

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 4.04

CANINE UNIT

Effective Date: January 23, 2022	Issued By: Interim Chief O.S. Hamilton
Rescinds: Policy 4.04 (October 1, 2019)	Page 1 of 6
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the effective deployment of Canine Teams. As needed or requested, Canine Teams assist in conducting searches of buildings and woodlands, and other hazardous incidents, in order to reduce injuries to police officers.

I. POLICY

The Canine Unit will provide support to both Precinct and Support Operations in all aspects of criminal investigation, criminal apprehension, and the collection of evidence to facilitate criminal prosecution. The Canine Unit will also perform other duties which deter criminal activity or support the welfare of the community.

II. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy, the following words and terms shall have the meaning ascribed:

A. Canine Unit: The Department unit made up of multiple Canine Teams.

B. Canine Team: The canine specialist and his assigned canine.

III. HOURS OF OPERATION

The hours of operation for the Canine Unit will be flexible depending upon the tasks required. The commander of the Canine Unit will dictate the hours, but should ensure coverage sufficient to prohibit delays in response.

IV. CANINE TEAM TRAINING, CERTIFICATION, AND EVALUATION

All Canine Teams will meet or exceed all Cobb County Police Department Canine Teams standards. Cobb County Police Canine Team standards will be consistent with established Canine Association requirements, but will not be limited to those requirements. The requirements are:

A. Obtain and maintain team certifications through a canine training or certification entity.

- B.** Be evaluated yearly by the unit commander or his designee, to ensure the Canine Teams perform within Departmental standards.
 - 1. Any Canine Team that fails to meet Departmental standards will be removed from service until standards are met.
 - 2. To maintain the Canine Teams reliability and to ensure the Canine Teams meet all applicable standards, a minimum of eight (8) hours of uninterrupted training will be allowed per week, unless an emergency situation dictates otherwise.
- C.** All special purpose Canine Teams will maintain certification in the applicable special purpose:
 - 1. Narcotics detection
 - 2. Explosives detection
 - 3. Patrol work (e.g. tracking and/or trailing)

V. FUNCTIONS

The Canine Unit functions as a separate, independent unit providing support where specialized canine tasks can be utilized.

- A.** Canine officers will be responsible for the following daily activities:
 - 1. Performing patrol activities that are consistent with specialized canine tasks.
 - 2. Enforcing state laws and county ordinances.
 - 3. Protecting life and property.
 - 4. Care and condition of the assigned animal.
- B.** Unless directed by a supervisor, canine officers should not engage in calls for service requiring extensive out-of-service time not related to the specialized support of the Canine Unit. Calls for service should not be held for Canine Units.
- C.** Canine Teams will be available for “on-call” assignments.
- D.** Canine Teams may be employed for the psychological impact of their presence, where actual use of their specialized skill is possible, but not anticipated.
- E.** Police canines will not be deployed “unleashed” to pursue or apprehend misdemeanor offenders, except where the offender has committed, or is in the commission of, acts of violence towards another person or persons.
- F.** Police canines will not be deployed “unleashed” to pursue or apprehend known juvenile offenders, except where the offender has committed, or is in the commission of, a forcible felony or violent act which may result in serious injury or death.

- G.** Reasonable force will be used when police canines are deployed to pursue and apprehend suspects.

VI. ASSISTING OTHER JURISDICTIONS

- A.** The Cobb County Police Canine Unit will provide assistance to local agencies within Cobb County, in accordance with Policy 4.12 “Mutual Aid,” and at the discretion of the canine handler.
- B.** Any requests for assistance outside of Cobb County must be approved by the canine supervisor. If the canine supervisor cannot be contacted, the canine handler will contact an on-duty Special Operations supervisor and advise him of the request.
- C.** A detailed incident report documenting all activities involving outside agencies will be filed immediately upon completion of the assignment.

VII. DRUG DETECTION

Use of police canines in a drug detection capacity is authorized in the following situations and under the following conditions:

- A.** Random exploratory sniffing of luggage, packages, or other inanimate objects may be conducted in public facilities such as airports, bus stations, and train stations in accordance with current case law.
- B.** Sniffing of an individual person is not permitted under any circumstances.
- C.** The use of drug detection canines in public schools is permitted only when:
 - 1. The school’s principal or designated authority requests/approves the use.
 - 2. There is reasonable suspicion to believe illegal narcotics are being distributed and/or consumed on the premises such that the interests of the school are being unacceptably compromised.
- D.** Sniffs of the exterior of residences are not permitted without a search warrant.
- E.** An exterior sniff of a motor vehicle is permissible without probable cause, provided that the occupants are not detained for an unreasonable period of time. An alert by the canine during an exterior sniff will serve as probable cause for subsequent search of the motor vehicle.
- F.** If an officer, during a routine traffic stop, develops probable cause to believe that drugs are located within a motor vehicle, the canine can be utilized to assist the officer in the search of the motor vehicle.

VIII. EXPLOSIVES DETECTION

Use of police canines in an explosives detection capacity is authorized as follows:

- A. Executive sweeps, such as in Presidential or other dignitary visits.
- B. Any area where suspected explosive devices may be hidden, such as in bomb threats, providing the area can be confined to an area small enough for the canine to effectively work within the given time frame prior to detonation.
- C. At no time will the explosives detection canine be dispatched to sniff a suspicious package or located device. If there is reasonable suspicion that the package may contain or be a bomb, the bomb technician should be dispatched. At no time will the explosives detection canine specialist attempt to disarm, remove, or tamper with any suspected device that may be located.

IX. CANINE CALL-OUT GUIDELINE

- A. Supervisors are responsible for authorizing requests for the Canine Unit. In addition, the following guidelines should be followed when a Canine Team is to be requested:
 - 1. When pursuing a suspect, do not pursue past the point of last visual contact:
 - a. Secure the area and establish a perimeter
 - b. Do not enter an area of building to be searched.
 - c. Do not allow anyone else to enter the area or building to be searched.
 - 2. If the suspect fled from a vehicle, **DO NOT ENTER THE VEHICLE EXCEPT TO MAKE THE VEHICLE SAFE.** Make a visual inspection of the interior from the outside of the vehicle.
 - 3. Inform the canine specialist of the length of time since the suspect was last seen, and if the suspect is believed to be injured or armed.
 - 4. Do not leave vehicles idling in the area of a canine operation or while meeting with a Canine Team.
- B. It is possible that you may be requested to provide security for a Canine Team while tracking or searching an area. If, for any reason, you feel you are unable to keep pace with the Canine Team, advise the specialist prior to starting the track. The Canine Team will not slow or stop for you as this could confuse the canine.
 - 1. While tracking, remain behind the Canine Team and follow the same path as the Canine Team. Under no circumstances should you move in front of the Canine Team or fan out to the sides of the track.

2. Should the canine stop and begin to circle, stop your movement and do not move or make a noise. When the canine begins tracking, resume movement.
3. If you should notice physical evidence while tracking or searching, quietly bring it to the attention of the canine specialist.
4. While tracking or searching, if you observe the suspect before the canine alerts, **DO NOT RUSH FORWARD** (the canine may attack you). Establish a position of cover, if possible, and advise the canine handler you have spotted a suspect. Let the canine handler give commands to the suspect.
5. When given information by the canine specialist to relay, repeat the information exactly.

C. Scene and Scent Articles

Scent is in constant motion, affected by temperature, wind, surface conditions, and terrain. Consider scent as a fluid; any change can scatter and disrupt a scent trail.

1. If you locate scent articles, **DO NOT TOUCH**. Leave it for the canine specialist. If the article is outside, protect it from being disturbed.
2. To ensure the Canine Teams produce good results you must protect any favorable condition that exists.

D. While engaged in canine activities (searches, tracking, etc.) a working canine may “alert” and “lock-on” to an officer assigned to a perimeter or security position. If a canine “alerts” or “locks-on” and remains with you, contact the canine specialist on the scene and follow the procedures in section X, B, 1 below.

E. If a canine engages and bites any person, the canine specialist will ensure that:

1. Appropriate medical attention is given for the victim.
2. A Canine Use Report shall be completed documenting the use of force; unless the bite occurred during a training exercise.

X. SERIOUS INJURY TO CANINE/SPECIALIST

- A.** During transport, the canine handler should keep the front divider closed to prevent possible injury to the animal and to keep the animal separated from the driver should a traffic crash with serious injuries occur.
- B.** Should an officer respond to a scene where the canine handler is seriously injured the following procedures should be followed:

1. **EXTREME** caution should be used around the vehicle and/or specialist. The canine may **ALERT** on the approach of rescue personnel and take a defensive or protective attitude.
 - a. Move slowly around a canine and the specialist.
 - b. Speak in a soothing manner and control your emotions.
 - c. Do not make direct eye contact with the canine.
 - d. Should a canine challenge you, stand perfectly still.
 - e. Do not attempt to frighten the canine with a weapon.
 - f. If the canine is loose or has been removed from the canine vehicle, secure the canine before attempting to move the specialist.
 2. The responding officer should have the Communications Center contact another canine specialist or an Animal Control Officer with a capture device.
 3. If the canine cannot be contained or controlled, the canine should be allowed to bite a protective arm sleeve. When the canine takes the sleeve, a leash can be attached to the canine's control collar. A muzzle can then be used to reduce the danger of a bite.
 4. As a last resort, the specialist's spouse may be used to control the canine.
- C.** Should a police canine be injured, the emergency veterinarian clinic should be contacted.
- Emergency Clinic: Cobb Emergency Clinic
Address: 630 Cobb Parkway North, Marietta, GA 30062
Phone: (770) 424-9157
- D.** Only under extreme and life-threatening circumstances should deadly force be used against a police canine.