

LOS SANTOS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

# Canine [K9] Specialty Unit

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



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**Table of Contents**

**Table of Contents**.....2

**1. Mission Statement**.....3

**2. K-9 Operations Procedures**.....4

**3. K-9 Certification Classes**.....4

**4. K-9 Trained Activities**.....4

    5. Canine Language and Commands.....4

    6. Deployments.....4

    7. Canine Tactics.....5

        7.2.1. Perimeter Control.....5

        7.2.2. Apprehension.....5

    8. K9 Usage.....6

        8.1.1. Narcotics Sniffing.....6

        8.1.2. Weapons Sniffing.....6

        8.2. Bites.....6

        8.3. Non-Bite Injuries.....7

    9. Investigations.....7

    10. Callsign.....7

**11. Policy Handbook**.....8

    12. Requirements.....8

    13. Application / Tryout Process.....8

    14. Activity Limits.....8

    15. Active Unit Limits.....8

    16. Usage Restrictions.....8

    17. Professionalism.....8

    18. Canine Location Restrictions.....8

    19. Unattended Canines.....9

    20. Injured Canines.....9

    21. Pursuits.....9

    22. Transportation of Individuals.....9

        22.2. Suspects.....9

        22.3. Public/Other Deputies.....9

    23. Authorized Vehicles.....10

[Jump to Table to Contents](#)

## 1. Mission Statement

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- The Los Santos County Sheriff's Office, Canine (K9) Unit is the premier Animal-aided emergency response organization serving the greater Los Santos Metropolitan and County areas.
  - The LCSO K9 Unit is a specialty unit tasked with handling some of the high-profile incidents that can occur in a jurisdiction outside the capabilities of normal departmental and law enforcement personnel. Not everyone can be taught to handle a K9- it takes a certain degree of capability.
  - As a matter of jurisdictional authority, LCSO K9 Unit is regularly trained for and tasked with responding to matters of the highest importance to government stakeholders and the greater public, primarily within the following scopes:
    - The purpose of the K-9 unit is to provide additional support to deputies in a variety of ways. For example, the K-9 Unit regularly performs different duties such as finding missing persons, inspecting vehicles, and collecting evidence from crime scenes.
    - Additionally, the K-9 Unit regularly performs different duties, such as using scent to search and tracking for missing and/ or wanted persons.
    - During traffic stops or investigations, they can be used to track the scent of possible illegal odors inside and around the vehicle.
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The LCSO K9 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is hereby established to outline the procedures, tasking, and direction of the LCSO K9 in a manner that ensures public transparency and accountability.

This SOP, and its contents within, applies solely but utterly to all members while active with the LCSO K9 Unit. This document will achieve this by outlining, specifically, their operations and standards.

All K9 personnel, regardless of status, are hereby expected to withhold themselves to the outlined standards and expectations while abiding by community guidelines, department SOP, and other applicable subdivision regulation as applicable.

Team Values: *Duty. Compassion. Fidelity.*

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## 2. K-9 Operations Procedures

### 3. K-9 Certification Classes

- 3.1. Each K-9 is specific to certain training and may be classified one of two ways:
- 3.2. **Single-Purpose Canines** are trained in only one specific task.
- 3.3. **Dual-Purpose Canines** are trained in two or more tasks.

### 4. K-9 Trained Activities

- 4.1. **Patrol** (i.e., chasing and securing suspects on the run and crowd safety control)
- 4.2. **Narcotics Sniffing** (i.e., searching for narcotics in a vehicle or on a person)
- 4.3. **Weapons Sniffing** (i.e., searching for weapons in a vehicle or on a person)
  - 4.3.1. Note: Although a Canine may have the option to engage in Bomb Sniffing, no LCSO Unit will be trained in this, and are to avoid using it.
- 4.4. Depending on what your Canine is classified as and trained for, you may only operate under your Canine's training. For example, if you have a single-purpose Narcotics Canine, then you will specialize in narcotics when doing searches. However, if you have a dual-purpose Patrol/Narcotics Canine, then you may respond to scenes that involve either of these two actions.

### 5. Canine Language and Commands

- 5.1. Each K-9 Handler will be given the choice of learning both German and English handling commands for the patrol. This gives each Unit the opportunity to keep you and your furry companion safe from any danger on the field by using a language most Civilians will not recognize. It is known that being able to communicate specifically with your Canine companion will heighten your safety and preciseness within the field.

### 6. Deployments

- 6.1. A **deployment** is defined as the removal of the Canine from the patrol car for any legitimate Law Enforcement use.
- 6.2. Therefore, merely taking a break, participating in training, or using the Canine in a demonstration would not be considered a deployment since those activities are not "enforcement" related.
- 6.3. A police service Canine may be deployed under any of the following circumstances, in accordance with their Canine's training:
  - 6.3.1. For the protection and safety of the Handler, the Canine, other Deputies, or Civilians
  - 6.3.2. To locate, apprehend or control suspects reasonably believed to be violent or dangerous
  - 6.3.3. To search for evidence, such as narcotics or weapons
  - 6.3.4. To apprehend a criminal suspect the Canine Handler reasonably believes that the severity of the crime warrants the application of the Canine
  - 6.3.5. To locate and apprehend hidden suspects when it would be unsafe for Deputies to proceed into the area

6.4. Prior to each Canine deployment, the Handler must objectively assess:

6.4.1. The severity of the crime at issue

6.4.2. The age of the suspect

6.4.2.1. In the case of the suspect being elderly and at higher risk of intense injury, the K-9 cannot be activated.

6.4.3. Whether, in the case of a search for a suspect, the suspect poses an immediate threat of harm to Deputies or others

6.4.4. Whether, in the case of a search for a suspect, the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight

## 7. Canine Tactics

7.1. The tactic and manner in which a Canine is to be utilized in a specific police operation shall be the decision of the Canine Handler and within the Canine's ability and the policy.

7.2. Canine usage should be utilized primarily for **perimeter control** and **suspect apprehension**.

### 7.2.1. Perimeter Control

7.2.1.1. Canines will be trained to be of service by providing a strong containment with the readiness to act swiftly if necessary. Canine can come up on different scenarios while in Perimeter Control:

7.2.1.2. In the chance that a suspect flees, Canine can activate for foot pursuit.

7.2.1.3. If a suspect is in an unsafe location for a Deputy to pursue, it may be safer for a Canine to engage

7.2.1.4. Sometimes, simply the presence of a Canine can ward off intruders or threats, so having the Canine on-scene may help ensure safety.

### 7.2.2. Apprehension

7.2.2.1. Canines in service are trained to find and manage individuals upon instructions. The Handler will comply with the subsequent instructions:

7.2.2.1.1. Before releasing the Canine, the Handler must take appropriate measures to confirm the individual's identity to be apprehended. Unless there is a perceived risk to the Handler's safety or the safety of others, the Handler shall verbally notify the suspect that the Canine will be set free. The notification should be loud and comprehensive with the following:

7.2.2.1.2. "This is the Los Santos Country Sheriff's Office! Come out, or I will send the Police Canine and you may be bitten!" (Then pause to give the suspect a chance to respond before releasing the Canine.)

7.2.2.1.3. "This is the Los Santos Country Sheriff's Office! Stop, or I will send the Police Canine and you may be bitten or hurt!"

7.2.2.2. When the Canine is released, advise the other Deputies, when practical, that the Canine is in pursuit. The Handler will follow the Canine until the suspect is apprehended.

- 7.2.2.3. The Handler will not knowingly send the Canine after a suspect being pursued by other Deputies. For example, when on a foot pursuit, do not send the Canine when other Deputies are in front of you in case the Canine latches on to a fellow Deputy. "Deputies are Friends Not Food."
- 7.2.2.4. In any case of the suspect being bitten by the Canine, the Handler will assess the suspect until another Deputy arrives to allow the Handler to take full control of the Canine again.

## 8. K9 Usage

8.1. In addition to the above uses, Canines may also be specially trained in different skills, such as:

### 8.1.1. Narcotics Sniffing

8.1.1.1. When a Canine is trained in narcotics, they are able to locate illicit substances found in vehicles. In particular, the Canine will be able to help further the investigation by finding the location of narcotics within vehicles. Handlers with Narcotics Canines will be able to respond to narcotic calls from Patrol units or Detectives in the LCSO.

### 8.1.2. Weapons Sniffing

8.1.2.1. Much like narcotics, Canines trained in weapons will be able to locate firearms and other weapons in vehicles. In particular, the Canine will be able to help further investigations and get dangerous weapons off the streets by finding the location of firearms within vehicles. Handlers with Weapons Canines will be able to respond to Patrol units who are suspicious of illegal or dangerous firearms in vehicles.

## 8.2. Bites

8.2.1. A canine bite is defined as any mouth contact with a person's body or clothing, regardless of harm or injury. The Handler is required to contact a Detective in the event of a dog bite. Additionally, any abrasions or clothes tearing brought on by a person coming into contact with a Canine's teeth will be reported, as well as any other harm or damage to the person's body or clothing. In the absence of a Detective, the Handler should request a member of Command.

8.2.2. In every situation where a person has been bitten by a Canine, the following procedure must be followed:

8.2.2.1. Immediately call for a Detective.

8.2.2.2. Ask permission to look at the affected area. Take a photo of the alleged bit area, even if there is no visible injury.

8.2.2.2.1. If there is no visible injury, ask the person if they want medical treatment. If so, call for medical aid personnel to look at the injury. If the person refuses medical treatment, make a note of that in your report.

8.2.2.2.2. If there is an obvious injury, take a photo of the area and have medical aid in route, regardless of whether the person wants treatment or not. If the opinion of the medical aid is that the person should have medical treatment, they are to be transported to the nearest hospital for more intensive care.

8.2.2.2.3. If the individual requests a doctor for any alleged bite, they are to be transferred to the nearest hospital as soon as possible.

**8.3. Non-Bite Injuries**

- 8.3.1. Any injuries caused by a police service Canine, although not associated with a bite, will be investigated by a Detective and reported on a use of force report. All non-bite injuries must be reported. This may include if the Canine attacks the suspect and knocks them over, for example.

**9. Investigations**

- 9.1. A Detective will investigate the incident and prepare a comprehensive report with the details of the circumstances surrounding the bite. The report will contain the injured person's information and specific injury surrounding the bite. Additionally, the Handler will prepare a statement containing all the facts of the bite and arrest to go in the Detective's report. Two conclusions may come from this investigation:
- 9.2. The Handler, by reasonable doubt and under the given circumstances, was **justified** in their use of force. Additionally, the circumstances that led to the use of force were clear and consistent among involved Deputies.
- 9.2.1. This conclusion does not involve any additional steps and the Handler is welcome to return to duty.
- 9.3. The Handler, by reasonable doubt and under the given circumstances, was **unjustified** in their use of force and/or the circumstances that led to the use of force were unclear and/or inconsistent among involved Deputies.
- 9.4. This conclusion requires the Handler to deactivate as K-9 pending a departmental investigation. The Handler may not activate as K-9 until approved by High Command.

**10. Callsign**

- 10.1. When activating as K-9, Handlers should add K9 to their radio callsign following their subdivision.
- 10.1.1. Example: L048 | SERT | K9 | C. Martinez
- 10.1.2. Example: L085 | Patrol | K9 | J. Dobbs
- 10.1.3. Example: L885 | CID | K9 | L. Sidney

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**11. Policy Handbook**

**12. Requirements**

- 12.1. To qualify and be offered training as a K-9 Handler, you shall:
- 12.2. Hold the rank and authority of at least Deputy I
- 12.3. Have a recommendation from a Command member

**13. Application / Tryout Process**

- 13.1. There are no applications for K-9. You may express interest in K-9 to a Command member, who may provide a recommendation for you. Recommendations should go to a K-9 Lead Trainer, who will discuss a K-9 appointment with the Deputy Chief.

**14. Activity Limits**

- 14.1. Due to the limited number of K-9 Units that are allowed to patrol the server at a time. Once positions are filled, there will be a set time limit for how long you will be allowed to run K-9. You cannot be in the server all day as K-9. This allows each Handler an equal opportunity to get good hours as K-9.

**15. Active Unit Limits**

- 15.1. No more than 2 active K-9 units per department are allowed at any given time. In tandem with the activity limits above, we ask that units routinely switch off to allow other units to activate as K-9.

**16. Usage Restrictions**

- 16.1. K-9 Units will be used only for what their Canine is specifically trained to do. If your Canine is specialized in ONLY narcotics, you may not search a vehicle for firearms or other high-end weapons. Use of K-9 will be for 10-70s/ Tracking, and vehicle searches.

**17. Professionalism**

- 17.1. The K-9 Unit must maintain a high level of professionalism on and off call. We ask that you do not use unprofessional commands like having your Canine use the bathroom in every location on the map.

**18. Canine Location Restrictions**

- 18.1. It is important that a Handler understands their responsibilities any time a Canine is deployed. For example,
- 18.2. Canines should generally not be taken into crowded public places (bars, theater, restaurants, etc.) unless they are there to control the crowded area.
- 18.3. Canines should typically not be taken inside a residence on family disturbance calls, as this can be an extra disturbance on Civilians.



**19. Unattended Canines**

- 19.1. Under reasonable circumstances, Canines should not be left alone for extended periods of time. When not with their Handler, the Canine should be secured in a department-issued kennel or inside the properly-secured K-9-marked vehicle.
- 19.2. Canines should not be left alone in a vehicle for an extended period of time. If the Canine is to stay in the vehicle, the windows should be cracked, the engine should be running, the doors should be locked, and the Handler should be within visual sight of the vehicle.
- 19.3. In all cases, ensure the following for the health and safety of your Canine:
  - 19.3.1. Ensure that the Canine has sufficient shade during warm weather.
  - 19.3.2. Ensure that the Canine has adequate supply of water.
  - 19.3.3. It's essential that the police service Canine is checked periodically to ensure that they are not in distress.

**20. Injured Canines**

- 20.1. If your Canine is injured, the Handler should immediately inform a Command member. Additionally, in the event that a Canine's injury is fatal, the Handler should transport the Canine to the nearest hospital for medical treatment. Injuries sustained by Handlers must be documented.

**21. Pursuits**

- 21.1. In the situation of a vehicle pursuit, K-9 Units are to try to stay within the area but do not attach to the pursuit to maintain the chances of any accidents. If in the case that a K-9 Unit MUST attach to a pursuit, they are to maintain safe distance to continue to keep themselves and the lives of the Canine safe meaning trying to maintain toward the rear of the pursuit.

**22. Transportation of Individuals**

- 22.1. When activated as K9, Handlers should be cautious of allowing other individuals in their vehicle, as their backseat will be taken up by their Canine companion. Below are some guidelines for different individuals.
- 22.2. **Suspects**
  - 22.2.1. Suspects may not be transported in a Canine vehicle, so Handlers will either have to call for local or county transport or request another Deputy to transport them.
- 22.3. **Public/Other Deputies**
  - 22.3.1. While transporting passengers in the Canine Unit Vehicle, they should be instructed on how to conduct themselves while in the vehicle. Only the front seat may be used - the backseat houses your Canine's crate so you do not have room.

**23. Authorized Vehicles**

- 23.1. 2021 Dodge Durango
- 23.2. 2022 Chevy Tahoe
- 23.3. 2021 Ford F250 Single (note: Mildly broken; dog must be deleted and respawned each time it is used.)
- 23.4. 2021 Ford F350 Dully

