

SWGDOG SC 9 - HUMAN SCENT DOGS

Article Search

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Article Search is the canine scent detection discipline used to search areas, usually near crime scenes, for human-scented articles that were thrown away or inadvertently left behind.

Statement of purpose: To provide recommended guidelines for training, certification and documentation pertaining to canines and handlers trained for article search.

1. INITIAL TRAINING

- 1.1. The handler training shall be conducted by a competent trainer from an entity that utilizes a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives. The handler's training shall include the following topics:
 - 1.1.1. Search techniques, tactics, and equipment.
 - 1.1.2. Environmental conditions affecting scent dispersion in order to maximize the canine team's search efficiency.
 - 1.1.3. Proper handling, storage and disposition of articles as required by the agency/organization.
 - 1.1.4. Techniques for collecting articles considered crime scene evidence as required by the agency or organization.
- 1.2. The canine training shall be conducted by a competent trainer from an entity that utilizes a structured curriculum with specific training and learning objectives.
- 1.3. Initial canine training shall include sufficient obedience training to ensure the canine will operate effectively based on mission requirements.
- 1.4. The canine shall be trained to perform an effective and controlled search.
- 1.5. The initial training of the canine shall include training of a determined specific alert.
- 1.6. Initial training shall include using articles typically expected in an operational search, such as handguns, tools, credit cards, match books, gloves, ammunition casings, car keys, et cetera.
- 1.7. Initial training shall include exposing the canine to a variety of different types of locations and environments.
- 1.8. The training shall be structured to meet the typical mission requirements of the canine team's department/organization.
- 1.9. The canine team's training shall be continued until a level of operational proficiency is achieved and the team is certified.

2. CANINE TEAM ASSESSMENTS

- 2.1. Assessments are part of certification, maintenance training and proficiency testing.
- 2.2. Each assessment is the evaluation of a search.
- 2.3. The canine team shall be assessed in the following ways:
 - 2.3.1. Scent recognition assessments that test the ability of the canine to indicate human-scented articles, the handler's interpretation of the canine's behavior, the canine's response, and the handler's interpretation of the canine's alert. These assessments shall adhere to the following procedures:
 - 2.3.1.1. One to three individuals shall be utilized to place human scent on articles which are then thrown into a search area that is typical of the areas where the canine works (e.g., urban/suburban/rural).
 - 2.3.1.2. The articles shall be held in a closed hand(s) for a minimum of 30 seconds prior to being thrown into the search area.
 - 2.3.1.3. A minimum of four scent articles shall be thrown into an area that is at least 150 m² (≈1600 sq ft).
 - 2.3.1.4. Neither the handler nor canine shall observe the placement of the human scented articles.
 - 2.3.1.5. Neither the scent contributor nor the handler shall enter the search area at any time.
 - 2.3.1.6. The set time shall be appropriate to the time the article was in human contact and shall be determined by the testing agency.
 - 2.3.1.7. The search time shall be appropriate to the search area size, the number of articles in the search area and should impose pressure on the search team.
 - 2.3.1.8. The human-scented articles shall not be visible to the canine or the handler, either before or during placement of the articles.
 - 2.3.1.9. The handler shall be informed of the search area parameters.
 - 2.3.1.10. The handler shall inform the assessor of the canine's trained response (active or passive alert) prior to the test.
 - 2.3.1.11. The assessor shall know the correct outcome of the search.
 - 2.3.1.12. The handler shall know the number of articles placed in the search area.
 - 2.3.1.13. The canine must be able to locate at least 75% of the articles either through a trained active or passive alert that the handler must discern and communicate to the assessor.
 - 2.3.1.14. Responding to articles that were not introduced into the search area for assessment purposes will not be considered a failure. Such responses are not considered correct positive alerts, but are also not considered false positives since it is currently impossible to determine the absence of human scent on articles.
 - 2.3.2. Comprehensive assessments that test the ability of the canine to indicate human-scented articles, the handler's interpretation of the canine's behavior, the

canine's response, the handler's interpretation of the canine's alert and the handler's ability to conclude the search (nothing left to find). Comprehensive assessments shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- 2.3.2.1. One to three individuals shall be utilized to place human-scented articles within a search area representative of that where the canine team typically works (e.g., urban/suburban/rural).
 - 2.3.2.2. The articles shall be held in a closed hand(s) for a minimum of 30 seconds prior to being thrown into the search area.
 - 2.3.2.3. A minimum of four and maximum of six human-scented articles will be thrown into an area of at least 150 m² (≈ 1600 sq. ft.).
 - 2.3.2.4. Neither the handler nor canine shall observe the placement of the human scented articles.
 - 2.3.2.5. Neither the scent contributor nor handler shall enter the search area at any time.
 - 2.3.2.6. The set time shall be appropriate to the time the article was in human contact and shall be determined by the testing agency.
 - 2.3.2.7. The search time shall be appropriate to the search area size, the number of articles in the search area and should impose pressure on the search team.
 - 2.3.2.8. The articles shall not be visible to the canine or the handler either before or during their placement.
 - 2.3.2.9. The handler shall be informed of the search area parameters.
 - 2.3.2.10. The handler shall inform the assessor of the canine's trained response (active or passive alert) prior to the test.
 - 2.3.2.11. The assessor shall know the correct outcome of the search.
 - 2.3.2.12. The handler shall not know the number of human-scented articles in the search.
 - 2.3.2.13. The canine must be able to locate at least 75% of the human-scented articles and give a trained active or passive alert which the handler must discern. The handler must communicate the canine's trained alert to the assessor prior to the start of the assessment.
 - 2.3.2.14. Responding to articles that were not introduced into the search area for assessment purposes will not be considered a failure. Such responses are not considered correct positive alerts, but are also not considered false positives since it is currently impossible to determine the absence of human scent on such articles.
- 2.3.3. Double-blind assessments are those in which neither the handler nor the assessor know the correct outcome of the test. These assessments demonstrate the proficiency of the canine team in an operational setting and shall adhere to these procedures:
- 2.3.3.1. The search area shall be prepared in an area that is representative of the environment in which the canine handler team usually works.
 - 2.3.3.2. The size of the search area shall depend on operational requirements.
 - 2.3.3.3. Neither the handler nor canine shall observe the placement of the human-scented articles.

- 2.3.3.4. The area shall be prepared to represent an operational setting. Human-scented articles shall not be visible to the canine, the handler, or the assessor.
- 2.3.3.5. The set time and search time shall be determined by the size of the area to be searched and operational requirements.
- 2.3.3.6. The handler and the assessor shall be informed of the search location, but shall not be given further information.
- 2.3.3.7. Neither the canine handler, nor the assessor, nor any individual present shall know the correct outcome of any portion of assessment.
- 2.3.3.8. The handler shall inform the assessor of the canine's trained alert prior to the test.
- 2.3.3.9. The assessor shall observe the canine team and compare the search results with the parameters of the search at the conclusion of the assessment. This may be done immediately after the handler concludes his canine has completed its trained response, or after the conclusion of the whole assessment.

3. CANINE TEAM CERTIFICATION

- 3.1. Certification for the named canine team shall be valid for one year.
 - 3.1.1. Certification does not relieve the canine team from regular maintenance training, periodic proficiency assessments, and following other recommended SWGDOG guidelines.
 - 3.1.2. The certifying official(s) shall not be routinely involved in the day to day training of the canine team being evaluated.
 - 3.1.3. Handler errors, when excessive, may result in failure of the team.
 - 3.1.4. A mission oriented test environment shall be used.
- 3.2. Certification shall minimally be comprised of a comprehensive assessment. An odor recognition assessment, a double blind assessment or both, may be added for certification.
 - 3.2.1. Target articles used in the certification process should not have been used in the day to day training activities of the team being certified, and should be "new", so they won't have any dog odor on them from previous tests.
- 3.3. A canine team that fails to complete the certification process shall complete a corrective action plan before making another attempt to certify.

4. MAINTENANCE TRAINING

- 4.1. The canine team shall conduct regular objective-oriented training sufficient to maintain and enhance operational proficiency. Maintenance training shall include the following:
 - 4.1.1. Correcting identified deficiencies or operational concerns.
 - 4.1.2. A variety of search locations, location sizes and environmental conditions.

- 4.1.3. Varied duration of search times.
 - 4.1.4. Varied times of day and night.
 - 4.1.5. A variety of blank searches.
 - 4.1.6. A variety of distractions in the search area.
 - 4.1.7. A variety of set times.
 - 4.1.8. A variety of article shapes, sizes, manner and duration of contact, weights, materials etc.
 - 4.1.9. A variety of degrees of concealment.
- 4.2. Training conducted solely by the handler to maintain the canine's proficiency is acceptable, but should be periodically combined with supervised training.
- 4.2.1. Supervised training, by a qualified trainer/instructor, is recommended in order to monitor and improve performance, identify and correct training deficiencies, and perform proficiency assessments.
- 4.3. Article search training shall be included within the minimum of sixteen (16) hours of training per month to maintain and improve the proficiency level of the team.
- 4.4. The canine team shall undergo periodic proficiency assessments as outlined in section 2 - the Canine Team Assessments. These assessments should include a variety of scent recognition assessments, comprehensive assessments and/or double-blind assessments.

5. RECORD KEEPING AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

- 5.1. The handler, department, or organization shall document training, certification, and proficiency assessments and discipline-related deployment data.
- 5.1.1. Training and proficiency assessment records may be combined or maintained separately.
 - 5.1.2. Discipline-related deployment records shall be maintained separately from training, certification and proficiency assessment records.
 - 5.1.3. Training and discipline-related records should be standardized within the department or organization.
- 5.2. Training records may include, but are not limited to, the following data:
- 5.2.1. Name of handler and canine.
 - 5.2.2. Names of individuals conducting or assisting in training.
 - 5.2.3. Time and date training took place.
 - 5.2.4. Location and environmental conditions.
 - 5.2.5. Training design (non-blind, single-blind or double-blind).
 - 5.2.6. Description and number of articles.
 - 5.2.7. Set time.
 - 5.2.8. Size of search area.
 - 5.2.9. Length of session.
 - 5.2.10. Search results.
 - 5.2.11. Deficiencies and corrective measures implemented.

- 5.2.12. Other information required by the team's department or organization.
- 5.3. Certification records shall be maintained by the certifying authority and the handler, and include the following information:
 - 5.3.1. Name of canine and handler.
 - 5.3.2. Date team certified.
 - 5.3.3. Certification authority, i.e., agency, professional organization, or individual(s).
 - 5.3.4. The standard or guideline under which the canine team is certified.
 - 5.3.5. Name of individual(s) awarding certification.
 - 5.3.6. Search area types included in certification assessment.
 - 5.3.7. Type and number of articles included in certification assessment.
 - 5.3.8. Location of certification.
 - 5.3.9. Set time.
- 5.4. Proficiency assessment records maintained by the handler, department or organization may include, but are not limited to, the following data:
 - 5.4.1. Name of handler and canine.
 - 5.4.2. Name(s) of individual(s) conducting assessment.
 - 5.4.3. Time and date assessment took place.
 - 5.4.4. Location and environmental conditions.
 - 5.4.5. Assessment design (single-blind or double-blind).
 - 5.4.6. Search area types included in the proficiency assessment.
 - 5.4.7. Type(s) and number of articles included in the proficiency assessment.
 - 5.4.8. Set time.
 - 5.4.9. Size of search area.
 - 5.4.10. Proficiency assessment results.
 - 5.4.11. Other information required by the team's department or organization.
- 5.5. Supervisory review of all records is recommended.
- 5.6. Digitally formatted records are recommended to facilitate compiling and analyzing data.
- 5.7. Records may be discoverable in court proceedings and may become evidence of the canine team's reliability. Record retention policy shall be determined by departmental or organizational guidelines.
- 5.8. Training records are necessary to illustrate the type and amount of training that the team has experienced before and after certification.
- 5.9. Confirmed operational outcomes can be used as a factor in determining capability.
- 5.10. Veterinary Records
 - 5.10.1. Veterinary records shall be maintained in a manner such as they are accessible to the handler, and department or organization.

5.10.2. Vaccinations required by state or local law should be documented in the veterinary record of the canine.