



**Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council (PSARC)  
H.R.D. (Human Remains Detection) LAND - Canine Specialist  
Performance Evaluation Guidelines and Expectations**

## **Section I - General**

### **A. Purpose:**

The Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council Search and Rescue Canine / Handler performance expectations are developed:

1. To provide user agencies and SAR managers with recommended performance expectations for both the SAR Canines and the handler at a search scene
2. To provide an operating guideline for teams that are in line with nationally accepted guidelines for the performance of SAR Canine Teams
3. To designate minimum skill standards for Search and Rescue Canines in Pennsylvania.

## **Section II - Expectations:**

This section provides SAR Canine /Handler Teams and Units with the capabilities that are expected from the SAR Canine Team. Agencies are encouraged to identify local SAR Dog/Handler Units who have met the standards identified in this document (or their equivalent) and develop a working relationship with these Teams/Units. Individuals not affiliated with a SAR Canine Unit or Team should be scrutinized carefully.

See Section V for additional expectations

## **Section III - Definitions:**

Human Remains Detection (HRD) Search Dog – This canine is used to search for human remains. The HRD dog works off lead and searches for clues such as human remains in the area. The canine has a distinct HRD scent indication readable by the handler. When the canine finds the positive scent source he/she will perform an alert, or means of signaling the handler that the positive scent source has been located.

Bark Find – After finding the positive scent source the canine remains at the positive scent source and barks until the handler or other searchers come to that location.

Human Scent Indication/Alert – A readable action performed by the canine which indicates to the handler that the canine has located human scent.

- Passive Indication – the canine indicates to the handler the positive scent source through a passive act such as sit or down
- Active Indication – the canine indicates to the handler positive scent source through active means such as barking touching or refind

Trailing Dog – This type of canine is generally used to identify a particular subject by scent and is considered a scent specific canine. This canine, working on or off lead, requires a scent article from the lost subject to begin searching. The canine follows the scent trail providing the lost subjects direction of travel and potentially finding the lost subject.

Air Scent Team – For the purpose of this document, a team is defined as one dog and one handler who train and work together.

Trailing Team – Same as above, but may include a navigator.

Scent Source - These scent sources used may be:

- Aged human blood
- Human tissue or other suitable sources
- Skeletal remains which do not contain skin or tissue
- The source should be packaged in a container to prevent the dog from making contact with it.
- A reasonable amount of scent source material shall be used for all testing as determined by the Evaluator

***Pseudo scent sources shall not be used for testing***

Handler – The human member of the team. This person is responsible for the canine at all times.

Unit – A group of SAR handlers and their canine partners that train and work together. Support personnel may be included.

## **Section IV – Requirements:**

### **1. Handler**

A handler must be cooperative and professional. He/She has met the qualifications of their Team or Unit to be assigned search responsibilities. The handler does not participate in any search efforts independent of their search team/unit or the designated search management agency for any incident.

### **2. Canine**

The canine must be a minimum of 18 months of age. The canine is friendly with people, non-aggressive toward other animals, and capable of working off lead (unless being used as a trailing dog). The canine is expected to be under the handler's control at all times, and capable of being controlled by others, if necessary.

### **A. Adaptability:**

Responding SAR Dog Teams are expected to search under all weather conditions, and at night as well as day. The dog teams are required to work regardless of distracting conditions such as dust, noise, crowds, machinery, and the presence of other animals or humans.

### **B. Portability:**

The SAR Dog Teams must be able to travel in all vehicles likely to be used by the unit. It is suggested the team obtain special training for operations in and around Helicopters.

### **C. Equipment:**

The handler is equipped and clothed in a manner consistent with the search terrain and weather conditions. The handler must provide enough equipment/supplies for his/her canine for the duration of his/her assignment at a search to last a minimum of 72 hours. The handler will have proper field gear appropriate to weather and terrain. Handler must assure that the appropriate field pack is with the team. The handler's field pack will contain supplies for self and canine rendering the team self sufficient on a task in the field for 24 hours

## **F. Documentation:**

The handler maintains a regular training log, which includes any training attended by the handler. This log includes date, time, location and type of training. If the particular training is with the canine, the log also includes a general description of the event such as the type of terrain and ground cover, time of day, how the canine worked, successes, challenges, areas for improvement and other information deemed appropriate. This log must be maintained neatly and made available for user agencies upon request.

## **G. Communication:**

The SAR Dog Unit must be equipped to use portable communications and licensed when required by law. All personnel in the unit are proficient in the use of proper plain language communication protocol as outlined by NIMS.

## **Section V Performance Expectations:**

**A.** The handler will provide the proper documentation to show the successful completion of:

1. PA-DCNR Field Team Leader, NASAR SARTECH II or other acceptable certification as defined by PSARC. (card or certificate)
2. NIMS IS-100, IS-200 and IS-700 (certificate required)
3. American Red Cross (or equivalent) Human Standard First Aid and CPR (current card)
4. AKC-Canine Good Citizen (certificate) required for all canines who will work off-leash.
5. A current Rabies vaccine as required by law in the state of PA.
6. Crime Scene Prevention

**B.** The handler will present evidence of the completion of training by a veterinarian, or other qualified individual, in canine 1<sup>st</sup> aid and CPR demonstrating the following:

1. General health of the working dog including nutrition and physical fitness
2. How to muzzle a dog / how to create a gauze muzzle. The importance of muzzling an injured dog and proper restraint.
3. Normal ranges: heart rate, respiration, rectal temperature
4. How to check: heart rate, pulse, capillary refill
5. Life threatening Injuries: hypothermia, hyperthermia, checking ABC's (Airways, Breathing, Circulation)
6. How to perform CPR, rescue breathing, Heimlich
7. Proper carry methods for sick/injured dogs from the field
8. Wound Care (how to stop bleeding until veterinary care can be obtained): abrasions, lacerations, punctures, deep wounds,
9. Impalements
10. Eye injuries
11. Sprains, strains, fractures: how to splint
12. Wild animal encounters: bite wounds (Rabies), snakes, porcupines
13. Insects: bee stings, spider bites, ticks (Lyme disease) and mosquitoes (heartworm)
14. Vomiting / Diarrhea

**C.** The handler must be able to identify and protect the scene when a clue or the lost subject is found.

**D.** The handler will demonstrate sufficient knowledge in the following categories, by successfully completing a written exam administered by the PSARC evaluator(s) during the evaluation

process and; achieve a score of 80% or higher.

1. Canine Assessment and First Aid
2. Canine training and documentation
3. Scent Theory and Movement
4. Environmental Factors Affecting Scent
5. Search Strategy and Safety
6. Communications

- E. The Handler will present all training log documentation as outlined in section II-A to the PSARC evaluator(s) upon request.
- F. The handler and canine must be in good physical condition and able to complete an assigned task. The handler must be able to work a SAR dog in moderate terrain for a minimum of eight (8) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period.
- G. The handler must be able to recognize when the team is not working efficiently. It is the handler's responsibility to control their canine and provide for its care and safety at all times. If any behavior problems arise, it is the handler's responsibility to resolve the problem. The handler must be able to interact and work effectively with other SAR resources.
- H. The handler must be able to use a map and compass/GPS unit to navigate during the day or night, and identify and document the course taken during the search. The handler is able to read topographic maps and relate the actual terrain to the map. The handler is able to report to the command post, their location and the location of clues in terms of map coordinates. At the end of their operation period, the handler will be prepared to be debriefed by the search planning section. The handler is able to translate their search activity onto an incident operational map, including route taken, areas left uncovered, alerts, clues, wind direction and probability of detection.
- I. The handler is responsible, as task leader, for ensuring the highest level of medical care available from within their task until further assistance arrives.
- J. It is recommended, but not required that the handler successfully complete courses such as Managing the Lost Person Incident or MSO (Managing Search Operations) to fully understand the handling of the lost person incident.

## **Section VI - Search Applications – Testing**

### **A. Area Search Problems - Human Remains - Testing Environment Criterial**

The following problems represent typical searching scenarios in rural or wilderness situations. The test area will consist of open and or wooded areas with small amount of debris such as natural ground cover, branches, rocks leaves etc.

1. The search will be conducted in an approximate size area of two (2) acres
2. There shall be a minimum of one and a maximum of two Scent Sources used. If two sources are used, one shall be above surface.
3. All search areas will be contaminated with human scent to prevent the canine from trailing to the scent sources.
4. The area shall contain animal remains
5. The training aids shall be placed in the test area a minimum of one hour prior to the beginning of testing

- beginning of testing
6. The Scent Source(s) shall be either above ground no higher than six feet, on the surface, or buried no deeper than twelve (12) inches below the soil
  7. Above ground sources shall be concealed so as not to be visible to the dog or handler. The burial site shall be camouflaged so visible ground disturbance is minimal.
  8. There shall be a minimum of three soil disturbances dug to ensure the dog does not alert on earth disturbance.

## **B. Area Search – Human Remains - Testing Criteria**

In addition to the requirements identified in Sections II, the Team is able to meet the following expectations for the specific types of search applications identified:

1. The handler understands search strategy and how best to utilize the canine in searching an assigned area. The handler is physically able to work the required shift(s) as determined by the Incident Commander.
2. The handler must demonstrate the canine's agility on unusual or unsteady surfaces, such as slippery wood, loose gravel, boulders or debris; and exhibit the canine's willingness to cross streams. The canine must demonstrate a willingness to respond to handler instruction and direction.
3. The Evaluator may extend the time limit based on weather and terrain conditions.
4. The handler cannot command the canine to perform the trained indication. The canine must do the indication independently.
5. The handler must develop a search plan for each area and advise the evaluator how they intend to search each area. The handler may deviate from their original plan, but should explain to the evaluator what they are doing.
6. This shall be a one (1) hour search test. The Evaluator may extend the time limit based on weather and terrain conditions.
7. The handler will advise the evaluator what their canine's trained indication behavior is.
8. The dog must offer the trained indication behavior as close as possible to the scent source.
9. The handler cannot command the dog to perform the trained indication. The dog must do the indication independently.
10. After the canine performs the trained indication, the handler must advise the evaluator of the indication and identify the source location.
11. Once the canine locates the material(s) and offers the trained indication the canine may be rewarded at the evaluator's discretion.
12. The team automatically fails the test if the handler calls an indication on anything other than human remains.
13. The dog may not compromise the Scent Source. Compromise is defined as eating, rolling in, or urinating/defecating on the scent source or digging up the source in a manner which exposes the source to plain sight.
14. To successfully complete the test, the canine team must locate all Scent Source(s) in the search area that contain human remains material.

## **Section VII Evaluation Procedure:**

### **A. Briefing:**

The evaluator will brief the handler on any known hazards and any other important data. Handler will be provided with the defined area to be searched. The handler will provide a briefing as a task leader and describe his or her search strategy.

### **B. The evaluation will be terminated under the following conditions:**

1. Failure by handler to present for evaluation with appropriate attire and supplies for self and canine partner.

2. Rough or inappropriate treatment of the dog by the handler
3. Unsafe changes in terrain or weather
4. Failure to complete the task in the designated time.
5. The handler declares a find on anything except the positive scent source.
6. The canine attempts to eat the positive scent source.
7. If at any time during the evaluation the canine compromises the scent source, the evaluator may terminate the evaluation.

**C. The SAR Canine Team must pass field evaluations, which replicate situations they are likely to encounter**

**D. The SAR Canine Team should be re-evaluated every three (3) years**