



# Police Service Dog Certification

To be eligible to certify a k-9, one must be a full time paid law enforcement officer, or corrections officer either local, state, federal.

You may certify a utility canine in tracking, area search, building search, or evidence recovery.

To certify a police service dog you must pass all control phases: temperament test, obedience, and criminal apprehension.

## TEMPERAMENT TEST

The canine must demonstrate to the certifying official that it is approachable by the certifying official. This will determine if the canine has a proper level of social skills required by a police service canine.

The certifying official will approach the canine team at a normal pace from the front, stopping at a distance of 8-10 feet from the canine team, then walking at an angle away from the canine team. At no time will the certifying official attempt to touch the handler or the canine.

Unacceptable behavior would be, but not limited to, one of the following:

Lunging

Uncontrollable barking

Over-aggressiveness

This phase must be completed successfully before moving on to the next phase.

## OBEDIENCE

The obedience testing will be conducted outdoors in an area acceptable to the certifying official. The area must be free of any obstacles and must provide a safe environment to both the canine team and any person(s) in the immediate area.

The obedience test shall be conducted off leash.

The canine team will demonstrate the ability to complete the following exercises:

- a) The heeling phase will consist of a normal pace, a fast pace, and a slow pace.
- b) A minimum of two (2) right turns, two (2) left turns and two (2) about turns.

The distance of each leg will be determined by the certifying official.

- c) This exercise requires the handler to place his/her dog in a sit position.

Upon instruction from the certifying official, the handler will leave his/her dog and move to a predetermined location and then turn and face his/her canine.

At that point, the time will begin for a one-minute sit-stay exercise. At the completion of one-minute, the certifying official will instruct the handler to return to his/her canine and the exercise is complete.

d) In this exercise, the certifying official will tell the handler to place his/her dog in a down position, leave the dog and move to a predetermined position.

The handler will turn and face his/her canine.

At that point, the time will begin for a two-minute down-stay exercise.

The certifying official will notify the handler who will recall canine to a heel position ending exercise.

### **CRIMINAL APPREHENSION/AGGRESSION CONTROL**

In each of the categories in this section the tests will determine if the canine is capable of performing in situations likely to be encountered in a working dog environment. This test will demonstrate the handler's control over his/her canine and the dog's courage ability.

**In all apprehensions the canine must demonstrate the ability to release on a verbal command. No contact between the handler and canine will be allowed**

### **RECALL/MINIMUM FORCE TEST**

The canine will start in a heel position. The suspect will be at a distance determined by the certifying official.

Upon command from the official, the suspect will break and run in a direction away from the canine.

The certifying official will then instruct the handler to deploy his/her canine.

At a predetermined location or on the command of the certifying official, the suspect will stop and surrender terminating the pursuit.

The call off used is at the discretion of the handler; however, the certifying official must be informed prior to the test which call off will be utilized.

The call off used may be, but is not limited to, one of the following:

Dog is recalled to a heel position

The dog sits, downs, or stands and is recalled to a heel position

The dog sits, downs, or stands and the handler joins the canine.

The dog goes into a revere or a hold at bay, bark and hold.

The importance of this test is that the canine will not have contact with the suspect.

Incidental or non-aggressive contact made by the canine is not a reason for failure. The suspect being bitten, mouthed, or an over aggressive contact is not acceptable.

This phase of testing is complete when the handler, upon command of the certifying official, takes control of his/her canine.

### **APPREHENSION FROM VEHICLE**

The handler, with the canine secure in a stationary vehicle, will encounter a suspect at a distance determined by the certifying official.

Upon command of the certifying official, the handler will order the suspect to approach his location.

The suspect will then refuse and break and run in a direction away from the canine team.

After the appropriate warnings are given, the handler will then release his/her canine to pursue and apprehend the suspect.

Once the suspect has been apprehended, the handler will then approach the suspect and the canine's location.

Upon command of the certifying official, the handler will command the canine to release the suspect.

The handler will then order the suspect into an arrest position and will approach the suspect.

Upon physical contact between the suspect and the handler, the suspect will simulate an attack on the handler.

At that time, the canine, without command will engage the suspect.

Upon command from the certifying official, the handler will command his/her canine to release and take control of the canine.

This phase of testing is complete when the canine has been placed on leash.

### **APPREHENSION UNDER GUN FIRE**

At a distance determined by the certifying official, the canine team will encounter a suspect.

Upon command of the certifying official, the suspect will fire one shot at the team.

The handler will immediately release his/her canine. The suspect will then fire 2 or 3 shots as the canine approaches with the last shot being fired when the canine is within 10 (ten) yards of his location.

The canine must apprehend the suspect and hold until the approach of the handler.

Once at the suspect's location, the handler will order the suspect to drop his weapon.

The certifying official will then instruct the handler to command his/her canine to release the suspect.

This phase of testing is complete when the canine has been placed on leash.

### **EQUIPMENT TO BE UTILIZED IN THE CRIMINAL APPREHENSION PHASE**

1. All equipment to be utilized in the criminal apprehension phase must be approved by the certifying official.
2. The certifying official must inspect all guns and blanks before they are used. The blanks used must be of 38 caliber in all gun fire tests.
3. Hidden or concealed equipment may be used. If the handler or certifying official raises a safety issue, full bite suits or full sleeves with scratch pants may be used.
4. As with all of the certification phases, safety of the canine and all person(s) involved will be of the utmost importance.

### **HELPERS**

1. It is very important that experienced helpers are used in the apprehension phases. When possible, the helper will be unknown to the canine.
2. No canine team will be penalized for a mistake made by an inexperienced helper.

The certifying official will have the final word on all re-tests due from any such error.

### **STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS**

## **ENGAGE/APPREHEND**

The canine must physically engage the suspect. The canine will be required to hold and fight the suspect. Failure to engage the suspect will be a cause for failure.

The handler should demonstrate good sound tactics at all times. Not using sound tactics will not be a cause for failure but should be addressed by the certifying official.

All three phases must be completed successfully for certification of the canine team.

The three phases must be completed in the order they have been presented above.

## **OPTIONAL AREA SEARCH**

The area search test is designed to test the canine team's ability to detect the location of a subject hidden from sight in a large area with no known track available to the canine. The test will also determine if the team is using wind currents to their advantage.

The suspect will hide in an area at the direction of the certifying official. As a rule, the suspect should hide fifteen to twenty minutes prior to the start of the testing. The area and the amount of time that will be allotted for the test will be at the discretion of the certifying official.

For the canine to successfully pass the area search test, the dog must find and give an indication as to the location of the suspect.

Alerts can be, but are not limited to, one of the following:

Bark and hold ( the canine should stay within a reasonably close proximity to the suspect.)

Engage the suspect ( proper safety equipment must be in place).

Other alerts may be used but the certifying officials must be informed of the canine's response.

The certifying official will have the final say as to when the test is terminated. Failure of the test may be for, but not limited to, the following:

The canine refuses to search

The canine stops searching

The canine fails to give an alert at the suspect's location

If the certifying official feels too much time has elapsed.

## **OPTIONAL BUILDING SEARCH**

This phase is designed to test the canine's ability to locate a suspect hidden from sight in a building.

The suspect will be hidden from sight and in an area that the canine will have access to. The suspect may be hidden at any height and will have protective equipment if necessary.

The building utilized for the test will be inspected and suitable to the certifying official. Sites chosen should be, but not limited to, the following:

Residential buildings

Schools

Warehouses

Office buildings

The certifying official will choose the hide location of the suspect and will also pick the starting point for the canine team. The handler may follow the canine into the building at the direction of the certifying official. The search must be done off lead.

The canine must alert the handler to the location of the suspect with acceptable alerts being, but not limited to, the same as those used in the area search test.

The certifying official will have the final say as to when the test is terminated. Failure of the test may be for, but not limited to, the following:

The canine refuses to search  
The canine stops searching  
The canine fails to give an alert at the suspect's location.  
If the certifying official feels too much time has elapsed.

### **OPTIONAL EVIDENCE RECOVERY/ARTICLE SEARCH**

This test is designed to determine the ability of the canine in searching an area for items that may be contaminated with human scent.

The area for the test will be acceptable to the certifying official and will be chosen based on the factors listed below:

Safety of the canine and person(s) in the area  
Vegetation cover to conceal the articles.  
The articles or evidence to be utilized in the search should be, but not limited to, the following:

Handgun  
Shotgun shell  
Car keys  
Screwdriver  
Wallet  
Credit card

The certifying official, for safety reasons, will examine all items used. The certifying official will also place the items in the search area.

Five (5) items will be placed in the search area with the canine team out of sight.

The canine must alert the handler to the items with an acceptable alert such as, but not limited to downing, sitting, or standing next to the items to be retrieved. The canine must alert the handler to three (3) of the five (5) items.

The certifying official may terminate this test for the reasons listed below:

Canine refuses to search  
Canine stops searching  
Canine gives two or more false alerts  
Too much time has elapsed

### **OPTIONAL TRACKING**

This test is designed to test the proficiency of the canine to follow a track and locate a suspect.

If possible, the test should be set up in the area or location similar to a working environment.

The track will be in an area out of view of the handler. The track should be laid in a fashion consistent with the path a fleeing suspect would choose to avoid being followed.

These routes would most likely be meandering and typically would not follow obvious routes of travel such as streets, paths or farm lanes for example.

The suspect will be a person unknown to the dog if possible.

The track will be at least thirty minutes old and will have one cross track.

The track should have at least three surface changes and a minimum of two turns.

The track will be at least 800 yards but not more than 1,000 yards.

The person laying the track will follow the instructions of the certifying official.

The final stopping point of the track will allow the person who has laid the track to be out of sight of the canine team.

Surfaces may be but are not limited to, the following:

1. Dirt
2. Gravel
3. Grass
4. Pavement
5. Woods or forest
6. Swamp

As with any of the phases, the certifying official may have to make changes due to circumstances beyond his/her control.

To successfully complete the tracking phase, the canine must locate the suspect to the satisfaction of the certifying official.

#### **CANINE PROGRAM VALIDATION/CERTIFICATION**

NNDDA will certify police service dog teams to their department standards. The certifying official must review a copy of the department standards. The certification will assist in validating their individual department standards.

Anyone interested in certifying their dogs to their department's standards must contact the Secretary of NNDDA to make the necessary arrangements in advance.

**There will be a thirty days waiting period to attempt to certify again unless circumstances at the time of the certification has been determined by the certifying official to warrant another attempt. All rulings by the certifying official are final.**

## **TO BECOME A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL IN POLICE SERVICE DOG**

To be eligible to be a certifying official, one must be a full time paid law enforcement officer, or corrections officer either local, state, federal. A certifying official retains their certifying official status when they retire from law enforcement.

Applicant must be a current member in good standing with NNDDA for the last three (3) years.

Proof of certifications and/or expertise must add up to four years of experience in the selected field.

Applicant may have certified with NNDDA a police service dog for four years, show a need for a certifying official in this area, have written endorsement from a senior (4 year) police service dog certification official with the NNDDA.

OR

Applicant may produce written proof of four years of expertise with written endorsement from senior (4 year) police service dog certification officials of the NNDDA, or NNDDA Board Member.

OR

A combination of both.

Applicant must produce written support from his or her agency.

Applicant will request a certifying official packet from the Secretary of the NNDDA.

Applicant will complete the packet and return it to the Secretary of the NNDDA.

All information submitted will be validated by the NNDDA Board of Directors.

The Board will notify the applicant of the results.

The Board will determine which seminar the applicant must attend to work with a senior (4 year) certifying official(s).

Applicant must pass an interview with the Board Members during the seminar.

Certifying Officials must attend a **Board Approved Seminar** at least every other year in certification field.

Certifying Officials must have access to equipment and training aids to conduct this certification.

Each certifying official must ensure that they possess a current copy of NNDDA Certification Standards and certify to that standard.

**A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL MAY NOT CERTIFY A DOG HE/SHE HAS TRAINED THE  
FIRST TIME THE DOG TEAMS CERTIFY**

**A Certifying Official may be removed from certifying official status by a majority vote by the Board of Directors.**