



National Police Canine Association

P.O. Box 538 Waddell, Arizona 85355

Terry Anderson, President



NPCA Members,

I want to bring to your attention a study conducted by the University of Davis California, Department of Neurology, which is an attack on the canine unit industry and could have a negative impact on what we do everyday with our partners. The study, "Handlers Beliefs Affect Scent Detection Dog Outcomes," written by Lisa Lit, states that handlers "cue" their dogs into alerting even when the dog does not give any odor response.

All of us in the industry are aware that dogs are master communicators and that we as handlers can consciously and subconsciously "cue" our dogs into an alert. When training a new dog, we don't allow the dog to pass a trained odor; therefore, at times we present and maybe even bring the dog back to a target to reinforce his recognition of the odor. However, the study states by saying that handlers on the street will "cue" dogs into an alert thereby allowing officers to search deeper into a targeted location. This is a direct attack on canine teams credibility and reliability.

This study is posted on our website for you to read and be aware of so that you can ensure that you are training and documenting against "cueing" your dog. Additionally, the information is being provided so that you can be prepared to defend your searches in court. I know of one court case in California where Steve Nicely, Nicely Trained Dogs, is testifying for the defense and is utilizing this study to attack the canine search.

In addition to making you aware of the Davis study, I am also providing information regarding the work that SWGDOG (Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal detector Guidelines) is doing to combat this study and any other similar studies that may be conduct in the future. Upon extensive review of the Davis study, SWGDOG has taken the position that it is a flawed, invalid study. At our recent SWGDOG meeting, the Executive Board and all members present unanimously agreed that the Davis study must be scientifically challenged to reduce the possibility of it being utilized to discredit a canine teams' testimony. The Research and Development Subcommittee of SWGDOG will begin work regarding the Davis study and has already produced a document for other scientists to follow as a guideline when utilizing working detection teams in future studies. This document was created to ensure that scientists are evaluating both the handler and canine as a team to produce an accurate outcome.

SWGDOG's Legal Committee is also prepared to assist prosecution with information regarding the Davis study or SWGDOG's Best Practice guidelines. Refer to the SWGDOG's website, www.SWGDOG.org, for the written document refuting the validity of the Davis study and other valuable resources regarding the canine unit industry. It is important to keep in mind that SWGDOG is working on behalf of the canine industry and our actions in order to provide an added defense for canine teams in court. You can also go to Terry Fleck's website, www.K9fleck.org for a document that he wrote pointing out the flaws in the Davis study. Terry Fleck is an expert in the field of canine legalities. Please be aware that the document Mr. Fleck prepared is for law enforcement officers only.

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"Leading the way for canine professionals"
www.npca.net



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Although some of you may not be familiar with SWGDOG, upon review of their website and the resources that they provide, you will see that SWGDOG is not “big brother” looking over our shoulder waiting to tell us what to do with our dogs rather it is focused on making our industry more credible, reliable and defensible. If you choose to get involved with SWGDOG, you will find that what you are doing in your canine units today can be augmented by SWGDOG’s best practices and provides you with more overall credibility. It is similar to having multiple certifications. Some agencies certify with more than one organization to show that their teams are doing more than is required. I am not recommending multiple certifications, but what I am saying is that in my program, Pasadena Police Department Canine Unit, I have utilized SWGDOG’s Best Practices to make my program stronger. Utilizing SWGDOG’s best practices required minimal changes to my program and mostly involved terminology. SWGDOG’s terminology put a name to the things we have been doing and documenting for years. But now when we go to court, we have an added source of credibility when we state that the Pasadena Police Department is SWGDOG compliant.

All of this information is being provided to you to consider so that you can be aware of some new trends in our industry and help to properly prepare you to defend your actions should they be called into question in court. If you want or need more information about the Davis study or about SWGDOG, please feel free to email or call me.

Terry Anderson
President NPCA