event any controlled training aid used by the K9 team is lost or destroyed during training or while in possession of the handler, the handler shall notify the K9 Unit Commander in writing on an approved form as soon as possible. Controlled training aids shall not be destroyed or disposed of by the handler. They shall be returned to the evidence custodian in accordance with department policies and procedures.

Training aids supplied by the DEA shall be returned according to DEA guidelines.

Training with non K9 officers should be conducted to maintain familiarity with K9 uses and tactics.

I. Approaching Canines

Department personnel shall not engage in or allow others to:

1. Provoke, tease or abuse a canine.
2. Feed or approach a canine without the consent of the handler.
3. Provide any commands to the canine.
4. Show the canine to anyone without the consent of the handler.
5. Operate or occupy a K9 vehicle without first checking with the handler.
6. Make any threatening gestures, engage in horseplay, or make any motion toward the handler while in the presence of the canine.

A person teasing, tormenting or interfering with a police dog in ANY way is subject to arrest per MGL Chapter 272 section 77A.

J. Canine and Use of Force

Police K9s are locating tools and therefore are not included in the use of force model. Upon locating a suspect, a use of force by the K9 may or may not be necessary. K9 handlers must take into consideration the totality of the circumstances using the information available to the officers at the time of the incident. In the event a K9 apprehends a suspect, the use of force will be governed by the objective reasonableness standard.

1. Severity of crime at issue.
2. Suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of officer or others.
3. Whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight.

Whenever a K9 makes an apprehension the handler shall:

1. Examine the injury to determine the seriousness of the bite and render necessary first aid.
2. Summon Emergency Medical Services if necessary.
3. Notify the OIC as soon as practical.
4. Photograph the injured area.
5. Complete a Response to Resistance Report.

The OIC shall:

1. Ensure the handler's Response to Resistance Report is accurate and complete.
2. Ensure statements are obtained from all persons and witnesses.
3. Obtain medical releases from the injured person, if possible.
4. Ensure that the K9 Unit Commander is notified as soon as practical.
5. Document any refusals and or treatments made by E.M.S.

At no time will a police K9 be required to be quarantined after biting an individual. MGL Chapter 129 section 22A indicates this is not required.

K. Injury to Handler

In the event that a canine handler becomes incapacitated due to injury, the utmost care and caution should be utilized in providing assistance. In those instances, officers should use the following guidelines;

1. Do not approach the K9 that is protecting the injured handler or attempt to assist him/her unless it is apparent that the failure to respond would result in death or serious bodily injury.
2. Summons another K9 handler to the scene immediately.
3. If the handler is conscious, follow his/her instructions regarding the ways to render aid.
4. If all else fails, and the injury is life threatening in nature, and it is apparent that immediate first aid and removal to a hospital is necessary, and the K9 cannot be safety controlled, the K9 may be destroyed.

L. Care of Canines

K9 handlers are responsible for the daily care, feeding, grooming, handling and maintenance of their K9 as follows;

1. Provide for food, fresh water and general diet/health maintenance of their K9.
2. Coordinate all regular medical treatments with the department contracted Veterinarian.
3. Handlers will regulate the K9 diet as prescribed in order to maintain proper body weight.
4. The Billerica Police Department will provide adequate housing for each K9 at the handler's residence.
5. Handlers will provide for the daily exercise of their K9.
6. Handlers shall notify the K9 commander whenever the dog requires emergency medical treatment or is taken to a veterinarian hospital.
7. Handlers shall not permit anyone to pet or hug their K9 without their permission and immediate supervision.
8. Whenever the handler is unable to care for his canine due to illness, injury or leave, another K9 handler may be assigned to temporarily care for the dog or the K9 may be housed in a department approved kennel.
9. A handler may take possession of the K9 if he/she so chooses when the dog is retired or relieved from duty due to injury.

M. Off Duty Call Outs

When the need for a K9 team arises in town, and there is no Billerica K9 working, the OIC should use discretion depending on the availability of Billerica Police K9s and the nature of the call before calling on duty out of town K9s. When requesting out of town K9s a radio broadcast on the “**NW DISTRICT**” (managed by Bedford PD 781-275-1212) should be placed requesting assistance. If no agency responds the NEMLEC Communications center can be contacted and a request for K9 can be made through them. Currently North Andover Police is the NEMLEC communications center.

See mutual aid request section regarding off duty mutual aid call outs.

N. Mutual Aid Requests

All mutual aid requests from outside agencies for K9 services shall be directed to the OIC on duty. When K9 is responding mutual aid, the following information is entered into the dispatch logs:

1. Name of person and agency making the request.
2. Nature and circumstances of the request.
3. Specific location the K9 team will be responding to.

When deploying K9 teams for mutual aid requests, the handler will follow Billerica Police policies, procedures and guidelines and not those of the requesting agency, unless otherwise dictated. Whenever a K9 team is dispatched to respond to the requesting agency, the handler shall advise Communications of their arrival and departure times from the location where their assistance was requested.

If mutual aid is requested and there is no Billerica K9 team on duty, the OIC should contact the K9 Unit Commander for consultation prior to activating an off-duty K9 team. Of note, missing person and suspect searches often require an immediate response. Narcotic searches should be based on urgency and reasonable suspicion issues for the requesting agency. The OIC should first inquire if the requesting agency has exhausted attempts to find an on duty K9 team from **NEMLEC**.

If the agency is requesting a dog that is unique and not commonly available this request should be given special consideration.

O. Demonstrations

The purpose of K9 demonstrations is to educate the public on the uses of police service dogs and promote favorable public relations between the community and the Police. Prior to making any commitments, the K9 Unit Commander or OIC must approve all requests for a K9 team demonstration.