

THE POLICE CANINE ACADEMY

INTRODUCTION

This report relates to an interest of the Grand Jury to evaluate the activities and effectiveness of K-9 units throughout Ventura County. We wanted to review the various law enforcement agencies policies on use of canines to apprehend suspects, specifically in the area of bark and hold techniques.

OBSERVATIONS

Currently there are 19 active K-9 units in the Ventura County law enforcement agencies. The breakdown by agency is as follows:

A. Ventura County Sheriff's Department	5
East Valley	1
Camarillo	1
Fillmore	1
West Division	1
Ojai	1
B. Ventura Police Department	3
C. Simi Valley Police Department	4
D. Santa Paula Police Department	1
E. Port Hueneme Police Department	1
F. California Highway Patrol	1
*G. Oxnard Police Department	4
<i>* Does not participate in training group</i>	

All the departments that participate in the Ventura County Training Group use canines that are cross-trained in both patrol and narcotics detection.

It is the policy of the participating department to train and deploy their canine(s) in the bark and hold technique, rather than the bite and hold mode, when apprehending a suspect. This agreement of training standards among the departments helps to minimize the liability exposure and increases the willingness of one agency to request the use of a canine from another agency in the group.

Probably the greatest variation of the law enforcement agencies is in the area of funding the K-9 programs. All of the departments have accounts to which individual citizens and organizations may contribute. This fund is used to purchase new canines. Some departments use these funds to support the entire expenses of their canine teams, except for vehicle maintenance or replacement and officer salaries. Others appropriate general funds to fully support their K-9 unit.

CONCLUSION

All K-9 unit managers in the County meet quarterly with K-9 managers from Santa Barbara and Kern Counties. These meetings allow the managers to discuss current and on-going problems. Recently, this group developed a much needed training program for newly appointed K-9 unit managers and supervisors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Law enforcement agencies make extensive use of K-9 units. There is substantial cooperation between the agencies to establish handling and training standards. The programs are effective and popular with the public who donate supporting resources.

1. Establish a separate account to receive donations for the K-9 program, and these funds should not be commingled with the general fund. An accounting of these funds should be made to the department head every six months.
2. Encourage citizen participation with a public awareness program designed to raise funds for the K-9 units.

COMMENDATION

The 1996/97 Ventura County Grand Jury wishes to express its appreciation to the law enforcement agencies for allowing us to observe street level use of K-9 units. Their cooperation provided a better understanding of the issues officers encounter.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

Ventura County Sheriff's Department
Ventura Police Department
Santa Paula Police Department
Port Hueneme Police Department