

Dog Sniff Evidence

Keep the Evidence In

by

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Introduction

The most important aspect of working with a detection dog is to remember a positive alert is a means to a legal exemption of the Constitution of the United States of America. This should NEVER be taken lightly. Just as your rights under the constitution are important to you, they are equally important to every citizen and visitor to our great country. The training, deployments, and related documentation MUST reflect a dog that is reliably trained and reliably certified to give you and your police department an exemption to the right against unlawful search and seizure.

This book is designed to help you understand what needs to be done prior, during, and after your dog is used to conduct a search that leads to the discovery of illegal substances (usually illegal narcotics).

I will be so bold to say if you do not follow the steps outlined in this book, you *deserve* to lose a court case against an otherwise guilty suspect. With all that has been learned over the last two decades and all the courses which are available to handlers today, failure to follow these steps is nothing more than incompetence and laziness.

Dogs are a powerful tool in finding hidden narcotics, explosives, and a number of other dangerous items. If you have to “cheat” in order to get your dog to alert on a vehicle, you and/or your vendor-trainer have done your dog a serious disservice. There is absolutely no reason why a legitimately selected and trained dog shouldn’t be able to find the smallest amount of narcotics no matter how well-hidden or masked. I have seen a video of a handler search a two-door vehicle on the exterior for twenty minutes in an attempt to get his dog to alert so they could get inside. How ridiculous is that? To make matters worse, there was up to a pound of narcotics inside the vehicle.

In addition to the steps I have for you to follow to ensure your dog is ready for the search and court, I have a list of about fifty questions you will be asked in court. It is important you know these questions so you can have the supporting documents to your answers. Additionally, you do not want to stutter and stammer when you have a truthful answer. To competently answer questions in court goes a long way in making you and your K9 trustworthy witnesses.

Chapter One

Documentation - What Makes You & Your Dog Reliable

As part of the discovery process in a court case where a detection dog was used to find evidence, you will be required to provide a number of pieces of documentation. I have found in the cases where a handler has all of this documentation in good order and up to date that they rarely lose the evidence in a suppression hearing. In cases where a handler is missing this necessary documentation, they often lose the evidence. Do yourself, your department, your city, and the K9 community a favor and maintain this documentation.

Selection Test Documentation

One of the first things you will get asked in a court case is, “Where did your dog come from and how was it selected?” This is a very important question for you even when you don’t have a court case that depends on a positive answer to this question.

Your vendor should have a selection process for the dogs they supply to their clients or your department should have a set of requirements for selecting a dog. If neither one does, create one for your future dogs. It’s too late if you already have a dog that is working. In this case, you need to interview the person responsible for selecting this dog and ask them the following questions:

- Why was this dog selected to be your dog?
- Where did the dog come from?
- What is the dog’s history?
- What tests do you conduct to determine the dog’s eventual effectiveness?
- Was it with a handler before you?
 - If so, why is the dog no longer with them?
 - If not, was the dog only trained for the discipline you are using him for now?
- What is the dog’s medical history?

- How old was the dog when the vendor purchased him?
- Is there documentation to support the information?

Document the answers to the questions. Make sure there is an order to your information that is logical and correct. Any supporting documentation should be included. The name and contact information of the person or persons involved in the selection of this dog should be included.

If your dog is a narcotics dog yet previously was an explosives detection dog (or any other detection discipline), this could cause serious problems. Remember that the substances you will be gaining search warrants for or warrantless searches for are presumed to be illegal. Because of this, a judge is granting such a search warrant based on your dog's alert to the odor of illegal substances. For explosives and other detection disciplines, there are many odors the dog is trained to alert on that are essentially legal in certain forms. Therefore, obtaining a search for substances that are legal for a person to have in their possession is invalid. If this fact is discovered, then all of your evidence in a narcotics case could be thrown out of the case, thereby losing the case.

You will also want to document what the selection process is for you as the handler or trainer. In other words, answer the question you will be asked on the witness stand: "What did you do to get selected and what does your agency do to select a handler?" This will give you credibility as long as there was a process to it. If there wasn't, I will discuss that later in this chapter.

I understand in smaller departments there may not be a lot of handlers to choose from and you may have just been walking down the hallway at the right or wrong time and were told you *will* be the next handler. That is okay—I will attack that in a moment. For those of you in large departments where there is more than one person to put in for a position or there is a policy that regardless there has to be a testing process, this will be easier.

In a Word document, write down every step there is to the selection process for the K9 handler position. You can either copy it from the policy and procedures or a memorandum. If you have none of those references, write down the process and have a supervisor sign off on it. This is important because the jury or judge wants to know why you were selected and what that process looks like. Next, write down what you did to not only prepare for the job but also why you were the best candidate possible for the position.

It may look like something like this:

"The City Police Department policy for the selection of K9 handler requires the handler to not have a poor history of use of force incidents; has an above average self-initiated activity, and a high performance record in all areas of patrol and/or current detective position."

As a patrol officer I maintained an above average and documented self-initiated activity record during each review period. An example of the results from this activity is in the number of stolen vehicles I have recovered. This also includes a number of arrests from occupied stolen vehicles and arrests from subsequent investigations. I was also recognized by the local chapter of MADD for the number of arrests I had that led to the conviction of several drunk drivers.”

To prepare for the K9 position, I attended twenty-six training sessions with our K9 Unit and became certified as a department approved decoy. I also studied the position of being a handler by working closely with K9 Handler Smith and K9 Handler Jones and their K9s while they were active in the K9 Detail, etc.

If you created the K9 position yourself or you are in a department that does not have a selection process, you will need to create a document that spells out why you are capable and credible as a K9 handler. List all of your traits that are conducive to being a K9 handler. List all you have done to prepare yourself as a handler and what you did to create the position and get approved (if that is the case).

It is important to show the jury and judge what makes you a good handler. Your credibility starts with your history. If you just randomly showed up one day and they handed you a dog, that is not going to show as much credibility as an officer who prepared and worked hard out of a desire to be the best K9 handler possible.

Curriculum Vitae – Hero Sheet

The second document you must maintain is your curriculum vitae (CV) that will include your training and experience as a K9 handler. In many Police K9 circles this is referred to as a “Hero Sheet.” Wikipedia describes a CV:

“A curriculum vitae (CV) provides an overview of a person's experience and other qualifications. In some countries, a CV is typically the first item that a potential employer encounters regarding the job seeker and is typically used to screen applicants, often followed by an interview, when seeking employment.

In the United Kingdom, most Commonwealth countries, and Ireland, a CV is short (usually a maximum of two sides of A4 paper), and therefore contains only a summary of the job seeker's employment history, qualifications and some personal information. It is often updated to change the emphasis of the information according to the particular position for which the job seeker is applying.[1] Many CVs contain keywords that potential employers might pick up on and display the content in the most flattering manner, brushing over information like poor grades. [1] A CV can also be extended to include an extra page for the job-seeker's publications if these are important for the job.

In the United States a CV is used in academic circles and medical careers as a "replacement" for a résumé and is far more comprehensive; the term résumé is used for most recruitment campaigns. A CV elaborates on education, publications, and other achievements to a greater degree than a résumé, but it is often expected that professionals use a short CV that highlights the current focus of their academic lives and not necessarily their full history. It was designed to help them understand what people moving between countries have to offer, while overcoming linguistic barriers."

This document is extremely important and must be kept up to date in regard to the number of arrests, schools attended, searches, types of narcotics found and total weight of narcotics found. Not only will this be useful in court cases related to successful searches but also necessary for obtaining search warrants. You do not need to go into deep detail in this document. Just listing experiences and a running total of each event is necessary. Further information will be gleaned from your logs and reports related to those incidents.

Training Records and Logs

Training logs are the next set of documents which will need to be diligently maintained. This may be one of the most neglected areas in all of Police K9 disciplines. This is not your supervisor's responsibility. This is not your training vendor's responsibility nor is it your departmental trainer's responsibility. They are solely your responsibility.

Maintaining these records has never been easier. There are products like the KATS Software (Eden Group) which allows you to easily keep track of all of your records and your dog's record. Even less expensive and a very easy solution is a "Google Doc" form. This form will keep both a single form with detailed information and an easy to read "Excel"-type spread sheet.

For both the narcotics and explosives detection dog it is important to list the following:

- Date and time
- Location of the search
- Type of search (building, vehicle, open area, etc.)
- Type of substance
 - Actual narcotics/explosives
 - Pseudo substance
 - Cotton balls or "cooked" items
 - Currency (cooked or uncirculated)
- Amount of substance (ounces, lbs., kilos, etc.)
- Types of distractions
- Set time
- Conditions
- Witnesses, helpers, actors
- Height of search (low find, nose height or high find)
- Other relevant information (good or poor alert; find was on open stairs, etc.)

It is important to include good and relevant information. Do not be afraid to put in negative information. Remember these are training records for you to ensure your dog is effective and continues to stay effective. No dog and no handler is perfect. Let me repeat: NO DOG AND NO HANDLER IS PERFECT. If you maintain training records and

deployment records which insinuate that you and your dog are perfect, an expert will be brought into a case and will say it is not possible. There is no dog or human on the planet that is perfect and by claiming so in these “official documents,” you are lying and cannot be trusted.

What you want to show through these records is you care about the ability of your dog to legitimately find hidden substances and do what it takes to maintain this dog’s effectiveness. An expert who is brought into a suppression hearing and views well-kept records will have no choice but to acknowledge the records are well-kept and honest. Do not rubberstamp your forms and minimize the importance of these records.

I have seen cases where absolutely no training records were ever written. In one case in particular, there was no certification, no training records, and no deployment records. It was impossible for me to say that the dog in this case was reliable. I was also unable to say the handler was competent and well-trained. I have also seen handlers in my own department frantically trying to create training records they did not have. They were using different pens and pencils on form after form to make it look like the forms were from differing days. All this was being done right before a suppression hearing.

As much as it may seem to be a hassle to maintain these records, it is far more of a hassle and stressful situation to defend yourself and your K9 in Federal Court without proper documentation to back up your claims.

Certification Records

Although certification is done once a year, you and your dog should be able to pass certification on any given day. This can include the ATF Odor Proficiency Standard, your state’s Detector Dog standard, a private organization such as the California Narcotics Detection Dog Organization or the World Detection Dog Organization (WDDO), and your vendor’s certification standard such as Falco K9 Academy’s Standards.

Your records should include both the certificate itself and the score sheet. It is extremely important that you and your department have a standard that a number of people are following and it is offered by a reliable, recognized, and substantiated organization. I know there are some experts recommending that a K9 team be evaluated by an organization which has no connection with the dog. That is a great idea, but unfortunately there are some communities that do not have the luxury of having an evaluator near them or their department has no budget or policy for sending a team to where an evaluator is or bring one to them. If they pay the evaluator to come to them, then there is a monetary connection. In this case, do not go without an evaluation for certification to a reliable standard, even if it is your vendor. As with Falco K9 Academy, there are no evaluators in our area, but I am a State Certified Evaluator and was one of the original ones. I can prove and show that I give no bias and I follow the standard to a T and expect more than

the minimum standard that the State of California recommends. I fail my own people if they do not meet *my* minimum standard which, again, is higher and more stringent than the State's.

If a handler feels the need to do special training in order to prepare for certification, something is wrong. At minimum, the following should be expected as trained behaviors for a Narcotics Detection Dog or Explosive Detection Dog and the skills of the handler:

- Basic obedience
- Searching behavior (dog)
- Handling skills
- Odor recognition
- Searching skills (handler)
- Ability to conduct a sight survey
- Ability to conduct a threat assessment
- Basic knowledge of the profession

Deployment Records and Logs

Deployment records are the real life activity of you and your dog. Every time you and your dog get out of the car together to be used to search for hidden substance, it needs to be documented. Even if an official police report is not generated, you need to complete a use form and log the activity in a spreadsheet. This includes the times you and your dog find nothing and when your dog alerts and you still find nothing. This is foreign to some police K9 handlers. They are often afraid to put something in writing which may show them in a negative light.

Remember what I said in the beginning: this is a very serious job and you have an obligation as a detection dog team to be honest and effective. If you are truly effective, it will show in the overall performance and in all of your documentation listed herein. If you are ineffective, it too will show itself and you will know quickly that something needs to be addressed. In other words, if you have several searches in real life where your dog alerts and nothing is found, then you will know sooner, not later, that something needs to be addressed. This can be in your training and/or perhaps the dog needs to be replaced. The key is that if you are going to fail, fail quickly. In other words, do not ignore potential problems or ineffectiveness for too long. Fix the problem quickly or replace the dog or even the handler (if you are a K9 supervisor, this may be your call).

The bottom line is to document everything and keep a running log of these deployments for easy access and review. In the log you will want to include:

- Date
- Report/incident number
- Location
- Type of search
- Arrest/s or no arrest
- Substance found and amount or if nothing found
- Location of the find
- Unusual circumstances, if any
- Running totals of alerts with finds, alerts with no finds, no alerts with finds, and no alerts with no finds.
- Notes giving further explanation of outcomes. For instance: *“K9 had an alert with no usable quantity found. However suspect admitted to having marijuana in the car and in the bag the K9 alerted on.”*

A final note on this subject: your training records should reflect a desire to fix any potential problems or issues which are mentioned in your deployment records. When possible, make a reference to an incident in your deployment records by cross-referencing the report/incident number in your training record. In the training record you can make a note: *“Due to the outcome of the referenced deployment, myself and the training team replicated the incident to correct the problem of the distractions to my K9.”* This responsible act will go a long way to show your credibility and desire to be as responsible as possible.

Veterinarian Records and Documentation

A smart defense attorney or prosecuting attorney in a civil case or rights violation case will not only get the aforementioned documents but also veterinarian records. It is important for you to stay up on your dog's health and required shots. If your dog can be deemed unreliable due to health issues, this will be used against you so make sure you are fully aware of any issues which may make your dog less than effective.

If you are not up on your dog's shot requirements or failed to show up for appointments, this can be used to show you are unreliable. It is so easy for you to stay up to date on this

is part of your job that you more than likely get paid for this aspect of the job, thus any failures are going to cast you in a very bad light.

For your review, here's what you need to keep up to date:

Document Checklist:

- Selection Process Document
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - Bio
 - Resume
- Training Records and Logs
- Deployment Records Logs
- Certifications and score sheets
- Veterinarian Records

Chapter Two

Know Your Dog

I know this may sound strange, but you should know everything about your dog and know it well. I can't tell you how many handlers I have seen on the witness stand who knows very little about their own dog. They stutter and stammer when it comes to questions like:

- Where did your dog come from?
- Who conducted the training of your dog?
- Was your dog trained to do anything before you got him?
- What is your dog trained to do?
- What does your dog do when he is in odor?
- What is your dog's alert?
- What odors are your dog trained to locate?
- What does your dog do when he gets into odor?

If you are going to be credible to the judge and jury, they are going to have to see that you are an expert with your dog and in the craft of dog handling. I have seen judges listen to the testimony of a handler who knows nothing (literally) about how their dog was trained, where he came from, and what his alert is and still accept their reliability. Yet I can say it is not the norm and will begin to be less and less common.

Some federal agencies, such as the Border Patrol, have made it a policy for the handler's to "not to know" anything about any aspect of their dog. As a matter of fact, when their training records are handed over, everything on them is redacted. I have never heard a handler testify to the same thing in regard to how their dog alerts. It is amazing to me that handlers in this time and day knows nothing about a dog they work with for eight to fourteen hours every day. It seems all of their dogs alert differently on different days. According to testimony I have heard, there is no one type of alert for Boarder Patrol Dogs. Now I know differently because I have judged these handlers at certifications and competitions. In these venues the dogs all are "Passive" alert dogs and they do it consistently. But when it comes to court hearings, the handlers say their dogs "do a

number of things”. This simply means when the dog does something different in the process of searching, it can be identified as a “change of behavior” or “secondary signal” and that is an alert on that day at that time. I think this is hogwash. All detection dogs are trained to have a “primary alert.” Your dog should have a primary alert. There is no doubt that a handler should know all of their dogs secondary behaviors or changes of behaviors prior to giving the primary alert, but your dog must have a primary alert behavior.

DO NOT fall into this trap. It is imperative you are an expert on your dog. Know what his one primary alert is. Recognizing a change of behavior or secondary signal is an important aspect of being a handler, but that is not a primary alert. They are only signs that your dog is “working” odor and is possibly near to solving the problem.

If the only thing you have while you are searching is a secondary signal and no primary alert, *that* is information. This information will lead you to possibly change the direction of your search or find a way to get your dog into a different position or location. If your dog never gives you the primary alert, then that is all you have. Do not force the situation or talk your dog into an alert. You must document this fact as it is in a report and advise your search team that your dog was showing interest in this particular area but never gave a primary alert. Then you will begin to formulate a plan and examine other related information and evidence to lead you to a conclusion or plan of action. There may be times that a secondary signal *combined with* additional information or evidence will give you enough for a search warrant, but *never does a secondary signal or change of behavior give you enough for a search warrant.*

Lastly, it is so important to know how your dog got here:

- Where did his training take place?
- Who was the trainer(s) who shaped the behaviors and trained you to be his handler?
- Was a two-week academy or a seven-week academy?
- Who certified you as a working team?
- What was the process of certification?

You should be able to recite this information without stuttering or stammering. Would hesitation and ignorance be acceptable if you were to have a risky procedure done by a doctor and you asked him where he went to school?

“I’m not sure.”

“Well, how long did you go to school?”

“It was either three or five weeks, but I can’t remember.”

“Is there a certification or validation process?”

“There probably is, but we did not get one done.”

Would you trust this doctor and believe he was reliable? I have heard answers just like these in the cases I have been involved with. It’s nothing short of ridiculous and embarrassing. Your K9 is your partner and may one day save your life (if it hasn’t already). Know your partner!

Chapter Three

How Long Should a Search Take?

Remember the main reason we use dogs during searches in the first place. Through the power of their olfactory system and their God-given desire to hunt, they are faster and more efficient at finding a hidden substance. It is incredible for me to see (on a more frequent basis than you may think) a search by a dog on a vehicle taking more than three minutes. As a matter of fact, I have seen a team take over twenty minutes to search the exterior of a small SUV. Yes, that's right, twenty minutes! In the end the dog never alerted but the handler eventually testified in court that the dog did.

The first thing you must keep in mind is the dog simply is sniffing for odor which is being emitted from the hidden substance (or left behind). The dog does not necessarily find the substance. If there is no odor present then the dog will not alert to it. Therefore, even though there may be substance hidden on a vehicle, in a building or out in a field, the dog will never alert to it if the odor is not present and available for the dog to sniff. It is your job to get the dog into the places where the odor is most likely to be. Circling a vehicle twenty-five times is not going to get you any closer to the odor than it did the first three times you went around it.

Secondly, a properly selected and well-trained team can find hidden substance and its odor within seconds in most circumstances. At the most it should only take a couple minutes in a large building. Odor does not like to be contained. A dog whose olfactory system is approximately a million times more efficient than ours can find this odor in almost every circumstance, even when the suspects attempt to mask the odor with such things as coffee grinds, petroleum jelly, and other substances.

If you find yourself continually circling a vehicle or the interior of a room in an attempt to get your dog to alert, it is time to stop and walk out. Where handlers get into trouble is when they begin to "use" their dog to violate someone's rights. In other words, you have decided or someone else has decided that we as the police "need" to get into this vehicle or building so we can find out if there is anything inside or to simply confirm our suspicions. *This is not the job of the K9 or the K9 team.* The job of the dog is to locate odor that will lead us to illegal substances. That is all. Nothing else. This job the dog can do very well and very effectively. The dog is not a tool to be used to violate someone's rights. This practice is not good for you, your department or the field as a whole.

I recently conducted a test with bed bug detection dog handlers. In this test I wanted to determine how long it should take a Bed Bug Detection Dog team to locate hidden bed bugs in an eight hundred square foot hotel suite.

As you can imagine, the odor coming off a bed bug is very slight and slow moving, unlike the odor of marijuana which is fast moving and abundant. I had six handlers of various abilities and experience (from a couple weeks to two years) in four hotel rooms at the Chase Suites in Brea, California. Three of the rooms had hides in them and one did not. The handlers did not know which of the four rooms had hides in them and which ones did not nor did they know how many of the rooms had hides, if any. Out of the six teams only one team missed one of the hides and all of the teams identified the room that was empty.

Besides showing how effective the dogs were at locating hidden bed bugs and clearing unaffected rooms, the most important fact was how long it would take a team to find the bugs in a room which was eight hundred square feet and how long it would take to confidently claim a room “clean.” The average time we discovered for a team to locate hidden bed bugs was ninety-seven seconds. One team found the hidden bugs in fourteen seconds.

If your dog is not properly trained or selected, he is simply going to be ineffective at doing this job, period. You may get away with circling a vehicle and prompting your dog to sit or queuing your dog for a short period of time, but not for long. Not only is this ethically out of line, it is illegal and when a handler who does this is found out, jail time is in his future. With the advent of car-mounted and shirt-mounted video, this will become more and more of an issue because the unethical handler will be caught in the act.

Chapter Four

There is Always Somebody Watching

My ex-wife often said, “There is always someone watching so only pick your nose in the bathroom.” I would laugh at this back in the late 80s and early 90s but as you all know, in the 2000s this has never been truer. There are cameras everywhere. Many of them are mounted on the very cars you drive and even some of them are on your uniforms.

The sad thing is, even though handlers know they are being video recorded, they still do some very stupid things. Sorry for the bluntness, but I have seen handlers circle cars several times, their dogs never alerting, and yet still claim their dogs alerted on the suspect vehicles. Why have they put themselves, their families, and departments at risk? Is it *that* important this suspect go to jail at this time on this day? Why would they compromise their integrity and all the great work that K9 handlers throughout the world do on a day to day basis? The only answer I have is STUPIDITY.

I promise you, this suspect *will* be stopped again, probably doing more of the same in the very near future. It may be that the next time he will have more on him that will put him away for a longer time or lead you to a bigger fish. It is okay if your dog does not smell the odor for whatever reason that may be. It is *really* okay if you don’t violate someone rights just to find out nothing is in the car, house or container.

Be aware in your training and deployments if/when you are talking your dog into an alert. This is one of the most common errors I see handlers commit when handling their dogs. They get a preconceived idea of the existence of substance and will either begin to focus on a location or change something in their body language or voice (for instance) to cause the dog to alert. This is very obvious on video. I do not even need to hear the audio to know a handler is searching for the dog and not allowing the dog to do his job.

Remember: it is the dog’s job to tell you where the drug odor is. *It is not your job to tell the dog where to alert.* Train your dog to work independently of you. The leash should not be a communication tool in the sense you are giving your dog cues to alert.

Blocking your dog is also a bad habit because many handlers will do this to get a dog to focus on a specific location. When a dog gets blocked in a way in which he believes he is being told to focus on something, he will begin to think, “This spot is important to my human, and when it is important to him I should alert just to see if that is what he wants,” and then the dog alerts. Keep in mind the odor emitting from a vehicle is strong enough for any well-selected and well-trained dog to locate. It does not matter if it is a single marijuana cigarette or a single rock of cocaine under the seat. The dog’s olfactory system

is powerful. If he is working as he should, he will smell it from outside the vehicle. I guarantee it and have seen it at night, during the day, in wind, and in the heat of the Palm Springs desert.

If you and your dog are not working effectively, fix it. If it means going back to the basics or getting a new dog, that is what you will have to do. DO NOT compromise yourself for the sake of an arrest. It will affect you and many others in the long run. If you make a mistake, that's one thing. If you are purposeful in your deception—and self-deception—of being morally right in your actions, it will catch up to you at some point.

Chapter Five

Foundation Questions

As I said in a previous chapter, as a Narcotics Detection Dog handler you *must* be an expert in your field. When you are on the stand, you must come across as an expert to the jury and judge or you will greatly diminish your chances of a successful outcome.

Below you will find a number of questions which will be asked about you and your dog. You should, at minimum, know the answers to all of these questions and be able to state them with confidence and authority. I recommend you go through each relevant question and write down what your answer would be and memorize it. I would even go as far to record yourself answering the questions. I have set up mock courtroom training and acted as an attorney and asked my handlers these questions:

1. How long have you been in the K-9 Unit?
2. How many dogs are in the unit?
3. What are their various functions?
4. What is your dog trained to do?
5. How is a drug/bomb detector dog trained?
6. What breed is your dog?
7. How old is your dog?
8. How long has your dog been working?
9. Are you the dog's only handler?
10. Did the dog have a previous handler?
11. Why was this breed selected?
12. How many hours of training has your dog completed?
13. How and when did your agency acquire this dog?
14. Have you handled any other service dogs? If so, how many, what type, and with what profiles?

Training Questions:

1. Are you a member of any K-9 organization?
2. Which organizations?
3. What are their functions?
4. When did you receive your training as a K-9 handler?
5. Where was the training conducted?
6. How long was the training?
7. Did your training include a manual or written materials?
8. Do you have those materials available?
9. What subjects were covered in your handling training?
10. Did you receive a certification?
11. How long is the certification valid?
12. Do you re-certify your dog through any agency or organization?
13. How frequently do you certify?
14. Are there criteria for certifying the dog?
15. Who administers the certification testing?
16. Are scores or grades given?
17. How well did your dog perform?
18. What odors is your dog trained to detect?
19. How was the dog trained to detect those odors?
20. Is an odor the same thing as a scent?
21. How does your dog communicate that it has located a drug odor?
22. How did you build this indication into the dog's behavior?
23. What is the smallest quantity of drugs you have ever used to train your dog?
24. What is the largest amount of drugs you have ever used to train your dog?
25. What is the reason for those limitations?

26. Have you and your dog received additional training since the initial training?
27. If so, how much and where?
28. How do you train a drug detection dog?
29. How often do you train with your dog?
30. Under what conditions do you train?
31. Is your dog weak in particular areas and strong in others?
32. What are your dog's weaknesses?
33. Is your dog 100% successful?
34. What is the distinction between a dog handler and a dog trainer?
35. Would you be willing to bring your dog to court and demonstrate the dog's training to the jurors?
36. If not, why not?
37. Are distracters included in your dog's training? Why or why not?
38. If so, what type of distractions?
39. Is your dog's indication strong enough that someone other than you could discern it?
40. During the course of training, has your dog ever failed to find concealed drugs?
41. If so, why?
42. Is your philosophy of training superior to that of other agencies?
43. Why don't you train like the LAPD (or some other large agency)?
44. Isn't it true that you believe that other agencies have inferior training approaches?
45. Can your dog indicate on command?
46. How do you reward your dog when it makes an indication?
47. Have you ever rewarded your dog when it was wrong or performing improperly?

Pseudo Drug-Specific Questions:

1. Is pseudo-cocaine a controlled substance?
2. Does your dog find pseudo-cocaine?
3. What would happen if I placed some pseudo-cocaine in a search area?
4. What is the difference between pseudo-cocaine and real cocaine?
5. Are you a chemist? Do you have any training in chemistry?
6. How many times has your dog alerted to a pseudo-drug or any other substance that was not actually a controlled substance?
7. Can we hide some pseudo-cocaine to see if your dog would find it and alert?
8. Would you agree that the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operates one of the nation's premier detector dog training programs?
9. Are you aware that ICE uses pseudo-cocaine in their training program?

Narcotics Detector–Specific Questions:

1. Is an alert the same as an indication?
2. If not, what is the difference?
3. What is your dog's alert?
4. What is a secondary alert signal behavior as it relates to detection dogs?
5. What are your dog's secondary signals?
6. Have you formed an opinion about your dog's reliability in alerting to drugs?
7. What is the basis for your opinion?
8. What is the largest amount of drugs your dog has ever located?
9. What is the smallest amount of drugs your dog has ever located?
10. How many times has your dog been used to search for drugs?
11. Has your dog worked at any time other than searching for drugs?
12. If so, for what purpose, and how often?
13. Are there any records kept of your dog's searches and/or training?
14. Who keeps those records?
15. Where are they kept?
16. Where could I inspect the records?
17. Does your dog behave on a bad day?
18. What kind of searches are challenging for your dog?
19. What kind of searches gives your dog problems?
20. How does your dog react to distractions?
21. What odors mask the odors of drugs?
22. What is a false alert, false indication or false positive?
23. Has your dog ever alerted in a location where no drugs were subsequently found?
24. If so, wouldn't that call the dog's ability into question?
25. How would you explain that?

26. What is residual odor?
27. The actual scent molecule in heroin is acetic acid, correct?
28. The actual scent molecule in cocaine is methyl benzoate, correct?
29. Aren't those molecules found in other substances?
30. How many times has your dog failed to find concealed drugs?
31. Has your dog ever failed to alert in an area where drugs were found?
32. If so, how can you explain that?
33. When your dog indicates, can you tell whether it has found marijuana, methamphetamines, cocaine or some other drug?
34. How can you tell?
35. Why don't you teach your dog to alert differently to different drugs?
36. How sensitive is a dog's nose?
37. How many more times is a dog's nose sensitive than a human nose?
38. What accounts for the difference?
39. What is a "useable" amount of drugs?
40. Has your dog ever failed to give a complete alert, such as only scratching and not biting or only standing and not sitting?
41. How do you explain that?
42. Do you stimulate the dog prior to deploying for a search?
43. If so, how do you stimulate the dog?
44. Didn't you contaminate the car/house/object being searched when you touched the toy to it during stimulation?
45. Couldn't the odor from the toy still be in the air when you commanded the dog to sniff the car?
46. Isn't that a form of residual odor?

Incident-Specific Questions:

1. Is your dog currently in good health?
2. Was he/she in good health on this specific date?
3. Directing your attention to that date, were you on duty?
4. What were your work hours during that day?
5. Were you and your narcotics dog asked to respond to a specific location and, if so, by whom?
6. At what time?
7. Did any officers meet you at the scene and advise you of the situation?
8. Could you describe the scene, that is, the area to be searched?
9. What did you do?
10. Where did you start the dog in its search?
11. Does the dog have the idea when a search is ready to begin? Do you give him/her a command?
12. Was anyone around you when you were searching with the dog?
13. During the course of the search, was the dog ever distracted from his/her search?
14. While he/she was searching, did the dog at any time give you an indication as to the presence of the scent of narcotics?
15. What was the dog's reaction or indication?
16. At what specific location did the dog give you this indication?
17. Did you or any of the other officers present investigate this spot or location where the dog indicated?
18. To your knowledge, what was the result or outcome of this indication and the subsequent investigation?
19. Property was seized for forfeiture in this case, yet no drugs were found. How can you explain that?
20. Did you have prior knowledge of the possible location of the hidden narcotics before you conducted your search with the dog?

Currency-Specific Questions:

1. Before you had your dog sniff the currency, did you check the area for contamination?
2. Is it possible that the currency became tainted with the odor of controlled substances after it was in the possession of narcotics officers and before you conducted a sniff?
3. When your dog indicated on this money, you had no idea how much of it was tainted with drug odor, did you?
4. Would it be possible to contaminate a single bill, place it in a stack of one hundred bills, and then for your dog to indicate on the entire stack?
5. Has your dog learned the smell of currency as it has learned the smell of drugs?
6. On how many occasions has your dog not alerted to currency?
7. Do your training records show how many times the dog has sniffed currency and how many times your dog has alerted to currency?
8. How do you know that the dog did not indicate on the odor of currency?
9. Isn't it true that a large portion of currency in circulation is tainted with the odors of drugs?
10. Are you aware of published scientific studies showing that a majority of \$20 bills in California are tainted with drug residue?
11. How many times has your dog indicated on currency that has no drug odor on it?
12. Isn't it true that your dog could indicate on currency that became tainted weeks before the sniff?
13. How is it that your dog alerted on this currency, yet you say that one gram is the threshold for an indication?
14. Do you believe that every large quantity of currency is drug-tainted?
Why or why not?
15. Would you agree that it is best to conduct a sniff in the closest possible proximity to the seizure of currency and other items?
16. Why was there a delay in this case?
17. Prior to the sniff, was the money counted?

18. Was a money-counting machine used?
19. Could the money be contaminated while in police custody prior to the sniff?
20. If one of the officers had touched the drugs and then the money, wouldn't that invalidate the results of your dog's sniff?
21. Do you have an opinion on how much time elapsed between when your dog sniffed the currency and alerted and when the currency was actually exposed, if ever, to controlled substances?

Chapter Six

Being a Detection Dog Handler

Being a detection dog handler is one the most challenging responsibilities within your organization. You will be charged with maintaining the health and safety of individuals and in some cases hundreds or even thousands of people. While doing so, you must be public relations-minded and remain aware that you are an ambassador for your organization. In addition, you get to contend with all of these things while working with an animal.

You must remember that you and your dog are a TEAM and that you both play a critical role in the art of detection. Your dog is the nose and you are the brain. You must allow your dog to use his nose to find the imprinted odor/s while at the same time using your brain to read his signals and facilitate the search.

The proper use of a detection dog in actual deployments and in training is ultimately the handler's responsibility. Care should always be taken to safeguard the dog, citizens, customers, and fellow employees. Remain mindful of your organization's policy and use common sense in deciding whether or not to use your dog to search an area or attempt to locate an item.

At Falco K9 Academy, we strive to prepare the handler to the best of our ability; however, not every potential circumstance or variable can be duplicated in training. Remember that your dog is a tool for you and your fellow employees and, like any other tool, can be used by itself or in combination with other resources. Each handler is left to use his or her best judgment so ultimately the most important resource for anyone is his or her own brain.

With all of this responsibility and pressure come great rewards. The presence of you and your dog will give students, customers, visitors and/or employees a sense of well-being, security and safety. If a dangerous situation does manifest (for instance, if explosives are found), there will be no greater satisfaction than that of seeing your dog successfully locate a hidden substance and potentially avoid a catastrophe. Similarly, when working with an Incendiary Detection Dog, it is extremely rewarding to see him locate an exhilarant which breaks a criminal case.

One thing that makes being a handler continuously challenging is the fact that you are responsible for the training and maintenance of your dog who learns and maintains behaviors out of repetitive training. Actions which are not natural instincts, such as searching for explosives (the imprinted odor) and sitting, must be trained on a regular

basis in a manner that the dog understands and for the most part enjoys. It is critical not to lose your patience or motivation if he becomes confused and does not understand what he is being asked to do; in most cases, it is the handler who has caused the confusion.

Lastly, remember that your dog is a “searching tool” and does not necessarily have the ability to reason or process information for you. Therefore, in addition to all of the other responsibilities handlers have, they must also strive to increase their knowledge of terrorism, explosives, criminal psychology, construction, insect breeding patterns, arson investigations, and all other information related to each particular job.

Being a detection dog handler is not a position where one may sit back and rest on his or her laurels. It is a job which stretches you every single day. You and your K9 must be prepared at all times, not just when it’s time for re-certification. The effort and rewards, though, are worth it in the end. I promise.

Chapter Seven

Training Issues

In our training scenarios, we will challenge both you and your dog to perform at the peak of your ability. If at any time you do not understand a scenario or its outcome, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification. Training is ineffective if you do not approach it with a clear and positive mind, either when working with a trainer or by yourself. Always strive to practice perfectly because merely practicing will not be effective if it is not done correctly.

At no time will harsh or inhumane forms of training be used or tolerated (such as sharpened pinch collars, tasers, cattle prods, etc.). Complete care should always be used to ensure the safety of the dog and he must enjoy the training and feel rewarded by the end result. If an experience is not positive for the dog, he will not be likely to repeat the trained behaviors.

The Academy staff will use all relevant forms of teaching in order to develop each handler's ability to train and maintain the dog's skills (classroom and video instruction, practical applications, etc.). In addition, every handler should strive for increased knowledge outside of academy training through continued education provided by Falco K9 Academy's website as well as other outside sources.

We believe each team should be trained in the environment in which it will be working. Therefore, when training in the Academy, it will be the responsibility of the contracted person or organization (in conjunction with Falco K9 Academy) to locate appropriate and effective training sites. It is each handler's duty to ensure that their dog receives varied training so he learns to search in a number of environments. This will greatly increase chances for success in the field.

Training Time

To maintain protection from civil liability, the following training schedule should be adhered to at a minimum:

- **Maintenance Training**—There should be one full day of training and evaluation per month, bi-monthly or quarterly; these sessions are used to evaluate the team's effectiveness. A trainer from Falco K9 Academy will perform this evaluation and discern what steps are necessary to correct any problems and maintain ongoing success. In addition, the entire group will discuss field deployments, training

scenarios, written reports and any other detection-related issues. It is strongly encouraged that you attend structured maintenance training days as often as possible. By having an experienced third party set up to view your training, you will avoid many common errors, such as signaling your dog at the find.

- **In-Service Training**—Each handler will be responsible for conducting “in- service training” throughout his or her work week in order to maintain the team’s effectiveness. Whether it is obedience or an entire deployment scenario, some form of training needs to be done daily. In addition to sensory development and maintenance, there is the additional factor of cardiovascular improvement and muscle memory. Without a commitment to regular training, the dog (and handler) will tire quickly and lessen the team’s chances of success. What is learned during maintenance training should be put into effect during in-service training until the next scheduled maintenance training day.

Training Tips

The following are explanations of how to set up training so it is more effective for you and your dog. The information presented is fairly generic so as to be applicable to all disciplines of detection dog work. However, do not skip an explanation which has to do with vehicles if you are working a termite dog because there is always something to be learned from all types of search methods. This is also the case with books and other instructional material. Just because you are working a mold detection dog, don’t shy away from reviewing a narcotics detection dog article on liability issues. Inevitably, there will be significant points made on training and documentation which have relevance for all types of handlers.

Training Scenarios

There are two types of scenarios you will be running with your dog. The first is a Skill Development Scenario and the other a Real Life Scenario. You cannot be a well-rounded and effective team without you and your dog participating in each. Following is a breakdown of both types:

1. **Skill Development Scenarios** are useful when you are cultivating a specific skill set necessary for you and your dog. For instance, when we are imprinting the odors on the dog, we will use a number of cinder blocks or PVC pipes with a specific scent while others remain empty or contain a distracter. You can either set up this type of training yourself or use a third

party, unless you're working on problems related to a handler signaling the dog at a find; in this case, you must use a third party.

Skill Development Scenarios encompass a wide range and can cover everything from odor recognition problems to working through distractions or from leash handling to off-leash development.

2. **Real Life Scenarios** are scenarios which resemble an actual search and will be conducted in the field. Because you should not know where the finds are, you will need a third party to set up these searches. It is important that the handler not know where the finds are in order to remove him or her from the chain that relates to the imprinted odor and the alert.

It is important to balance your training between these two types of scenarios in accordance with your specific needs as a team. If your dog is passing by the odors or you are continually getting your lead tangled about the dog during your search, you must go back to Skill Development Scenarios before you can progress further. Conversely, if your dog is consistently finding the correct odors in the blocks or on the scent wall, then it is time to challenge you and your dog by conducting Real Life Scenarios.

Odor Imprinting

Imprinting of the proper odors is key to the effectiveness of the detection dog team. Therefore, the most important step in your training is to find and acquire the actual substances you will be searching for. If you are training an Explosive Detection Dog, for example, you will need to train with real explosive odors; if you are training a Bed Bug Detection Dog then you will need to train with live bed bug odor. In the case of an Incendiary Detection Dog, training is a little more complicated as you must train on flammable substances, both "pre-burn" and "post-burn."

I say nothing about pseudo or fake odors, because I believe that proper imprinting is so important that we never employ these, only real odors. They can occasionally be used as training aids for those who cannot keep or maintain a dangerous substance (such as explosives), but only after the real odors have been trained and proofed.

With regard to detection dogs which are looking for odors related to living organisms such as bedbugs, termites or mold, you must ensure the scent you are training on is emitted from the live organism itself. It's important to remember that you are in the job of finding the actual "bug" that is causing the (structural or health) problem, which means a live one. There is no use training the dog to find a dead organism, as they are no longer causing problems at that point. Improper training will inhibit your dog's ability to clear a building of live bugs after a remediation or extermination.

Quantity of Training Substance

“Quantity of substance” refers to the amount of odor coming from the training tool. Although in the beginning we use terrycloth towels which have been sitting in a jar of the relevant substance, we do not want to train only with trace odors. Trace odors of a substance such as C4 (explosive) will tend to be minimal in relation to the odor emitted from a two pound brick of C4; this distinction is important, because just as the smell is different to us, it is different to the dog and he may learn to find only trace odors and pass by substantial quantities of the same scent.

It is our recommendation that you do everything you can to train your dog on varying quantities as often as possible. At Falco K9 Academy, it is important for us to maintain a DEA license for narcotics and an ATF license for explosives, so we can legally train with large and small quantities of these substances. If you do not have this ability, you will need to seek out agencies or trainers who do have the permission to train with the various quantities and substances you require.

Also be aware that when you get into extremely large quantities of a substance, your dog may not alert at all; perhaps you will merely see a change in his behavior. Therefore, it is important to train with large quantities when possible so you can observe how your dog behaves when confronted with this experience. You may also only encounter this change in behavior for a short period of time due to the “popcorn” effect I describe on page 40.

Proofing Your Dog Off the Training Aid Container

Not long ago I was conducting training for the Orange County Police Canine Association in the warehouse of a local business that had opened their doors to us. I’d hidden about four ounces of heroin in a hand towel dispenser in the work area, and along a wall of the three thousand square foot space. A team from a local department began the search and the dog appeared to be working very well. Suddenly the dog had a huge head turn and started toward a 4x4 square foot cardboard box in the middle of the room. The dog worked the entire box for a brief moment and began to scratch. I told the handler “no” and he attempted to move the dog away. Immediately the dog returned to the box that was about twenty-five feet from the actual find. Both dog and handler were convinced something was in the box. Eventually, the dog found the hidden substance in the proper location.

Before the handler left the area, I asked, “What do you store your substances in?” He replied, “Sandwich bags in a jar and I keep the jars in a ‘Pelican’ box.” I then asked, “When you hide your aids, do you just take out the baggies of substance and hide both the substance and the baggy?” He replied, “Yes.” I had the handler look in the box and

inside the box were the discarded plastic baggies. So what this handler had trained was essentially a narcotics and plastic baggy detection dog!

Two lessons can be learned from this story: first, you should vary the type of container you use whenever possible. For instance, marijuana can be kept in a paper envelope, a glass jar or a plastic container. This way, when you make your hides, the only consistent odor is that of marijuana.

The second lesson is that you need to proof your dog off the containers. Whether you are able to vary your receptacle or not, it does not hurt to place empty and clean containers within the search area so you can correct your dog when he shows interest in one. Do not use containers that were once used to hold your imprinted odors and always use ones that are stored separately from your training aids.

When a dog does show inappropriate interest, you must be sure that the correction is appropriate to the infraction; in many cases, you can just give a verbal correction and continue with the search. If the correction is over the top, you may cause your dog to pass by a find that is hidden in a similar container because he is afraid that alerting to that container will lead to a correction.

Training Through Distractions

As a detection dog handler, you are always going to have to deal with distractions. These may come in the form of scents, visual movements or noise. Every dog has something that will take his focus off the task at hand. During the selection process, dogs that are very susceptible to distractions should be weeded out. With that said, though, it is impossible to have a dog without something in his world which may be more interesting than the imprinted odor. In most cases a male dog will be highly distracted by a female in heat. There are also breed-specific distractions. For example, and a Labrador retriever will often be drawn to food and/or tennis balls.

The best way to handle things which are distracting to your dog is to face them immediately (with the exception of seeking out a female in heat). A good place to start is to put a kibble or two in the search area or scatter pieces of tennis ball here and there. Make sure the dog cannot easily get to the distraction so you can correct his misdirected attention in a timely manner. As I stated above, you do not want to go over the top with the correction or you may turn the dog off of searching altogether (or any other action the dog associates with the correction).

As your dog begins to ignore the small distractions, increase the distracter to a handful of food or a whole tennis ball lying within the search area. It is important that the dog cannot get to the distracter and actually eat the food or pick up the tennis ball. If he

succeeds in doing this it will set back your training significantly as he will just learn to become quicker at getting to the distraction.

Eventually add other challenges, such as random people or noises like a radio or (for Police K9s) ratcheting handcuffs. We currently have a dog in our training group that is highly distracted by clapping so during building searches and obedience we have the other handlers clap from time to time (the dog's reaction is to become aggressive, so we make sure his handler has control at these times).

What is Your Dog's Alert?

Just as imprinting the proper odors on your dog is key to your team's effectiveness, so is your dog's alert. The alert has to be clearly tied to the odor and his movement must be absolutely solid. If your dog's alert is passive, it may appear as a half sit, a stand and stare, some jumping up and down or a quick look before moving on with the rest of the search. The dog must believe that his solid alert and only this alert will result in reward.

If you begin to reach for the toy or the food before your dog has sat properly, you are going to train a dog that simply smells the find and looks in your direction to see if he has to sit or not. If you make the mistake of giving the reward before the alert, you're rewarding and encouraging whatever the dog is doing at that very moment. Because we can be slow one day and fast another, this reward will cause the dog to link several other behaviors to his alert and it will rarely be the sit or the scratch. It is imperative that you only reward the dog after the odors have been imprinted when he has given you the desired alert.

The only exception to this is when you need to take a step back in your training and reintroduce an odor due to a setback of some sort. In this case, you are going to reward the dog when you are sure he has sniffed the odor. For the alert, however, the reward comes either when his butt has touched the ground or his scratch is at a sufficient intensity.

Reward for the Find

This controversial subject should not be so controversial. Much of the debate is on whether the reward should be a toy or food, but there can be another argument as to what type of toy you should use. The easiest answer is use whatever motivates the dog to do the job. However, you have to make sure your reward does not cause you problems during a real search.

A problem that can be caused by your reward is when you decide to use a tennis ball as a reward. If you are working a narcotics dog, there is going to be a time when you are searching a home and your dog comes across a tube of tennis balls and he will alert on it. Hopefully this does not happen and you get a search warrant based on his alert to the illegal substance.

A handler from the LA Sheriff's office shared a story with me. She was searching an apartment with her dog when the dog went crazy around bed. He eventually went under the bed and literally lifted it up and tipped it over its side (with help from the handler, I am sure). She thought the dog had found the mother lode. To the dismay of the handler and the investigators on scene, it was a box of tennis balls. The handler could not get the dog to continue the search due to the distraction of his reward which was now everywhere!

For many years Falco K9 Academy has primarily used a toy as a reward and selected dogs that have a strong desire to play and hunt for a toy. Recently we have partnered with David Latimer and opened Falco K9 Academy, Alabama, where the primary reward is food. In either case (food or toy), use a reward that is as unique to you and your dog as possible.

For the toy reward dog, I prefer to use a burlap tug. Burlap is not a common household item and rarely found in industrial areas. It is a toy that most working dogs love and can easily be put in a pocket or under your arm. Also, when you throw this toy, it just falls to the ground. This is unlike a "Kong" or a tennis ball, which will continue to go and go and sometimes bounce into the street.

For food, I like beef lung or liver treats. They dissolve quickly and are easily chewed and swallowed. They are not commonly found in a home or commercial building for the most part. However, no matter what you use, you are going to have to follow the steps involved in proofing your dog off of distractions and in this case, food. The dog should only get his reward from you and never be able to "self-reward" from the ground or a feeding bowl in someone's house.

Checking Your Dog's Odor Recognition

From time to time you may notice your K9 is missing an odor or having difficulty recognizing one. This is the perfect time to go back to a Skill Development Scenario like cinder blocks or a similar tool where all the items to be searched are exactly alike. Other tools you can use are clay pots, paint cans or PVC pipes.

Why the similar look is important is because you do not want the dog guessing that you hid a substance where you usually put it, like a drawer, cabinet, hubcap, etc. Dogs can

become very good at this game and if they guess often enough, they eventually will be correct and of course you will reward this behavior. Then what happens is the dog begins to alert all over the place because you have trained him to do so.

Additionally, when you use this training aid, you will know exactly where the odor is emitting. In this way you are sure the dog can get into odor and he is not just missing the odor because he cannot smell it. This can happen when you put your hide in a wall socket, for instance, and the air in the wall is being sucked into the wall space into another room or up into the ceiling or attic. In this case the dog can come within inches of the socket and never be in odor, giving you the impression it does not recognize an odor or it is missing the odor. In the case of being in a cinder block, the odor must come out somewhere, usually the top, but if not, out the bottom near the floor.

When conducting this exercise with blocks you can set them up in any configuration, in a straight line, circle or random pattern throughout your room. I suggest using five to ten blocks. You will place the odor in one block and keep the others empty (or place distractions inside when appropriate). Make sure and keep track of which block has your odor so that you can correct appropriately when the dog alerts on the wrong one and properly reward when he is correct. After you run through the exercise, change the location of the find and repeat. Make sure and move the block with the find together. Do not just take the aid out of a block and put it in another because depending on the odor you can contaminate the block and the dog will smell the residual odor and sit.

Lastly, at first when you are training an odor or reinforcing an odor, you can leave the top of the block open for the dog to stick his nose in and potentially see the training aid. This is not bad to start because the dog, with his nose inside the block, will take a strong sniff of the odor and allow for a strong reinforcement of the odor to the reward. However, you will want to take the visual aspect out of it as soon as you are sure the dog is getting the idea. This can be accomplished in many ways. One way is to put similar containers which are clean and empty in all of the blocks so that they will look all the same. You can put paper towels in all the blocks to cover the find and give a similar appearance in all the others. At Falco K9 Academy we have designed a cover for the block made of aluminum that has holes for the dog to sniff. I like this design because it will force the dog to sniff the holes for odor (great behavior reinforcement) and he cannot pull them off like he can the towels. Visit www.falcok9academy.com to purchase these training caps.

Training the “Push”

There will inevitably be a time where you be confronted with a space where your dog will need to go between two items where he cannot turn around or under a desk that is very deep or maybe even into a deep cabinet. Because some dogs will not automatically go into an area like this, you may have to teach it as a behavior that is tied to a command.

This is where the cinder blocks come in handy. Find a training location with a number of these spaces for your dog to be challenged. In these spaces, if your dog has been trained on the blocks, place a block just inside the space a couple feet. Make sure you only go far enough so the dog only has to push part of his body in but not the whole body. This is especially important with dogs that have a problem with tight spaces. At first, only set up one or two of these situations where the dog has a find in each one.

When you approach the location with the “push,” you want to ensure the dog sees the block so he will have a purpose (or “magnet”) for going in. Just as your dog enters the space, you are going to give the command “push” so that you can tie the command to the behavior. In a passive alert dog, do not expect the dog to sit within the space at this time. The passive alert will come with time if it is in fact possible for the dog to sit. Be careful to not expect too much too soon, especially from dogs who have an issue with this exercise. In an aggressive alert dog, you may or may not get the alert from the dog but try to encourage him to do so without pushing too hard. If you need to move the find out closer to the opening, then do so until you get the alert you want. You do not want to train the dog to have an aggressive alert too far away from the source odor.

It is extremely important that you ensure the location where the dog needs to “push” into is safe. Especially with a dog who is nervous, you absolutely do not want anything falling on him when he is in the space. If this happens, you will only reinforce the thought the dog has about it being unsafe. This can happen even if it only falls near him and not on him.

As your dog becomes more reliable and comfortable with this exercise, you can begin to push the find deeper and deeper and more randomly within the search. After this you can take the block out of the equation and only hide the training aid.

Chapter Eight

Reliability of Detection Dogs

From time to time the reliability of detection dogs is called into question, especially when it is perceived that a trained detection dog has apparently missed a large quantity of the substance it is trained to alert on.

The truth of the matter is that a *properly selected and well-trained detection dog is extremely reliable*; however, success is only made possible when a dog is put in position to smell the odor. Unfortunately, many trainers and handlers forget this critical fact. Instead, they often want to blame the dog for not finding the substance (narcotics, explosives, incendiary, etc.) if it is subsequently discovered during a hand search. The problem, more often than not, is that the dog simply was never directed to the scent cone of the odor in question.

There are several variables which cause a dog to miss odor or make it impossible for him to get into it. For those of you who wonder how in the world a dog could miss a kilo of cocaine or a brick of C4, I will explain a few reasons why this happens. First, it's important to understand a little about how a canine nose works. Amazingly, a dog's nose is five hundred thousand to one million times more effective than our noses are! His olfactory system breaks odors up into separate components, enabling him to isolate one substance which may be blended with several others. Scents are processed on both his inhalation and exhalation of breath.

Given this extreme sensitivity to smell, let's examine how a dog could fail to alert to a large quantity of a particular target. When there are several pounds or kilos of a given substance, the odor that is emitted can be overwhelming for the dog, making it nearly impossible to pinpoint the source in a relatively small room or building. This is because it is pervading the space and there is no *single point* to which the dog can alert. A similar scenario for humans would be if we were to have someone cook a bag of popcorn in a two-bedroom apartment and then hide it from view. Upon entering the room what we would smell is popcorn. Closing our eyes and using only our noses, would we be able to find that bag of popcorn? Imagine how difficult that would be! That is how a narcotics detection dog feels when it enters a room with several pounds of marijuana hidden in it.

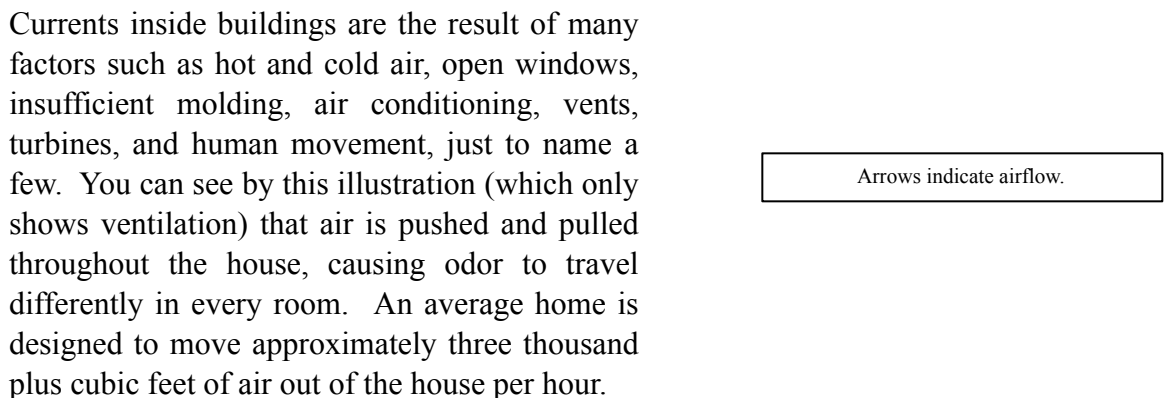
In addition, noses become desensitized to smells after a period of time. Using our previous example, after being in the room for a while with the odor of popcorn, though the smell remains strong, we would no longer be able to detect it. Only after leaving the room and purging our nasal passages would we be able to return and smell the popcorn again. This same thing happens to dogs. They can act like they are working an odor and attempting to locate the source, then suddenly lose all interest and appear indifferent; their olfactory system has become desensitized to the odor and will need to be purged with fresh air.

Unfortunately, many handlers are unaware of this phenomenon and fail to take the dog out of the room, merely assuming he is not working properly. In smaller searches, often when a patrol dog is working to find a substance or a person, he will suddenly leave the area briefly only to return to the same location and alert. This is because he momentarily became desensitized to the odor, instinctively left the area, purged his system, and returned to relocate the odor and make the find.

When talking about substances of a lesser amount, one of the most common reasons for a dog not getting into odor is that the handler does not get him there. This is one of the primary skills any handler must learn as they are the conductors of the search. It is imperative for the handler to understand where the dog needs to go to be successful and then get out of the way and let him use his nose.

The second most common reason for missing odor is the dog being on the wrong side of wind direction or air current. In a perfect world, odor is heavier than air and it will fall to the ground; however, in some cases wind or air currents in the environment will alter the odor's direction of travel. The scent will eventually get down to the dog's nose, which is about two and half feet off the ground and he will then be able to follow the odor to its source.

Currents inside buildings are the result of many factors such as hot and cold air, open windows, insufficient molding, air conditioning, vents, turbines, and human movement, just to name a few. You can see by this illustration (which only shows ventilation) that air is pushed and pulled throughout the house, causing odor to travel differently in every room. An average home is designed to move approximately three thousand plus cubic feet of air out of the house per hour.



Arrows indicate airflow.

Looking again at this illustration, you can see the rooms in which a dog would have the greatest opportunity for getting into odor are the downstairs bedroom, laundry room, and upstairs family room. The two rooms where he may have the most difficulty are the

downstairs bathroom and the kitchen because air is being pulled out through the ceiling, taking the scents with it. The likelihood of him getting into odor in these rooms decreases as the height of the hidden substance increases. The greatest difficulty arises when a substance is on the overhead shelf of a closet that has attic access (or other ceiling ventilation) because many homes and apartments have turbines that pull air out of the attic, thus causing a “chimney effect.” This extracts the odor from the closet along with the air, not allowing it to reach to the dog’s level.

What can embarrass a narcotic detection dog handler is when a six-foot tall investigator walks into this same closet, smells the slight odor of a narcotic, and proceeds to pull out a baggy of drugs from atop the shelf. The investigator may then wonder, “What’s wrong with this dog? I found it with my own nose. Who needs them?” The problem, of course, is that the dog never had a chance to get into the odor, as it never got down low enough for the dog.

I hope this information is helpful for any administrator, investigator or civilian who works with detection dog teams. In most circumstances, the dog is the most reliable tool available to locate hidden substances. They can detect cancer in urine samples, mold sealed in walls, and narcotics stashed in secret locations. Without dogs’ unique talents, human detection teams would miss many of these finds. In most cases, the primary reason a detection dog misses a substance is that he is not properly guided by his handler in order to make the find.

Chapter Nine

Links and Chains

In general, when dogs learn a behavior (good or bad), they tend to link a chain of events together which make it clear in their mind what is going to happen next or what task they are to perform. For instance, they may get a cue from you when they recognize the leash is on the collar a certain way, or your body position or language indicates an impending behavior. With these links in place, he knows “for sure” that something always follows. This could be to perform a trick, to execute a protection exercise or let him know you are leaving for work.

This tendency can be both good and bad, especially for the detection dog handler. It’s good when a dog links the odor of a trained substance to his toy or food and indicates to him the need to sit for reward; however, it can be bad if your dog senses a change in your gait or body language as you get close to the odor, and interprets *this* as a signal that he needs to sit in order to get the toy or food. In this case, you have trained a “change in gait detection dog” and not a narcotics detection dog.

It is important to know that some dogs generalize and others don’t. Dogs that generalize tend to be ones which need only one or two links in a chain in order to understand what comes next. For example, a dog may learn to search for explosives in a carpeted room using only cinder blocks as hiding locations; however, still he is able to approach *any* venue and perform exactly the same searching behavior regardless of flooring and hiding location. Dogs that don’t generalize and are trained as stated above, when taken to a new location will become easily confused and sometimes appear as if they have never been trained at all. This is because such dogs require more links and have added the cinder blocks to the chain of links necessary for them to understand the task. Unfortunately, most dogs do not generalize and need to be trained on a variety of floorings and locations until they realize, for example, that searching on slick floors is the same as searching on carpet.

One goal as an owner/handler is to work with your dog to minimize the links in his good behavior chains. In other words, train until just the command “sit” means sit and does not require command, leash, body position, and correction. For the detection dog handler, only the strongest location of the odor means sit—nothing else. For chains that lead to

bad behavior, the handler needs to alter the chain of events until it leads to a positive behavioral outcome instead (an example of this is given below).

Quite often when we change a routine or add something new to a learned behavior, a dog will become confused. Sometimes due to this confusion you will see him fail in the first few attempts because you have added or omitted a link in the familiar chain and he gets thrown off. Once he catches on, however, he will begin to perform as before. In detection dogs this confusion may be caused by going from searching items on the floor to suddenly being asked to sniff outlets or to change from sniffing things in a building to searching vehicles.

Another possibility is that the dog will shut down (stop and stare at you) or try to overcompensate (for example, a detection dog may sit at everything you present him with) because he becomes frustrated. In these instances, the worst thing a handler can do is to become frustrated, *even slightly*, which will compound the dog's confusion and give him the sense that he is in trouble.

The best thing you can do when you notice this confusion is back up, shorten the length of the exercise or decrease the difficulty of the task, and increase the reward. On rare occasions, you may need to increase the consequences. One of the best things you can do is go for the quick success and act as if it is the greatest thing that has occurred in years. As the dog comes out of his funk or confusion, you will be able to slowly increase the length of the exercise and lower your emotional feedback to a single pat on the head or a whispered "good dog." Important! Be careful *not* to increase difficulty until you and the dog have both had several successes

Remember that this pattern holds true for *every* dog, not just police and detection dogs. It also goes for pets in the home and for working dogs doing obedience. For example, many dogs in the home believe the back door opening is a link to them pushing it open with their nose, then to you chasing them around the house, and that ultimately leads to FUN. A simple fix for this behavioral chain is to break the link at the nose opening the door; as soon as their nose comes toward the door, the door closes. As soon as they back up a foot and sit, the door begins to open. If they break their sit, the door will close again. Soon they will learn that the chain of events which needs to occur in order for them to enter includes sitting patiently and waiting for the proper command.

A marathon runner doesn't become successful by running a marathon every day; he works up to it with steady and progressive training. Similarly,

hockey players become professionals by repeating short dynamic drills that work first on stick handling, then on skating, and so on. In other words, they compartmentalize their training until they are prepared for the big game. A dog is no different. You must conduct short, efficient exercises in which you strive toward specific goals and only then increase difficulty and integrate skills as you and the dog are ready.