



United States Police Canine Association Region 6

TESTIMONY

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you today about how police canine units have a positive effect on combating crime in our community.

For centuries, humans have domesticated dogs and used their superior olfactory sense to help with day-to-day life. Farmers in rural Europe bred dogs like the German Shepherd and Belgian Malinois for the purpose of herding livestock flocks, the Newfoundland dog was used to pull fishing nets and pull carts, while the Jack Russell terrier was used to hunt and drive foxes from their dens. It was eventually realized that the canine could have use in police work. In 1888, a bloodhound was used by the London Metropolitan Police to track for Jack the Ripper. By 1910 Germany deployed police dogs in nearly 600 of their largest cities. It was not until the 1960's when police service dogs took a foothold in the US.

The modern police canine is typically what we call a "dual purpose" dog. They would be trained on a scent specialty such as narcotics, gunshot residue, explosives, or cadaver. These dogs will also be trained to locate and alert on concealed criminal suspects hiding in buildings, track and locate criminal suspects or lost people, detect discarded evidence and when appropriate, apprehend dangerous criminals through biting. We train handlers to use the canine as a locating tool first and a use of force second. Progressive tactics driven deployments focus on scenario-based training that includes crucial decision making into the calculus when deploying their dog. When a bite occurs, it is because it was the best force option available, and the force needed to be used to effect the arrest safely. Our policies are driven by current case law and industry recognized best practices.

Police canines should be held to a very high standard when it comes to training, certification, and deployment. The United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) is once such organization, of which I am proud to represent, that establishes nationwide standards for both training and certification. Often individual states will require some type of training standard or policy standard for police canines. Pennsylvania, with the passage of Act 60 of 2022, will begin to codify statewide standards for police dogs and is a vital step in the right direction to keep our canine community in line with training and certification practices.

Unfortunately, like many important law enforcement programs, police canine units have fallen victim to funding shortages. The initial cost for a starting a unit are considerable, but the yearly maintenance costs are also a significant factor affecting municipalities. Police canine units are often required by their municipality to fund either a portion, or the lion's share of their budget through donations and/or fund raising. K9 Units are sometimes viewed as a luxury rather than a vital component in modern day policing. In my twenty years in the police canine industry, I have seen K9 units face often insurmountable funding issues, especially when faced with considerable veterinary bills that were often not planned for when starting a new unit. Additionally, when the police dog retires from service, the handler is often paying for the cost of healthcare and food for the retired service dog, out of their own pocket. Fortunately, groups like the USPCA, are forming non-profit entities to fundraise and provide support to retired police dogs.



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I am happy to report that, in our local communities, police canine units are alive, well and keeping our communities safe from the increasing threat of violent crime. Locally, in June, a USPCA member with the Warrington Township Police Department, Corporal John Blanchard and K9 Jollie successfully tracked for, and located, suspects that had attempted a carjacking in Doylestown Township and completed a carjacking in Warrington Township. In my own Township last month, a suspect who was wanted for a substantial number of mail thefts and check frauds, who fled on foot from police, was successfully located by Officer Nick O'Connor and K9 Dausen. A stolen handgun was found after the arrest. These are just two of many, examples of how K9 Units enhance our security in local community.

Again, thank you very much for allowing me to spotlight the vital services that canine units in the area provide. I would be happy to take this opportunity to answer any questions that you may have.