



POLICE K-9 TEAMS		
new: ✓ rescinds: 43.6 ✓ amends: All previous		cross-reference: accreditation standards: NYSLEAP Standard(s): 33.3 & 43.6
effective date: June 3 rd , 2016	amend date: November, 2021	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Order is to establish and describe policy and procedures for the selection of the specialized assignment of Police K-9 Handler, the acquisition and care of office-owned K-9 partners, and the procedures and restrictions of K-9 Team deployment by the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office.

The office's Police K-9 Handler is considered a specialized assignment due to the increased levels of responsibility and specialized training involved but is granted within a given position classification. The office may choose to implement Police K-9 Teams in various aspects of its operations.

II. DEFINITIONS

Handler: For the purposes of this policy, this is the term used to describe a properly trained and certified Officer in direct control of the police canine (K-9).

Explosives K-9 Team: The Explosives K-9 Team consists of a Handler and assigned K-9 partner. An Explosives K-9 Team can be used to detect the presence of certain explosive substances. The Team can be used to conduct protective sweeps of buildings or areas for the presence of explosives, respond to bomb threats, and screen suspicious packages. An Explosives K-9 Team can respond to other jurisdictions, with approval of the shift supervisor or higher authority, to assist those agencies with similar incidents. The Team will only perform functions that they are trained for and in a manner that best protects the community's safety while not placing the Team in unnecessary danger.

Tracking K-9 Team: The Tracking K-9 Team consists of a Handler and the Handler's assigned K-9 Partner. A Tracking K-9 Team can be used to search buildings, search for articles and search for lost, missing or wanted persons. A Patrol K-9 Team can respond to other jurisdictions, with approval of the shift supervisor or higher authority to assist those agencies with similar incidents. The Team will only perform functions that they are trained for and in a manner that best protects the community's safety while not placing the Team in unnecessary danger.

III. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to maintain a trained and certified K-9 Team, which will be available to support all of the operations of the office.
- B. The office K-9 Team will be used only for such functions for which they have been trained and demonstrated proficiency.
- C. The K-9 Handler will determine the manner and methods of K-9 use following their training, experience, and sound judgement.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Police K-9 Team Selection

1. The Sheriff will determine the need for appointing a Police K-9 Handler.
2. The Sheriff and the Undersheriff will appoint the K-9 Handler, with input from the supervisory staff.

B. Vacancies

1. Should a vacancy become available, an announcement of the vacancy will be posted in a manner that provides access to all eligible office members.
2. A statement of minimum qualifications for eligibility for selection are listed below.
 - Two years as a full-time police officer (One year at the time of the physical fitness test as a Deputy Sheriff with TCSO);
 - Must pass an initial and annual Physical Fitness Test at the Cooper Standards 40%;
 - Ability to safely and effectively house, transport, and care for a K-9 Partner; and
 - Have demonstrated emotional maturity and a high level of independence.

C. Assignment

1. The office's Explosives K-9 Team will be directed by the Road Patrol Lieutenant.
2. The selection and assignment of a K-9 partner to an officer appointed as a Handler will be coordinated by the Road Patrol Lieutenant.
3. The acquisition of a Police K-9 Partner will be coordinated by the Road Patrol Lieutenant.
 - a. Before acquiring a dog to be utilized as a K-9 Partner, it shall be evaluated by an experienced K-9 Handler/Trainer for fitness to include temperament, alertness, and drive.

- b. Perspective dogs will be examined by a veterinarian and found healthy and capable of performing the intended function. The dog must also be current with all required vaccinations.
 - c. The Police K-9 Team will remain in their assignment until the Handler or K-9 Partner is no longer able to perform the duties of their position, or the Handler resigns from the position, or the Sheriff terminates their assignment.
 - d. The Sheriff may forego the application/selection process to keep a current Handler in their assignment after their assigned K-9 partner is no longer able to perform the duties of the position to assign another K-9 partner to that Handler.
 - e. The Handler shall be given a take-home vehicle unless otherwise decided by the Sheriff.
 - f. Handlers will be compensated for daily care in compliance with the Bargaining Agreement.
4. Canine Handlers must complete the Physical Fitness Test annually, in the fall time of each year. This test will be administered by a NYS PT Certified Instructor. In the event the Canine Handler does not pass the required Physical Fitness Test, the handler is permitted one additional attempt which is required to be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of the initial failure.
 5. In the event that the Handler is placed on Administrative Leave pending discipline under county policy, for a period of time extending thirty (30) calendar days, without any regard of the outcome of potential arbitration findings, the Handler may be suspended or removed from the Canine Program.
 6. In the event that an injury or illness shall prevent the Handler from performing the required duties and trainings of a K-9 Handler, without exacerbating the injury or illness, they shall be removed from the Canine Program.
 7. In the event that it is discovered that the K-9 Handler's injury or illness will not prevent them from performing their duties as a Handler; but will be on disability for an extended period of time, the K-9 team may be suspended or removed from the Canine Program based on the anticipated return date and a review by the Sheriff.

D. Police K-9 Ownership

1. All dogs utilized as Police K-9 partners will be owned by the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office and are the sole property of this office.
2. Office-owned dogs are not available for breeding purposes unless approved in writing by the Sheriff.
3. A Handler may request to assume ownership of their K-9 partner if:

- a. The dog is retired or removed from service, or if the Handler is no longer assigned as Police- K-9 Team, or the decision is made not to retain the dog for another Handler.
- b. The Handler will be required to purchase the dog from the County for an agreed upon amount.
- c. Once ownership is transferred, the Handler becomes solely responsible for the care of the dog and solely responsible for the actions of their personally owned dog.

E. Police K-9 Care

1. The Handler must maintain the K-9 partner in a safe and controlled manner at all times.
2. The Handler is responsible for providing a suitable living environment for their partner when off duty, as well as a vehicle capable of safely transporting their K-9 Partner when off duty.
3. Handlers are responsible for the daily care of their partner to include maintenance and cleaning of the area the dog is housed in, provision of food and clean water, grooming, exercise, general attention to medical needs, and the maintenance of all records.
4. Handlers must have an outdoor location at their residence, for an outdoor dog kennel to be safely kept.
5. Handlers must have an acceptable location at their residence for a Sheriff Canine Vehicle to be kept.
6. An initial inspection of the kennel/canine vehicle location will be conducted by the Road Patrol Lieutenant after the candidate selection has been made.
7. If the Canine Handler candidate does not own their residence, written permission from the head of the household or landlord shall be obtained prior to the candidate being selected for this position.
8. It shall be the responsibility of the Canine Handler to maintain the cleanliness of the kennel area provided on their property, office assigned vehicle and any canine training areas. If upon inspection by the Road Patrol Lieutenant it is discovered that these designated areas are not being properly maintained, the Lieutenant shall notify in writing or email the deficiencies and areas requiring improvements.
 - a. The Canine Handler shall be given seven (7) calendar days upon issuance of the notification to make the necessary corrections. The canine may be removed from the location until the deficiency is corrected.

- b. It shall be the responsibility of the Road Patrol Lieutenant to inspect the location or area of deficiency within seven (7) calendar days or issuance of deficiency notice.
 - c. In the event that the deficiency is not corrected and sustains, the Road Patrol Lieutenant may order and direct the removal of the canine to an approved kennel and the Handler shall be reevaluated in order to continue as the Sheriff's Canine Handler.
9. Food for office-owned dogs will be acquired or paid for by the office after authorization by the Sheriff or Undersheriff.
 10. The office will pay for equipment and supplies after authorization by the Sheriff or Undersheriff.
 11. The office will pay to board an office-owned dog for up to ten (10) days annually at an office-approved kennel. It shall be the responsibility of the handler to set up and transport the canine to an approved kennel for such circumstances. Unless exigent circumstances exist, the handler shall seek approval from the Lieutenant.
 12. Periodic veterinary examinations, vaccinations, and treatment of injury and illness for office-owned dogs will be paid for by the office after authorization by the Sheriff or Undersheriff. No authorization is required for an office-owned dog to receive emergency care. In the event of an emergency injury or illness, the handler shall notify the Lieutenant as soon as practical.
 13. The dog should be groomed and inspected daily before being deployed at the start of the shift.
 14. Any K-9 Handler who is thought to be guilty of abuse, neglect, cruelty, and/or other unethical behavior toward their K-9 partner shall be subject to an investigation and possible discipline.
 15. Any finding of abuse, neglect, cruelty or other unethical behaviors toward their K-9 Partner shall result in the immediate removal of the Handler from their specialized assignment and shall prevent the Handler from requesting the transfer of their K-9 partner's ownership.

F. Special Equipment Assigned:

- K-9 patrol unit with kennel;
- K-9 kennel (one inside and one outside);
- Ballistic vest;
- E-Collar & Fur Saver Collar;
- Leads;
- Muzzle;
- Grooming brush;
- Training aids (toys, balls & detection aids);

- Food and water bowls;
- Pooper Scooper; and
- Cleaning supplies for the kennel/crate area.

G. Requests for K-9 Assistance & Utilization

1. The K-9 Team is deployed as assigned by the Sheriff. The K-9 Unit program will be under the overall supervision of the Road Patrol Lieutenant.
2. Whenever the K-9 Team is on duty, the Team will be under the direct supervision of the patrol supervisor. The Sergeant shall be guided by the opinion of the Handler as to the ability of the canine to perform the desired task.
3. Any on-duty officer may request the assistance of a K-9 Team through the on-duty supervisor. If the K-9 Team is not on duty, a supervisor may authorize the team be called in, keeping in mind the working capabilities of the team.
4. The K-9 Handler is responsible for determining whether a situation justifies K-9 use and the appropriate measures that should be taken. When the patrol supervisor and the K-9 Handler disagree the Lieutenant shall be contacted to determine whether the request for the K-9 will be provided.
5. Should an outside agency (within Tompkins County) make an emergency request for the services of the K-9 Team, the request shall be approved by the patrol supervisor. The patrol supervisor will obtain the following information:
 - a. Agency and name & rank of the person making the request;
 - b. Contact telephone number (preferably of the supervisor on scene)
 - c. Type of canine assistance requested, i.e. explosive detection, missing person tracking, or locating discarded evidence; and
 - d. Exact location to respond to (specific direction/route of approach if appropriate).
6. All requests for the use of the K-9 Team from outside of Tompkins County must be approved by the Road Patrol Lieutenant.
7. Advance requests by outside agencies for the use of the Office's K-9 Team shall be in writing and referred to the Road Patrol Lieutenant.

J. Deployment

1. Only Police K-9 teams currently certified by the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services and/or the North American Work Dog Association (NAPWDA) will only be available for service.

2. The Police K-9 team will be assigned a patrol vehicle equipped with a kennel system and all necessary safety and emergency equipment.
3. Police K-9 Handlers shall assume all tactical control of the K-9 operations during a K-9 utilization based upon their specialized knowledge of canine deployments tactics and considerations, including but not limited to the decision to deploy or not deploy the canine.
4. The Handler will complete the appropriate Spillman report with the corresponding “K9” observed field anytime that the K-9 Team is used.
5. In all instances where a canine is deployed or displayed in an effort to gain compliance from a subject, the handler shall complete a Defensive Action Report.
- 6.. In the event that a subject is bitten, whether on or off duty, it is the responsibility of the canine handler to report the incident to the Tompkins County Health Department by use of the *Animal Bite Form*.
7. The Handler shall notify the on-duty supervisor immediately or as soon as practical, in the event that their Canine bites, or in some way causes any physical injury to a person regardless of location, regardless of on or off-duty. In the event of a dog bite, the individual(s) concerned shall be afforded medical attention as soon as practical, following an incident. Any injuries during a dog bite are required to be photographed, if practical.
8. No office member shall conduct themselves in a manner that would elicit a trained response from a Police K-9 except to assist the Handler in training exercises
9. The Police K-9 team is intended as support for all divisions within the office.
10. Arrests made or evidence recovered as a result of the use of a Police K-9 team will be considered to have been accomplished by the requesting officer(s).
11. Authorized uses in which the K-9 team may be used are:
 - Tracking of suspects/missing/lost persons
 - Open area searches
 - Explosive detection
 - Article/Evidence Recovery
 - Community Policing Initiatives
12. A Police K-9 team shall not be used in crowd control.
13. The use of a Police K-9 team is subject to all NYS Laws, regulations, and office policies.
14. The Handler must remain knowledgeable about lawful and effective use of a Police K-9 and ensure that the training of the K-9 adequately addresses all legal requirements.

K. Training

1. Each new Handler or new K-9 shall attend a K-9 training academy or similar course of instruction before assuming official duties as a Police K-9 Team.
2. A pre-trained/certified K-9 will conduct in-service training with their Handler, overseen by a DCJS accredited trainer, and pass a New York State DCJS certification.
3. K-9 maintenance training will be conducted at the level of at least twenty-four (24) hours every three (3) months per certification. The Handler coordinates this training with the approval of the Lieutenant. If the Handler cannot complete the required maintenance training within the prescribed time period, the Handler must notify the Lieutenant before the end of the deficient month. Failure to properly maintain the K-9's training is grounds to have the Handler removed from their assignment.
4. The Explosives K-9 Team will be recertified every year per DCJS regulations.
5. All training will conform to the standards and principles established by the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services.

L. Records

1. The K-9 Handler shall be responsible for maintaining all K-9 related records, including but not limited to:
 - Veterinary records;
 - Training records;
 - Certifications;
 - Awards/Commendations;
 - Uses of Force that their K-9 partner was involved in;
 - All bites outside of training exercises;
 - All injuries to their partner;
 - All injuries to a person caused by their partner, regardless of the circumstances;
 - Any other records as directed by the Sheriff.
2. At the end of each calendar year, the Handler shall prepare and provide to the Lieutenant a summary of activity for their Police K-9 Team to include total utilization, incidents, training progress, and future needs.
3. All K-9 records will be maintained in a manner that allows review by the Sheriff and other authorized persons.

Attachments:

A. *Animal Bite Form*

By Order Of



Derek Osborne Sheriff