Establishing a Canine Unit: A Comprehensive Study of the Implementation Process

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Introduction

Police have utilized dogs in their ranks for over a hundred years. Their roles and functions have changed with the times to evolve with the communities they serve. Furthermore, police canine sections, much like police in general, have been designed to become more approachable than they have been in the past. This increase in approachability has garnered more support from the public and aided many police departments and their K9 units.

Looking at how often a K9 team can be used in a community is one of the first things to consider when researching the implementation of a unit. It’s based on that necessity that the decision should be made as to whether the implementation of a K9 unit is warranted. A community that produces enough calls for K9 service will not only help maintain the high level of training that the team received, but also be able to enjoy the added safety that the unit can provide in certain situations.

It has been said that a single K9 team is as effective as 10 patrol officers and can cover the same ground in a fraction of the time when conducting certain searches. For this reason alone a K9 team reduces costs and increases efficiency when attempting to locate people or property.

With a faster and more cost effective location device (K9 team), a reduction in liability is achieved by having the ability to show that every possible resource is being used to combat crime and locate lost individuals. Additionally, police dogs of this day and age are required to fall under stricter guidelines and training to ensure that they are an appropriate fit for the community that they serve.
The training that is conducted for K9 units is not only an initial certification class, but in addition involves bi-weekly classes to make certain that a K9 unit is functioning at the high level that it should be. These classes are designed to reinforce hierarchy, obedience, task focus and proficiency in specialty areas, such as narcotic searches.

The initial cost of a K9 unit can be a high hurdle for a police department to negotiate, but with the help of private businesses, grants, and the community, a K9 section is well within the reach of any department. Furthermore, the continuing costs of a single dog department are far less than likely expected. After the initial purchases of supplies, training needs and a vehicle, the continuing cost can be as little as a few thousand dollars a year, with the majority of the money being spent on overtime call outs.

It is vital to any K9 unit to have the continued support of the public that it wishes to serve. The community can be a great ally for the unit if the K9 team is used appropriately and the public is educated about its functions. Also, the K9 team can be used for demonstrations to school children and community organizations to further gain support.

Every department that employs a K9 unit needs to take into account the different types of situations that the unit will function in and develop a policy dictating when the unit is to be used and how it is to be called out. A use of force policy should also be devised for the unit and be separate from that of the departments overall use of force policy.

Overall, a K9 unit can be a cost and task effective community supported tool that can be used to not only reduce crime, but also assist in the apprehension of criminals, locate lost individuals and educate the public about how serious their police department is about reducing crime.
**History**

The first police dogs were used between 1899 and 1901 in Ghent, Belgium. They were taken by night patrolmen in order to defend against attackers who would frequently attempt to assault police at the time. After experiencing success with keeping attackers at bay the dogs were utilized as part of normal patrol units along the docks. Soon word spread of their usage in police duties and their popularity grew.

By 1907 New York City began to implement dogs into their police force, but did not experience the same success as their predecessors and abandoned a not fully developed program in 1951. Some of the notable reasons for failure were a lack of funding, lack of quality trainers and public acceptance.

It was not until the late 1950’s that another U.S. city attempted the implementation of a K9 unit, but with very different results. Baltimore, amidst soaring crime rates implemented a very successful program that is still very strong today. (8)

Today there are thousands of K9 units and teams throughout the U.S. used in both large cities and small towns. The duties that these teams perform are varied, but are an invaluable tool and resource for the department and community. Some of their functions include narcotic detection, criminal apprehension, search & rescue, patrol procedures, tracking/trailing, cadaver recovery, locating missing persons, accelerant detection, community education and explosive detection. (3)

As part of history, the way police work is conducted needs to change with the times and needs to evolve in order to maintain safe streets and to ensure high quality of life.
The Necessity

Table 1 (below) shows a break down of the calls for service where a different police agency’s K9 was requested by Natick over the last three and a half year period. During that time frame there were 31 call outs with call types ranging from missing persons to suspicious activity, and recovery of stolen motor vehicles. As is evident, the call types that the units were used on are widely varied and show the overall usefulness of the canine team. With these numbers being up to date as of September 27, 2007 there has already been eleven call outs for another agency to assist by providing a K9 Unit in 2007. Projecting the numbers for the year based on what has already occurred results in a call volume of fourteen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narcotics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist Other (Section 12)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarm</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen M/V</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susp. Activity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
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</table>
Table 2 (below) shows a break down of the calls that have been identified as those where a K9 unit was not contacted or not able to respond, but definitely could have been used. These statistics were gathered from the same three and a half year period and show that the potential utilization of a K9 unit goes far beyond the current usage. The calls below were identified using a very conservative eye. Only calls in which the target of the search was not located within 20 minutes by patrol, not missing for more than a few hours, occurred too far in the past to be reasonably traceable or involved a motor vehicle as a method of escape are represented in the numbers below. Also, none of the narcotic arrests that were made by the narcotic detectives in 2006 & 2007 are represented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narcotics</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist Other (Section 12)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stolen M/V</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the call narratives for those represented in Table 2 are:

- “Walk away from H3… Section 12 from hospital indicates there is a likelihood of serious harm to self or others” (LMH – 1/20/2004)
- “Caller reports ex-wife kicked in the front door of his residence.” (7/22/2005)
- “Caller reports a youth just broke a window and fled from the facility.” (Brandon Residential – 9/4/2005)
- “Reports walk away subject… walked away about 10 minutes ago from emergency room in an unknown direction. Section 12. Unable to locate.” (LMH – 8/2/2006)
- “Caller reports his mother who has Alzheimer’s disease has been missing for about fifteen minutes from her residence.” (12/7/2006)
- “Caller reports an unknown subject assaulted and robbed her while at the train station… subject fled towards Natick Village.” No arrest made. (2/2/2007)
- “Caller reports unarmed robbery… suspect exited out the rear of the building. No vehicle was seen, unknown direction of travel. Unable to locate.” (Courtyard by Marriott 4/16/2007)
- “Calling party reports suicidal female just left their office, unknown direction, Section 12 in hand.” (6/6/2007)
Both tables show an increase in calls for service where a K9 team would be useful over the last few years. Projecting numbers for this year, as the statistics are current as of September 27, 2007, would result in a call base of 26 calls for service. This number is also not including the drug arrests and search warrants of houses.

Another dark or unknown number here is the number of times the dog could be used during normal patrol procedures, such as performing vehicle sniffs and also conducting community education demonstrations.

By looking at both Tables 1 and 2 together the argument can be made that a K9 team has only been used in approximately 25% of all possible circumstances. A very likely reason for this is because typical response times from the State Police (especially during off hours) can be upwards of 30 – 45 minutes. With an in house K9 unit that response time can be greatly reduced or even eliminated if the K9 team is on duty when deployment is warranted. Shorter response times would increase the likelihood of a positive result from a track or search.

The easiest and most efficient way to use a K9 team would be to review the calls for service in which the team would be required and pinpoint the time frame or shift that the majority of the calls occur on. (26) By assigning the K9 team to the shift with the highest percentage of K9 related calls, there would be a reduction in the need for overtime call outs.

After a few years of the team being in service it may be needed to re-evaluate the calls for service and adjust the teams schedule to address the current situation. As stated before, as the community evolves so should the police department and its strategies.
Table 3 (below) shows a breakdown of ALL calls, when K9 was used and when it was not, over the same three and a half year period based on the shift in which the call originated. The table shows by a small margin that the impact shift has the highest number of calls overall, but a higher shift I total for this year. Warrant service was not included in Table 3 because warrant service times are selected by the department and therefore could be set up to be made while the K9 is on duty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
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<th>Totals</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shift I 0000-0800</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift II 0800-1600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(25%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shift III 1600-0000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Impact Shift)  (1800-0200)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is likely that with the completion of the Natick Mall expansion and the addition of several hundred new residential spaces that these numbers will continue to climb based on the increased population visiting and residing in Natick. With an increase in population, even a temporary increase during business hours, there is an increased opportunity for criminal activity. In addition, with the Natick Mall attracting an even wider base of visiting individuals there will be even more transient traffic through Natick.
Cost and Task Effectiveness

One of the most significant ways that a canine team is cost effective is by looking at how many man hours can be saved by having such a team present when conducting building searches, area searches and drug searches. By their very nature dogs utilize their olfactory talents to see the world and this talent far outweighs the searching abilities of any patrol officer currently serving the public. It has been estimated that a dog’s sense of smell is close to fifty times more sensitive than a humans. (30) Canine teams have also proven themselves to be much more efficient and accurate than lone patrol officers, taking less time to complete searches. Usually K9 teams can perform searches in one-quarter of the time. (1) Additionally, K9 teams can search for items such as evidence, as well as, criminals, drugs and lost individuals. (30)

A study in Michigan showed that a building search for two known criminal offenders with two man teams of patrol officers recorded a 59% success rate in locating the individuals. While a K9 unit had a 93% success rate and conducted the search in a fraction of the time. (Lansing Building Search study).

A second study in Yarmouth, MA showed a dramatic 80% decrease in commercial break-ins following the first year of a canine unit being on patrol and aggressively addressing the issue of the break-ins. (1) A decrease in break ins results in a decrease in overtime costs caused by detective call outs.

The above examples show that K9 teams can operate far more rapidly and accurately than normal patrol units. In turn this saves patrol from losing units for more time than absolutely necessary and can return them to being available for other calls.
It has been figured out that because of their task efficiency as a search tool, coupled with their low maintenance cost, K9 units can be as effective as 10 patrol officers at a fraction of the hourly price.

It has also been estimated that the dog portion of the unit costs approximately eighty cents an hour to operate. (6) This is a breakdown of how many hours the dog is used (over an average career length) and divided by the cost of upkeep (food, housing, vet care, etc.) This cost far and away undercuts that of even just one average patrol officer.

Additionally, as a cost saving tool the K9 Unit has been shown to deter crimes such as residential and commercial breaks. With a decrease in these types of calls there would likely be a decrease in the detective call outs during off hours, which costs the department at least four hours of overtime at the detective’s pay rate.

Another situation in which K9’s can be used as cost effective and highly task tool effective is when an officer is confronted by an armed suspect during apprehension or in the midst of a routine call. The K9 is an expendable tool when put next to a human life, such as the officer’s. K9’s are well trained to enter situations that pose significant risk of injury or death to officers and neutralize the situation. This saves the department money by keeping an officer on active duty instead of losing him/her to injury or worse. (30)

As stated earlier, not only have the canine units proved themselves to be cost-efficient, but also task effective! Studies have shown as much as a 33% increase in drug arrests after the implementation of a canine unit. (2) This completed task accomplishes a number of things, notifies the public that their police department is serious about drug violations, seizes drugs bound for usage or distribution and creates assets for the police department through drug forfeiture.
K9 units can send strong messages to the public that the police department is serious about cracking down on drug offenses. A collaboration with the school system can lead to random searches of school lockers and facilities with very little impact on the day to day operations of the school. The superintendent can grant permission to the police department to conduct random partial searches of the school as a means to not only find and discipline those with drugs inside the school, but also to deter any future drug activity (25). This partnership would be viewed by the community as a positive effort on both the part of the school and police department to further protect the community’s children.

Further, a canine unit provides added safety to officers on the streets. (6) Criminals are less apt to be non-compliant while a canine unit is on scene. It is because of this psychological advantage that many more arrests are made without incident, injury or death. (1) This could save the department money by eliminating the need to hire overtime officers to cover a shift because an officer is out on injury. By reducing the likelihood of injury to an officer a K9 unit in turn reduces the liability of the police department from lawsuits stemming from the injury. (30).

This is also why K9 units should be on scene with any warrant service where a violent or drug offender is the target of the warrant. By having the K9 on scene the risk of having the offender act out and become violent toward the police is substantially reduced. Additionally, when serving warrants for felonies, violent or drug offenses there is a much higher chance that the target of the warrant will run. (25) On September 19th of this year there was such a call where officer’s attempted to serve the warrant and the target fled. Ultimately, a state K9 unit responded to the scene and a successfully tracked the individual, which led to his capture.
Combining the need for cost and task effectiveness of a canine unit is where the department benefits the most. In early to mid 2006 there was a rash of car breaks in the West Natick Village condo complex which a canine unit patrolling the area possibly could have prevented these incidents. This prevention would have saved residents countless time and aggravation, not to mention money to replace or repair the items stolen or damaged. Recently, these events are again occurring throughout the town. The areas most affected are East and West Natick, along 135.

Secondly, in late 2006 there were a bevy of house breaks that were occurring during the late night/early morning hours. The deterrence of these events would have reduced societal costs significantly, but also reduced departmental cost by eliminating the overtime that was spent on investigating these crimes. Additionally, there would have been no need for a dedicated directed patrol in that area on shifts 1 and 3, freeing up that unit to field calls for service.
**Breed Selection**

There are 3 basic breeds that are used today in the world of policing; German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois and Labrador Retrievers. Bloodhounds are also used, but the former three are far more prevalent. There are pros and cons to each of these breeds as will be discussed.

**German Shepherd**

Shepherd’s are the quintessential police dog. They are fast, agile, intelligent and have a very high work drive. Their size and raw talent in the fields of criminal apprehension and narcotic detection are almost unparalleled. German Shepherds offer superior protection to the handler and officers on scene due to their dedication to their handler and the task at hand. They are aggressive when needed, such as during a criminal apprehension, and gentle when not, such as during an elementary school demonstration. Shepherds are perfectly built to be dual purpose dogs. Dual purpose dogs are dogs that are trained in two different major aspects of K9 law enforcement, such as a dog trained in criminal apprehension/patrol work and narcotics detection.

One downside to German Shepherds is the stigma that they are solely aggressive dogs that just like to bite. This is a stereotype that no doubt started in the 1950’s and 1960’s when police dogs were notoriously aggressive and unapproachable. (1) Trained Shepherds are aggressive only in certain situations, when told to be by the handler or when the dog determines that the handler is in physical danger. The second pitfall with Shepherds is the chance of significant hip problems that would limit their ability to work. Researching a good bloodline can help prevent this from occurring though.
**Belgian Malinois**

Belgian’s are the second most used dog in police work. Like the Shepherds they are highly intelligent, have a high work drive and are very agile. Their strong frame makes them durable for the grueling conditions that tracking/trailing can put on a K9 team. They are great dual purpose dogs and possess the intelligence to excel in any of the areas of K9 police work.

One downfall is that Malinois tend to generally be more hyperactive than the other breeds, which make them not as good for green handlers. (22) This could lead to a control issue with the dog, in which retraining would likely be needed to address the handler/dog control issue. A study by Charles Mesloh also showed Malinois to have a slightly higher bite ratio than the other breeds. (2)

**Labrador Retriever**

Most commonly used are Black Labs, but there are certainly other breed variations in service around the world. These dogs are unquestionably people pleasers; they enjoy having a task to do and being rewarded when they complete it. They are agile, strong and intelligent. They are a less aggressive breed than the previously mentioned two, but still have a work drive that can rival either.

Labs have some significant health concerns, including eye ailments and hip and elbow displasia. Also, Labs are trainable to be one purpose dogs only, unlike the other two who can be utilized as dual purpose. Lastly, a Lab generally does not have the nature to offer as much protection to his handler and, based on genetics, are not built for apprehension work.
**Bloodhound**

Bloodhounds are best known for their search and rescue roles in law enforcement. Their olfactory abilities are arguably superior to any other breed of dog, which is what makes them magnificent search dogs. Bloodhounds have the ability of picking up a scent from a location where other dogs wouldn’t be able to. This gives them the ability of tracking an individual long after any of the previous three. The current record for a bloodhound is picking up a track that was 105 hours old.

Bloodhounds are not built for apprehension work and also do not demonstrate the command presence that any of the other three breeds do. They have health issues which include bloat, hip displasia, ear infections and eye problems. Bloodhounds can also be very messy in that they slobber and drool a lot, which would make cruiser maintenance more involved.

Generally speaking, a police service dog has a career life expectancy of 8 – 10 years. However, like a patrol officer, dogs are subject to unexpected injury or illness that can shorten their career time. During the latter years a service dog can slow down and lose desire to work.

Further, the majority of police dogs are male in gender and are normally left intact, as it has been discovered that neutering the dog often decreases his work drive. However, if done early enough in life a neutering may not adversely affect the dog’s desire to work. One notable drawback to a male dog is that there is a chance of the male dog being distracted should there be a female dog in heat in the area. When I spoke with a number of handlers and asked their opinion on this, they stated it was possible, but had not had an issue with this situation as of yet.
A very important consideration that needs to be made once a breed is selected is whether to purchase a “green” (untrained dog) or a pre-trained one. Many companies are selling pre-trained dogs now that come as ordered, but the price tag is significantly higher. The upside is that the dog and handler can be placed into service much quicker than with a green dog.

Speaking with a few handlers, they have recommended though that a green handler start with a green dog. This partnership will allow each of them to learn their tasks together and develop a stronger bond. Additionally, a green dog does not have any small bad habits that may have been adopted from the training facility’s handler. It was also recommended that prior to purchasing a dog for the first time, a green handler should be accompanied by an experienced trainer to help determine what dog would be appropriate.

(Sample Bids)

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<tr>
<th>Breeder/Trainer</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>GS- Patrol/Narcotic (Pre)</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Includes 2 weeks of in service yearly for life of animal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Comes with medical and temperament guarantee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>$4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K9 Instincts (26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Comes with medical guarantee and paperwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fully exchangeable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>$5,000 - $6,000</td>
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Liability

Liability is one of the biggest concerns to a police agency and the town that it serves when contemplating the implementation of a K9 team. The most common instance where liability becomes a concern is when a bite occurs. Bites can occur intentionally or accidentally. The accidental bites cause the greatest trepidations because they often lead to litigation in which towns, police departments and individual officers can be found responsible for the damage caused by the dog bite.

These accidental bites, although rare, do occur and are an unfortunate reality of K9 police work. The best example that I have heard compares accidental dog bites to officer at fault traffic accidents. Nationally, there are many car crashes that happen yearly where the patrol officer is found to be at fault for the accident, yet patrol vehicles are still in service. Departments have found patrol vehicles to be necessary and that the liability of having them in service is less than the benefit. (19) I believe this analogy can be applied to accidental dog bites as well, in that, they occur usually as a breakdown in training and re-training may be necessary. In recent years a few officers have been sent back for training in emergency vehicle operation as a remediation to prevent future accidents. On going in-service training is conducted with both K9 and handler to alleviate the possibility of any break downs in training and to prevent accidental bites. Along with on going in-service, regular obedience training conducted by the handler is necessary to help prevent accidental bites and behavioral issues. (1)

97% of what a K9 team does is through the dog’s nose. (1) Only when absolutely necessary is a dog allowed to apprehend a subject by the method of bite control. With this being said a section on bite & hold vs. bark & hold will be introduced later.
Even prior to allowing the K9 team to patrol the streets for the first time there are a few ways to limit liability that need to be considered. These procedures start with documentation, testing, follow through the deployment process and record keeping.

Before deciding on which dog should be purchased, all records of the staff that have been in contact with the dog should be obtained and should be freely given. All police dogs come with some level of training, obedience and some bite work. Therefore, the trainers that worked with the dog should be appropriately certified. Additionally, if a fully trained dog is purchased (instead of a “green” dog) the police department should verify that the training center used national standards when teaching the dog. (1)

It has also been highly suggested that prior to purchasing a police dog, that an experienced trainer from a non-biased agency should assist in assessing the dogs. This trainer will be able to tell far more about the dog than a green handler and will be able to see through any “sales pitch” by the seller. The trainer should be advised as to what the department is looking for prior to visiting the breeder so that the correct dog can be selected.

Another tool that can be used in determining whether a dog will be a good fit for the department is having the dog complete the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizens Test & Procedures. This test is a 10 stage procedure that tests the dog temperament when placed in situations that are not familiar. The tests include accepting a friendly stranger, walking through a crowd, coming when called, reaction to distraction and others. A failure on any stage is a failure of the test and the dog is dismissed. (13). A full version of the test is enclosed at the end of this document. (Appendix A)

If the dog has already been trained by the selling company and has passed their testing boards, it is imperative to know whether the dog was tested by the private
company or by a national organization. The latter will hold more weight in court, as it’s a nationally recognized standard test and will often result in an insurance break. (1)

After the dog has been selected and training has begun it is in the best interest of the department to develop a deployment policy. This policy should detail the uses of the K9 as well as when it is and isn’t appropriate to deploy the dog. The policy should also include which officer makes the final decision to deploy or not. (3) In all the material that I have read there are two suggestions regarding who should have the final decision on deployment, one is that the final decision should be the shift commanders, while another stated that it should be the decision of the K9 officer. The rationalization for the final decision to belong to the handler is because he/she has worked closely with the dog through training and is presumably more informed on the limits of his particular canine. (9) Because this type of police work is unique by nature this policy should also be unique and separate from the department’s overall Use of Force Policy (3). A copy of the MA State Police Standard Operating Procedure has been included as well. (Appendix B)

Lastly, documentation of training, in service hours, deployments and everything that the K9 team is involved in, is to be carefully recorded. *United States v Cedano-Arellano (2003)* decided that all training and certification documentation for a drug dog is discoverable by attorneys. (12) Poor record keeping can lose cases. Upon the recommendation of Terry Fleck, a retired California Deputy Sheriff of 27 years, I have found the K.A.T.S. (K9 Activity and Tracking System) to be very easy to use and an extremely efficient way of recording and recalling any and all types of K9 activity. The program can accept and manage a number of different K9 units, organize them in teams and run reports on activities. This tracking system makes it very easy to maintain appropriate records and show the high level of training the K9 unit posses.
When talking about liability, it is important to consider all the different aspects and opinions of police dogs and the work that they conduct. For years, police dogs for years were seen as unapproachable beasts that wanted nothing more than to bite someone. (1) This, however, is not true anymore. Police dogs, if chosen correctly, should be able to pass the previously mentioned American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizens Test and even be able to perform demonstrations at schools with small children watching and interacting with the dog.

Yet another rarely thought of aspect of police dogs is that, much like batons, tasers and pepper spray, police dogs are viewed by the courts as a tool available to the police to be used as a non-lethal force option. (3) The difference between police dogs and the other types of non-lethal tools is that a dog can be recalled. (4) A swinging baton, a tasers electrodes and a fog of pepper spray are impossible to recall once deployed, making the split second decision to deploy them the final decision. Situations in police work can change within a few seconds and a recall of a less than lethal tool may be required should the situation change from an aggressive situation to a compliant one. (19) Verbal recalls are a part of K9 training which can limit the liability of accidental bites. (5) This command is one that is taught, tested and retested throughout the career of the police dog. Any signs that the dog is disobeying are and should be addressed immediately while in training.

There has also been significant case law that limits the liability of departments of unlawful seizure if a K9 is taught and is reliable with verbal recalls. This skill, coupled with evidence of the dog being trained and certified, is also believed to be part of the reason why courts view trained police dogs as a non-lethal police tool. (5).
There are currently at least 15 cases on file dating from 1988 to 2005 which classify police dogs as a non-lethal force option. (19).

- Robinette v Barnes (1988)                - Vera Cruz v City of Escondido (1998)
- Marquez v City of Albuquerque (2005)

Even more so, the US Supreme Court has ruled on three other cases that are pertinent to K9 deployment and the liability in this action. (7)

Tennessee v Garner (1985) – The court determined that the utilization of deadly force on a fleeing felon was no longer acceptable unless the “suspect poses a significant threat of death or serious injury to the officer or others.” What is applicable here is that police dogs, as previously mentioned, have been ruled as non-lethal force and thus do not fall under the Tennessee v Garner ruling. However, attorney’s continually try to have the use of police dogs ruled as a use of deadly force when apprehending a subject. (7)

Graham v Connor (1989) – States that when a court is deciding whether excessive force was used during an encounter that the reasonableness test must be used. Also courts are instructed to take into account the crime’s severity, the possibility of an immediate threat to the officer or public and whether the subject is resisting arrest or attempting to flee. (7) This ruling assists law enforcement by forcing the courts to look at the circumstances of each case objectively and through the eyes of a reasonable officer.
*Heck v Humphrey (1994)* – This court found that if an individual who is apprehended files a civil rights lawsuit against the town, department and/or officers who seized him, and is found guilty of the crime that he was alleged to have committed that no civil rights suit can be filed. This is especially applicable for K9 units due to claims of illegal search and seizure.

While courts have generally sided with police departments in the respect that police dogs do not fall under the category of deadly force, there are additional methods and tactics that a K9 team can utilize to further limit the exposure of a unit to litigation.

One of these tactics used by K9 teams is the use of a verbal warning prior to the release of a K9 into the field. This verbal command acts as a warning to any and all individuals in the area (target and non-targets) that a dog will be in the area and it would be wise to vacate at once. (6) The subject being searched for will often surrender when a verbal warning is heard out of fear of being bitten. This accomplishes the end goal of the unit without even a chance of a bite and eliminating the liability completely. Furthermore, the verbal warning affords those individuals who are not involved in the call to leave the picture by allowing them time to vacate, reducing the chance of an accidental bite occurring. (11)

Lastly, a K9 unit can actually reduce liability in certain areas. First, the utilization of a canine unit shows the public and the courts that the police have used all available resources to them in a timely manner to address the nature of the call. Even further, law suits usually occur in cases where a bite occurred, but these lawsuits are often fruitless and in the end it is often found that the bite was warranted and actually saved the officers on scene potential injury, which would likely have resulted in a different law suit. (30)
Expense

Next to liability the expense of starting a K9 section is usually a department’s second biggest concern. However, even though the start up cost can be somewhat substantial, if compared to any other specialized unit the cost of a K9 team often costs less than other units already in place. Additionally, there are also many opportunities for a K9 section to give back to the community and participate in educational events.

For example, the highway safety division employs a low profile vehicle, three motorcycles, accident reconstruction equipment and a dedicated supervisor. The continued cost of this unit includes the wages of a dedicated supervisor, regular vehicle maintenance, as well as, vehicle replacement and new traffic law related equipment. Even further, the truck team operates under this unit and costs the department in overtime dollars and uniform costs. The value of this specialized unit is unmistakably seen by the amount of tickets written, arrests made, and public educated about traffic laws.

A second example would be the animal control unit. This unit has a specialized vehicle modified for the transport of sick, injured or deceased animals. There is also a full time animal control officer employed by the department and permanently assigned to animal control duties. This unit’s value comes from its public service, in that the animal control officer handles calls that may fall by the wayside if left up to patrol due to call priority. Further, animal control frees up patrol units so that they may attend other calls that may have more legal bearing.

A K9 team can accomplish many similar things that both of the above listed units do at a significantly smaller continued cost. The continued cost of a unit are limited to cruiser maintenance, which with a take home car is less than a pool cruiser, food, vet care
and call out costs. Often times a sponsorship from a local pet store can alleviate the cost of food and assistance from an area veterinary office can help with the vet bills. This leaves cruiser maintenance and call out costs. Additional supplies may be needed from time to time as training materials grow old, but these costs are usually nominal.

One of the most willing entities of the community that have provided assistance to other units has been private sector business. (15) Stores such as Home Depot, Petco, Sears, McDonalds, Staples and Bank of America are just a few examples of potential sponsors in this area. These donations are made on the part of the corporations to assist law enforcement in maintaining the safety and security of the communities in which they conduct business. Moreover, these donations are tax deductible and often result in positive advertising for the donating businesses.

Another avenue to explore for funding is the existence of grants. (15) These grants can be from private companies, much like the one that we recently obtained from the Metro West Community Healthcare Foundation for approximately $30,000 for a collaborative implementation of new Automated External Defibrillators. These private grants often require follow up contact between the funding company and funded department to determine and document how well the funded program is progressing.

Along with private company grants there are state and federal grants available.

A third option to fundraise for this program would be to apply for sponsorship from charitable organizations. There are hundreds of organizations here in Massachusetts that distribute money for good causes, such as this one. An inspection of the charitable organization list at the Attorney General’s office would likely reveal many possible organizations that are willing and able to aid in this project. (15)
Yet another available potential resource is the Milk-Bone company. The Milk-Bone company runs a program called the Milk-Bone Canine Heroes program, which sponsors the purchase of dogs for police department canine units. This program came highly recommended by Troopers Tasker and Liberty, stating that Milk-Bone has purchased a few of the State Police dogs currently in service. (21, 25)

The AmVets, VFW, American Legion and Elks clubs are also very good community groups that have been generous to town police departments when implementing canine sections.

Another option for obtaining money to pay for the implementation or continued cost of the K9 unit is to use some of the drug forfeiture money that has been seized. Frequently, departments will continue their K9 program with the revenue that the previous K9 generated by drug forfeiture. (30) This money can be earmarked for the unit that at the very least assisted in the detection of these drugs and the apprehension of those who were in possession of it.

Lastly, a fundraiser that the public gets involved in raising money is a good way to not only obtain funding, but also garner the support of the public that the K9 unit will serve. Fundraisers that give away prizes are most common, but there are many other ideas and possible ways to run such an event. Recently, the Sudbury firefighters hosted an event in which they raised funds for their organization from local businesses and then gave away tickets to a flag football game in which the firefighters were playing against some current and former New England Patriots. This event generated revenue for their cause, publicity for the businesses, support from the public and team building among the firefighters.
All in all fundraising for a K9 unit is merely a task of looking for the support from sources outside the department. Much of the community does not see these donations merely as giving the money away, but instead, they view it as helping their community, something that we all take great pride in doing. Also, since the initial implementation cost is the largest economic hurdle to a canine unit, any assistance, no matter how small, can make a big difference.

Breaking down the initial implementation costs looks like this:

- **Dog** – Green dogs can range from free (donated) to $3,750 – $6,000. Pre-trained dogs will cost anywhere between $7,000 – $9,000. The cost of the dog does depend on the breed, training level and whether the dog is imported or domestic. Generally, imported dogs are better suited for police tasks and generally cost around $6,000. (21)

- **Training** – The Boston Police Department hosts both patrol and narcotic academies free of charge. The Massachusetts State Police also host these courses at no charge. Additionally, the in service program run by these agencies is free.

- **Cruiser** – A dedicated cruiser is the best and most efficient way to operate a K9 unit. A fully marked new police cruiser equipped with a dog cage, heat sensors, door electronics, fan, tinting and lettering will cost approximately $35,000. A full quote is attached at the end of this report. (Appendix C) Another option for transportation is retrofitting a cruiser that is marked for trade in. This option would cost the department approximately $10,000 (plus the cost of laptop and modem setup). Most units dedicate a K9 cruiser to the handler as a take home vehicle. A take home vehicle reduces response time on the part of the K9 unit and also places accountability on the handler for the upkeep of the vehicle. Take home cars are estimated to last 3 – 5 times longer than pool
cruisers, have reduced maintenance costs and generally remain a lot cleaner. (1) K9 vehicles have needed approximately 1/3 the maintenance of regular line cruisers (20). Along with the cost of the vehicle is the added cost of the registration, insurance and annual fuel usage. The former two are easily discovered by looking at the costs of the pool cruisers; however, the annual fuel usage is more difficult. Fuel usage will be based on how many call outs there are in any given year and how often the vehicle is used.

**Training Equipment** – This includes bite sleeves, leashes, harnesses, collars. A full list of a recommended training supply list is attached at the end of this paper. (Appendix D) The total cost for the initial purchase of training equipment is $800. (21) Another option for obtaining training equipment is to talk with other departments in the area that have K9 units or have had them in the past. Some of the departments may have equipment that they are willing to part with for little or no cost.

**Deployment Equipment** – Most equipment needed during a deployment will be the same as the training equipment and usually doesn’t require a separate purchase. However, the uniform for a K9 officer should be different from the patrol uniform due to unavoidable contact with the dog that can cause standard uniforms to tear. Further, the demand of tracking individuals through any kind of terrain and foliage easily extends beyond the durability of patrol uniforms. A pair of TDU pants and shirt is the easiest and least expensive option. This uniform, with a fully equipped nylon belt and duty gear, is quoted to have an estimated cost of $600. A copy of the quote is enclosed. (Appendix E) Additionally, a bullet proof vest should be purchased for the K9 for high risk situations. These vests often cost $600-$700, but there are non-profit agencies who donate new vests to police dogs. One such agency is the Vest-a-Dog program, which alone has vested 180 police dogs here in Massachusetts. (14)
**Insurance** – The town will likely need to adjust the insurance policy that covers the use of force by police to include coverage for intentional/accidental dog bites. Furthermore, since the dog is an employee of the town the policy should cover the dog while working and while at home. This will ensure that in the unlikely event an incident happens while off duty that the department is covered. (19)

**Housing** – The most common method of housing police dogs is the construction of a kennel at the handler’s home. Kennels usually consist of concrete flooring, 8 ft fencing and a dog house. The cost of a kennel, depending on how elaborate, can cost a few hundred dollars. However, I have been told that companies such as Home Depot and Lowe’s have been very generous to police departments who have approached them and asked for assistance with materials. The other option would be to board the dog at the station, but this would create a separation from handler and dog that may not be conducive to an entirely effective working relationship.

**Everyday Needs** – These needs would be the nutrition and medical attention of the dog. The average adult police dog would consume approximately (6 cups/day), which would estimate that a standard 40 pound bag of high performance dog food to last approximately one month and cost $40. One bag a month at $40 a bag results in an annual food cost of $480. In regard to medical attention, many in town veterinary offices have agreed to assist with some, if not all, of the cost of other K9 units. One medical cost that may or may not be covered, but required is heartworm preventative. A yearly cost of Interceptor or Heartguard Plus is roughly $100. Another medical consideration is flea and tick control. This care would consist of either Advantix or Frontline products which cost approximately $200/year. These price estimates are high estimates; where as cheaper prices could likely be obtained by ordering these products online.
Record Keeping Cost – As previously mentioned, the KATS program recommended by retired Deputy Sheriff Terry Fleck is an easy way to track everything in regard to a police K9 Unit. Training, deployments, reports and even day to day costs can be tracked and recalled in a report style when needed. The program is simple to use and can be easily understood and navigated within a very short time of using it. The program would be best suited installed on the in cruiser laptop of the K9 vehicle to make entering field information easier. The cost of this program (for 1 to 6 teams) is $209.00 (shipped).

Projected Call Out Cost – Another very important cost to consider is the cost of calling the dog team out during off hours. Table 4 (below) shows the annual cost that call outs would have cost the department had a K9 unit been employed, available and used on every call detailed earlier in the Necessity section of this paper. The numbers below are assuming that ALL K9 calls are off duty calls out, so in reality the overtime expenditure would be far less if the K9 team is used on the appropriate shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>2004 (20 Callouts)</th>
<th>2005 (24 Callouts)</th>
<th>2006 (37 Callouts)</th>
<th>2007 (35 Callouts)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Approximate</td>
<td>$2,560</td>
<td>$3,072</td>
<td>$4,736</td>
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<td>Average Patrolman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OT Rate ($32/hour)</td>
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Predicted Initial Implementation Costs: (with NEW cruiser)

“Green” dog - $6,000 (Pre-trained $9,000)
Training - $0 (Patrol & Narcotic academies)
Cruiser - $35,000 (31)
Training Materials - $800 (if not purchased or donated from another PD)
Deployment Materials - $600 (Uniform and duty belt)
Record Keeping - $209 (KATS program)
Housing Needs - $400 (If not donated from outside source)
Every Day Needs - $780 (plus vaccines & emerg. care if not donated)

1st Year Implementation Cost - $43,789

(The cost of covering the handler’s vacated shift is another cost that is very difficult to calculate because of the unknown number of days in which the shift actually has to be filled with an overtime officer. As long as the shift does not fall below staffing minimums no overtime coverage is needed, therefore no further additional cost would be incurred.)

Predicted Initial Implementation Costs: (with retrofitted cruiser)

“Green” dog - $6,000 (Pre-trained $9,000)
Training - $0 (Patrol & Narcotic academies)
Cruiser - $9,000 (plus cost of laptop & modem) (31)
Training Materials - $800 (if not purchased or donated from another PD)
Deployment Materials - $600 (Uniform and duty belt)
Record Keeping - $209 (KATS program)
Housing Needs - $400 (If not donated from outside source)
Every Day Needs - $780 (plus vaccines & emerg. care if not donated)

1st Year Implementation Cost – $17,789
Predicted Annual Continued Cost:

Call Outs - $2,800 (using 59% of 2006’s possible K9 deployments)
Training - $0 (In service)
Cruiser Maintenance - $500 (1/3 yearly maint. cost of a pool cruiser, $1,500) (31)
Training Materials - $50 (Material replacement)
Every Day Needs - $780 (If not donated)

Total Annual Cont. Cost - $4,130

As a part of the continued cost there is also the day to day after hours care that should also be taken into consideration. Generally, a handler is compensated for 30 – 45 minutes/day for care of the dog while not at work. Additionally, the in service training that is conducted twice a month should be compensated for as well, since this is done to maintain the canine unit’s certification. Combining these off duty costs can be quite substantial if paid out solely in overtime money. However, by using a combination of overtime, compensatory time and in lieu of time, a unit can maintain a low cost.

For example, using four hours a week (16 hours/month) for at home care and 16 hours a month for in service training (32 hours total) a yearly overtime pay out would be roughly $12,000. However, by using compensatory and in lieu of time in conjunction with overtime the actual monetary pay out can be far less. Simply substituting two thirds of the overtime with the alternate options would drop the overtime to $4,000/year.

Additionally, some of the continued cost of a K9 unit can be covered by neighboring towns that, throughout the year, request mutual aid from the unit and utilize the town’s resource. The utilization of the unit can be done on a call out basis or only when it is on duty and at the discretion of the commanding officer.
Training

The most important aspect of a K9 unit is the training it has received and the ongoing training that it does to remain certified, reliable and in compliance with state standards. (28) By not receiving the best training and not staying up to date with the recommended amount of in-service training, a unit and its police department run the risk of being negligent should a lawsuit occur. Minimum standards currently dictate that a full certification class for both handler and canine must be completed. Additionally, at least 16 hours of in-service is to be completed monthly to maintain the certification of the K9 team. (12)

In Massachusetts, there are mainly two academies that certify K9 teams for work in patrol and narcotics areas. The patrol course is a 16 week course which entails all the skills necessary for the K9 team to operate in the patrol setting. (18) These skills include, trailing/tracking, criminal apprehension, obedience, K9 first aid, legal applications to K9 patrol, report writing and other pertinent topics. The narcotics course is a 12 – 13 week course that teaches handler and dog how to conduct narcotic searches. The narcotics course covers detection of different narcotic scents, legal aspects, alerts and other related narcotic search skills. It’s important to note that a police K9 must first be certified as a patrol dog before being allowed to participate in drug school. The two most prevalent academies are hosted by the Boston Police Department and by the Massachusetts State Police. Both academies are free of charge and offer on going in-service training for handler and canine.

It’s very important to note that only upon completion of the patrol course is the handler and dog certified and able to perform patrol functions. Further, until the team
attends, passes and is certified to perform drug searches they are not to be used for such events. Going beyond the scope of training can result in a tremendous amount of liability should something go wrong.

A portion of the training conducted is aggression control. This type of training carries with it the greatest amount of liability due to the possibility of injury resulting from the dog biting an individual. However, with adequate and appropriate training any issues of accidental or inappropriate bites can be limited. (6) There are only a few times when a K9 should bite another individual:

- When instructed by the handler
- While protecting his handler

Because of the liability associated with bites, there has been some training changes and options afforded to departments in order to tailor a dog to their specific need. (27) Two of the most prevalent training options are “Bite & Hold” and “Bark & Hold”. It’s important to note that with either training the dog has the potential to bite, but do so under slightly different criteria.

“Bite & Hold” is the traditional method in which a dog utilizes his biting ability to render a non-compliant subject temporarily incapacitated. This is, as defined before, NOT deadly force. There must be well defined and distinguishable need to exercise this force option and a force report should be completed once the call is over and the officer is writing his arrest report. The “Bite & Hold” criteria only consists of being instructed to bite someone and protection of the handler.

“Bark & Hold” is a method in which the dog tracks an individual and upon finding them barks to alert the handler, but also to intimidate the target into submission. This method of training has been recommended by the International Association of
Chiefs of Police (IACP) (9). However, a study conducted by Charles Mesloh of the University of Florida found police dogs trained in “Bark & Hold” to have a slightly higher bite ratio than “Bite & Hold” dogs. (10) This was attributed to the criteria in which a “Bark & Hold” dog needs satisfied in order to bite. A “Bark & Hold” dog will still bite if it feels that the target is demonstrating threatening behavior. This behavior could be limited to eye contact, not standing still or talking. It has also been found that occasionally the “Bark & Hold” dog will nudge a target in order to make him/her move and thus satisfy the criteria for a bite. (10).

When discussing these two different styles of training and the occasions of bites it should be noted that these instances happen more when the dog is off leash or not under positive control. Of course, this off leash time is necessary when attempting to apprehend a fleeing suspect that poses significant danger to himself, the officer or the general public.

As stated, on going in-service training is needed to maintain the high level of proficiency that a unit should be working. Furthermore, on going obedience training should be conducted by the handler frequently to avoid accidental bites and ensure proper hierarchy between handler and K9. (23) Any deficiencies should be dealt with swiftly.

The prevalence of in-service training and additional seminars is very high. There are a great number of facilities around the New England area that run training programs and hold K9 related seminars. Seminars typically cost $150 - $200 and will cover a myriad of topics associated with canine. (1)
Acquiring and keeping the public’s support in a K9 team can be vital for their continued success. Many teams have had great success in their communities because of the contributions that the canine section can give back to the community. Aside from the law enforcement actions, such as criminal apprehension and removing drugs from the streets, the K9 teams can perform educational demonstrations for schools, clubs and businesses. Furthermore, the K9 team can participate in parades and other community gatherings to raise awareness about the new team.

All of these actions result in good publicity for the unit and serve many more purposes than just educating the public. By becoming involved in the community, more specifically the school system, a K9 unit can help reinforce the idea that the police are their friends. This unit can help bridge any feelings that the police are unapproachable and act as a helpful way to garner trust in tomorrow’s adults.

Another great benefit to conducting demonstrations with kids is the utilization of photographs taken during demonstrations showing the police dog interacting with the children. These pictures can be introduced into court as evidence of the dog’s demeanor and personality. (1)

Incorporating the media with the implementation of a K9 unit is also another useful tool when talking about public relations. The media can be used to show the community that the police department is very serious about fighting crime and assisting all those in need by utilizing every tool and resource possible. (1) Media releases also act as a warning to would be criminals that the police have a new resource available and should heed the warning and rethink any plans of criminal activity in town.
Lastly, acquiring and holding the support of town officials and local judges is also paramount to a K9 unit’s success. A meeting should be set up shortly after the K9 unit has graduated and been certified so that the town officials may meet the new employee. Once again pictures should be taken to demonstrate in court the character and demeanor of the dog. (1) This meeting also helps to show the officials that the dog knows when he’s working and when he’s not.

Overall, the public can be a great asset to the entire K9 program if utilized correctly. Both in the school system and in the media, the public can become more educated about the uses of the K9 program and it’s successes as well.
Call Out Procedure

In order to appropriately have a K9 unit respond to calls for service there needs to be a policy that dictates when a unit is to be deployed and how it’s contacted for deployment.

One of the most popular options is to utilize a pager system, which can be carried by the officer on call 24/7. This option allows the department the ability to contact the handler even when he/she is not home to answer the phone.

There will of course be times when the handler is not able to respond, as he/she is out of the area, on vacation, etc. In this instance, Massachusetts State Police should be contacted and used as a back up.

When the handler is not available, the dog is not available as well. A K9 unit works best if each dog has one and only one handler. Therefore, if the handler is on vacation, the dog is essentially on vacation as well. Care of the animal at this time will be the responsibility of a specially manned kennel or entrusted to another K9 handler.

Also, a policy must be established regarding the availability of the K9 team to be utilized by neighboring towns. Further, if the neighboring towns are allowed to use this resource it must be determined whether the usage is limited to times when the K9 unit is on a normal patrol shift or whether other towns can ask for a call out. The final decision should be left up to the commanding officer of the shift.

Call outs would fall under the same compensation plan as a call in for a patrolman.
Along with all the other considerations that have to do with the implementation of a K9 unit, there are some union and FLSA matters that are involved as well.

The first issue that is often raised is that of handler appointment. There are two ways that a handler can be selected, based on seniority alone or based on interest and merit. Handlers should be chosen for this duty with great scrutiny because, like most programs, a K9 unit will fail if put into the hands of an individual who is not well suited for the task. Officer selection is the first critical decision to be made by the department after the choice has been made to implement the unit.

There are a number of criteria that should be considered when selecting an officer to become a K9 handler. Some of the things that need to be considered are, the officer’s career record (whether he or she has been an asset to the department), their work ethic, their interest in pursuing and helping maintain a well trained K9 unit and their job proficiency. Furthermore, the officer’s home life should be examined because most likely the dog will be residing with them and appropriate accommodations will need to be made. Does the officer have the appropriate living space for the dog? Will the officer be available for call outs at all times of the day and night? Does the officer live close enough that response times would likely be less than the response time of the State Police? Is the officer willing to make personal sacrifices for the betterment of the unit and its service to the police department and community? Does the officer have the time needed to dedicate to keeping the dog trained and sharp?

Another issue raised with unions is that of after hours care of the animal as being compensatable due to the on going time it takes to maintain the departmental tool.
Garcia v San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority (1985) stated that if the dog is cared for and sheltered at the handler’s home there is a certain amount of time per day that the handler needs to take to appropriately care for the dog. This time is in addition to his/her time on patrol and working at that capacity and should be compensated as overtime (18). While only one case, Levering v District of Columbia (1994) listed a specific time frame per day (30 minutes) typically 30 – 45 minutes is a generally accepted amount of time spent caring for the dog at home. (16) This care includes feeding, grooming, exercising, delivery of medicines, etc.

This compensation is often made in a combination of 3 ways:

- Overtime pay
- Compensatory time
- In lieu of time (where the K9 team is released from shift 30 minutes early)

Furthermore, in order to maintain the certification status of the K9 team both handler and dog are required to attend at least 16 hours of training per month. This equates two 2 full days of training per month and need to be compensated for. Again, the 3 compensation options listed above are often the most widely used.
Applicable Police Dog Associations

- American Working Dog Association
  www.americanworkingdog.com

- Dogs Against Drugs – National Law Enforcement K-9 Association
  www.daddac.com

- Eastern States Working Dog Association
  www.eswda.org

- National Police Canine Association
  www.npca.net

- National Narcotic Detector Dog Association
  www.nndda.org

- National Tactical Police Dog Association
  www.tacticalcanine.com

- North American Police Work Dog Association
  www.napwda.com

- United States Police Canine Association
  www.uspcaK9.com
**Conclusion**

The performance of a K9 unit within a police department is well documented as a highly effective unit that not only raises awareness on the community level about the dedication of the police department, but also gets results. These results range from the apprehension of criminals, the detection of narcotics, the location of lost individuals, the education of the public and also the deterrence of crime.

A well trained unit will be successful if utilized correctly and under the right circumstances. The utilization of the unit can also lead to higher morale for other officers, as there is a better chance to catch criminals utilizing this resource. Further, the correct usage of this unit can also not only limit the liability the department is exposed to, but also relieve some of it by using all available resources in a very timely manner to accomplish a task.

While the initial expense of a unit can be daunting, the ongoing costs are limited and can be at least partially covered through the use of drug forfeiture money and other town assistance.

Overall, a well trained K9 unit can add an unparalleled search tool to any police department, while limiting the costs of overtime and freeing up patrol units to field other calls for service. The deterrent effect alone of this unit, when properly used, can be a money saving aspect that alone could justify the expenditure.

In conclusion, as the community around us is changing the police department needs to make changes to maintain the high level of safety, security and education of the public. This unit can accomplish those goals and can be used for years to come in the effort to maintain the type of lifestyle that our residents have come to enjoy.
References


