



Police Utility 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 also qualify if you are a commissioned part time or reserve officers. Reserve or part time law enforcement officers shall upon request for membership provide a written letter of endorsement, on department letterhead, signed by the department head. This letter will outline the canine duties and responsibilities of the officer. Letter must be submitted each year. The membership is not valid unless a current letter is on file with the NNDDA. [No certifications will be conducted at the vendor's facilities.](#)

A utility dog may certify in area search, building search, tracking or evidence recovery. Utility certification may be done by a police service dog certifying official or police utility dog certifying official.

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 to 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

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.

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.

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 OR ADVANCED TRAILING/SCENT DISCRIMINATION (IF AVAILABLE)

If both options are available, the team can select which option they would like to certify in. The Trailing/Scent Discrimination is for experienced team.

The certifying official should indicate which option the team certified in when filling out the paperwork.

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.

ADVANCED TRAILING/SCENT DISCRIMINATION

This test is designed to test the proficiency of the canine to follow a trail and locate a specific suspect. This is known as "scent discrimination."

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

The split trail will be in an area out of view of the handler. The trail 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 handler will gather scent material from the suspect prior to suspect starting trail.

Both the suspect and decoy will be a person unknown to the dog if possible.

The suspect and decoy will start and walk parallel to one another, keeping at a minimum of 6ft but no more than 12ft apart.

The suspect and decoy will walk in the same direction, making the same turns, but maintaining the required distance apart.

The suspect and decoy will not cross one another's trails.

The split trail will be at least 45 minutes old and will have one cross track. Cross track will be done by someone other than the suspect or decoy.

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

At the last turn, the suspect and decoy will turn in opposite directions.

The split trail will be at least 1000 yards but not more than 2,000 yards.

Both persons laying the trail will follow the instructions of the certifying official.

The final stopping point of the split trail will allow the person who has laid the assigned trail to be out of sight of the canine team. The decoy will also have a final stopping point out of the sight of the canine team.

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

Dirt

Gravel

Grass

Pavement

Woods or forest

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 scent discrimination trailing certification, the canine must locate the suspect to the satisfaction of the certifying official. An end article may NOT be substituted for either the suspect and/or decoy.

CANINE PROGRAM VALIDATION/CERTIFICATION

NNDDA will certify canine teams to a federal, state, or department standard. The team must submit a copy of the standard to the certifying official who must approve the standard prior to certifying the team. The standard must meet or exceed NNDDA Standards. The certifying official will attach a copy of the standard to the yellow certification sheet and retain it for future courtroom testimony. The certification will assist in validating other agencies' standards.

Certification is valid for one calendar year. There will be thirty day waiting period to attempt to certify again. All rulings by the certifying official are final. [The certifying official must be at the certification location and personally view the certification.](#)

TO BECOME A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL IN UTILITY DOG

A Utility Dog Certifying Official may certify canine teams in tracking, area, building, and article search as described in the above standard.

Utility certifying official may not certify 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. An applicant cannot be in the business of selling police dogs. These two requirements will not be waived. A certifying official retains their certifying official status when they retire from law enforcement.

If you meet the above requirements there are several ways to be considered for an interview. An 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 three years of experience in the selected field.

An applicant should show a need for a certifying official in this area, have written endorsement from a senior (4 year) certification official with the NNDDA. An Applicant may produce written proof of three years of expertise with written endorsement from senior (4 year) certification officials of the NNDDA, or NNDDA Board Member.

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.

Applicant must pass a formal interview with the NNDDA Board [or Board approved Regional Director](#).

The Board will determine which seminar/certification the applicant must attend to work with a senior certifying official(s). That certifying official(s) will make a written recommendation to complete the process.

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

NO CERTIFYING OFFICIAL WHO BECOMES A VENDOR OR AN EMPLOYEE OF A VENDOR CAN CERTIFY ANY CANINE TEAM THAT HAS BEEN SOLD, EMPLOYED OR MAINTAINED (MAINTENANCE CONTRACT) BY YOU OR YOUR VENDOR.

YOUR POSITION IN THE NNDDA CAN NOT BE USED IN ANY ANVERTISEMENT.

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