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BELGIUM

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

HANDLE IT... K-9 AGGRESSION
TOWARDS GUNFIRE

E-COLLAR TRAINING:
DETAILS MATTER



“The dog must learn how to properly target an attacker with courage, intensity, and decisiveness.”



Decoy & Patrol Training

by Jerry Bradshaw



Developing a protection dog, regardless of the discipline, comes in two stages. First, the *foundation* must be laid in which we develop the basic drives that impel the dog to bite, and the interaction among these drives. Further, in the foundation work, we must introduce the dog to the various kinds of equipment we will use to maintain his training including sleeves, bite suits, and muzzles. The dog must learn how to properly target an attacker with courage, intensity, and decisiveness. Thus, foundation training includes teaching the targeting of the vital grip areas. How we use both civil agitation, as well as equipment, to teach the dog to be man-oriented is also a significant issue that must be explained. This is critical for police dogs and personal protection dogs. Further, we need to develop the dog's reactions to all manner of distractions during bitework that may frighten him off the grip and render him, at best, ineffective in a street situation, or, at worst, a liability to the handler deploying his dog.

Second, the dog's *skills* must be developed. These skills begin with the out on command, guarding, hold and bark (if desired), redirects and out and returns, and the call off. Further skills, such as area searching, tactical building searches, felony vehicle stops, and passive bites, should also be discussed and demonstrated. In my experience, many handlers and some trainers have a good grasp of deployment, but struggle with understanding the process of training a dog from start to finish because they don't have a theoretical construct to follow. In my seminars, I provide that theoretical construct, which gives the han-

dlers and trainers a road map to follow. Mind you, there are many routes one could follow and this is but one. But it works, makes sense, and has been followed many times to develop and create strong, controllable, patrol K-9s.

In a 3 day seminar it is hard to treat all these areas, so in these seminars we look at all the dogs in the class initially to determine strengths and weaknesses, look at the decoy work to evaluate the knowledge base, and then address the seminar topics to the dogs we will work during the practical work. The lecture covers all these key areas. These seminars are both decoy technique related (for the handlers), as well as problem solving related (for the dogs). Decoys must understand how to solve these problems. Being a good decoy is not just about "catching" dogs safely. It is more about understanding the training progression from foundation development to training skills. A decoy must know how to bring out the behaviors in the dog, because in patrol training, for the most part, and especially in the foundation work, it is the decoy and not the handler who is the mechanism for conditioning the behaviors. The decoy is the reward system, determining the timing of the bite rewards, or if the rewards should be withheld from the dog. The grip itself is the positive reinforcement. Many places I go, the decoys are not sufficiently educated in training theory from the decoy perspective, and how every movement the decoy makes, how every training drill is set up, teaches the dog either something we want the dog to learn or teaches a habit that may be counterproductive to effective street deployment.

The Alert

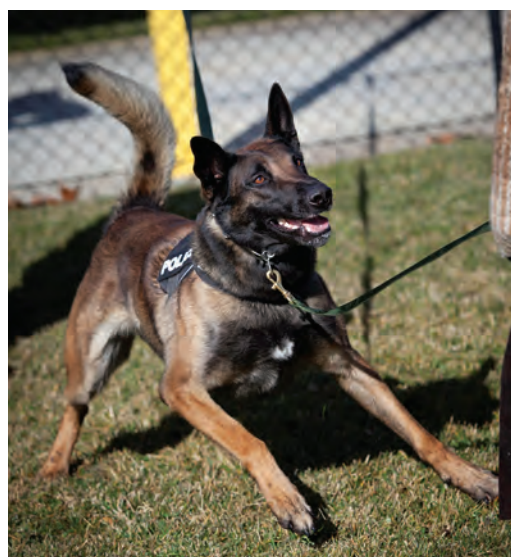
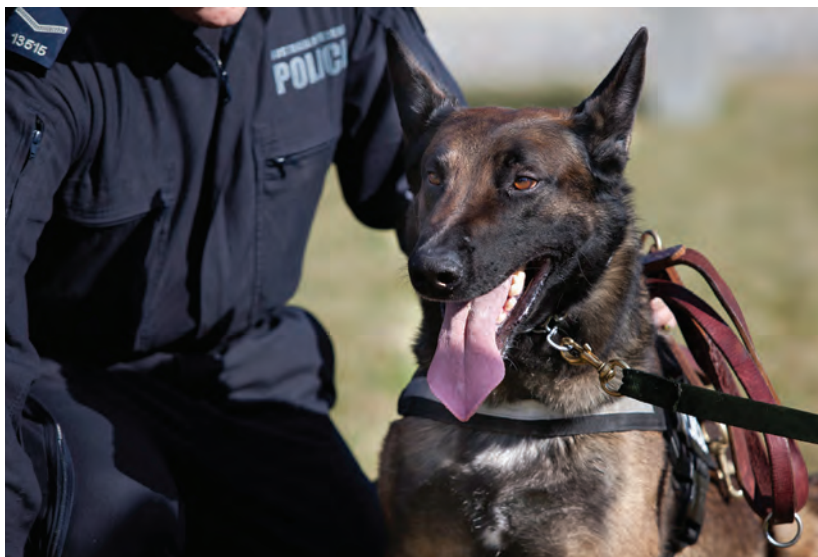
The alert for a police service dog is one of the most important foundation exercises and often is one of the most neglected exercises. Typically in training sessions, the dog is brought out to the training area with the decoy in full view and the decoy initiates action to which the dog responds with aggression. This process, however, is the exact opposite of what we actually want to do. Many K-9s have trouble with threat identification, especially on passive decoys, in deployments, rather paying attention to the K-9 officer's back-up because they are moving in the dog's field of view. This is because in the alert phase and beyond, what gets the reward in training is looking for the moving bad guy. Agitation creates a response from the dog of aggression and an expectation of a grip. Some dogs have excellent alerts on passive decoys. Some need to re-orient to passive decoys and learn that they create the grip opportunity by being aggressive on command on the passive decoy (who can be standing, sitting, prone, with or without equipment).

When the dog initiates the aggression on the passive decoy, the decoy reacts to reward this aggression. This reaction can be subtle or pronounced depending on the stage of training. As long as the dog learns to initiate the aggression on the target subject and back-up officers at some point are included in the training scenarios, the dog will learn to ignore the most obvious (moving back-up) in favor of the passive potential threat or even easier the active potential threat. Just like in detection training, the dog must learn to ignore obvious distractions to which he would normally be attracted to like KONGs or balls or food in the search area. We must teach the dog to ignore back-up moving with the K-9 in favor of the target we want him to seek. Aggression initiated by the dog is what brings the bite reward. This can be taught with young green dogs in the first stages of training.





**“Stress rises
in defense and
stress clears out
when the dog is
in prey.”**



"The dog that pushes to win the grip, will push through these difficulties to win. You can see a great change in confidence when a dog is taught to push into the decoy to fight."



Drive Channeling: Avoiding Drive Conflict

Many police dogs have not been sufficiently introduced to drive channeling. This is a big topic in my decoy seminars because it is critical for successful foundation training as well as important for the skills that follow. The ability to avoid drive conflict is based on teaching the dog to switch drives (prey to defense or defense to prey) clearly and comfortably as dictated by the changing dynamics of the fight with the helper. This process of changing drives is called channeling. The drives of defense and prey are the building block drives of protection. Defense drive here is used in a broad context to include: defense of social position (dominance aggression), self-defense, defense of prey (object or resource guarding),

tions. We also use prey drive to set the dog in a confident mood before challenging the dog with threat. The decoy is in control of initiating either threat to trigger defense or movement in prey to bring the dog back from the stress of a defensive confrontation. In humans, this is referred to as stress inoculation, allowing a human to process the stress of combat so as to operate under large amounts of stress. Dogs must learn to operate in situational disadvantage as well. Training drive channeling is the way to accomplish this. In my book, *Controlled Aggression*, I take about 4 chapters of the foundation section of the book to clearly articulate prey work, defense work, and drive channeling. In a recent seminar, I showed the de-

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pack related defense, and other classical defensive behaviors. Channeling between defense and prey, multiple times, is what we require for a stable and confident dog that can be taught the proper intensity and control. By its very nature, channeling requires that we do defense training, and thus we have to worry about the possibility of pushing the dog into avoidance. Prey drive is the drive in which the dog feels clear, confident and in control. Prey drive itself is the innate desire to chase, catch, and kill things. In the dynamics of a confrontation with a man, the dog must be able to react and respond confidently to threat, which triggers defense and movement, which triggers the prey response. Stress rises in defense and stress clears out when the dog is in prey. We use prey to reward the dog for enduring the fight during defensive confronta-

tions. We also use prey drive to set the dog in a confident mood before challenging the dog with threat. The decoy is in control of initiating either threat to trigger defense or movement in prey to bring the dog back from the stress of a defensive confrontation. In humans, this is referred to as stress inoculation, allowing a human to process the stress of combat so as to operate under large amounts of stress. Dogs must learn to operate in situational disadvantage as well. Training drive channeling is the way to accomplish this. In my book, *Controlled Aggression*, I take about 4 chapters of the foundation section of the book to clearly articulate prey work, defense work, and drive channeling. In a recent seminar, I showed the de-

coys how to work the dog with drive channeling in mind with the basic drill I will explain below. Many police K-9 decoys simply get the dog on the bite (whether a sleeve, suit or hidden sleeve) and simply move the sleeve around, standing still, without regard to what drive the dog is in, much less moving the dog from one drive to another. By teaching the decoys about how to pressure the dogs and then how and when to relieve that pressure by going into prey, they were able to understand what to do with the dog once on the grip and how important that part of the training actually is. This is a critical part of police K-9 decoy work that is often not taught. The ability of the dog to deal with stress will affect the training of the release and recall later both skills with which many police dogs struggle.

Targeting

Last issue in this magazine I wrote an article entitled Targeting the Bite Suit for Police Service Dogs (K-9 Cop Magazine, Volume 4 Issue 5). Targeting, for a number of reasons, is a critical foundation for the police dog to learn and for an in depth treatment of it, I direct you there. Many dogs have not done a lot of front bicep targeting, so we concentrate on showing the decoys how to properly teach the dogs front side targeting, starting with the Belgian arm turned inside out and progressing to the bite suit. We choose the back tie so as to limit the dog's options in where to allow the grip. The decoys must show that they are in control of where the dog is allowed to grip using the back tie (see my article Advanced Back Tie Training for Patrol Dogs, K-9 Cop Magazine, Volume 4 Issue 4). They are shown that, although it is a bit uncomfortable to have the dog on the inside in the front, it is a critical part of making the dog as confident as possible. By using the back tie and showing the decoys that only allowing the dog to bite within a 12" zone on the bicep,

moving slowly in and being very precise will get the dogs comfortable in this particular target area.

We also teach dogs to target the legs. Teaching a police dog to bite the legs will give him multiple target areas, not just the forearm. This makes the dog more decisive on his entries to the grip and allows him to feel comfortable gripping somewhere other than just in the arm. Many younger dogs can be taught to target the legs on a leg sleeve during foundation training. By having all four feet on the ground, they immediately feel in better control rather than being up on the arm with their forelegs hanging.

Next, we work to perfect the decoy's starting the training sessions passively and reacting to the dog's aggression, how to channel the dogs once on the grip, and how to do targeting both in the bicep and in the legs. We take our practical training to a building with slick floors to work on the redirect and the recall, demonstrating a motivational technique for introducing the dog to what is normally a very compulsive exercise.



**For training videos that
compliment this article, visit
Tarheel Canine's youtube!**

www.youtube.com/user/TarheelK9

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The Out

Just because you need a quick out in a deployment doesn't mean that the dogs should be "outed" quickly in training. The police dog is an animal with inherent hard wiring to react aggressively to threat and to make prey. The dog must be fulfilled in his desire to express these drives. If the dog is not allowed to fulfill these imperatives, conflict is created.

As an example with a human twist, suppose you were very hungry after a long busy day and came home to a meal your significant other had cooked for you and they presented you with your favorite foods, in plentiful portions. Just as you dove in to eat it, the food was pulled away from you! "Dinner time is over!" How do you think that would make you react the next time you were really hungry and offered a plate of food? You would probably fight against losing it, would you not, expecting it to be taken away from you just after it was offered.

When a high drive K-9 is allowed to stop a threat or engage his prey on a sleeve, hidden sleeve or bite suit, and it is taken away almost immediately after it is offered, the

dog will fight the release. The dog wants to neutralize the threat and come down off the stress of the confrontation by unloading the aggression through biting, as the dog biting in prey wants to grip and possess the prey. Removing the bite too quickly will turn a dog with no out issues into a dog that fights against the release. The path to a quick out, is to allow the dog in training to engage the grip, go through the process of channeling, and then be asked to out, allowing the dog to re-grip as a reward for the release. Forcing a release and taking the grip away from the dog completely, builds the desire for the dog to try to fight the release process and makes the dog more possessive. By trying to accomplish the goal of quick outs, some dogs can be inadvertently trained to out even slower. Understanding this concept of drive channeling and how it relates to the release allows the dogs to fulfill their desire to engage the grip, but further to become comfortable with giving up the grip, knowing they are going to get it back after simply waiting a period of time.





Basic Decoy Drill

Over the years, I developed a basic decoy drill that works on a number of foundation elements and the out skill together. It can be introduced without the out, but when the dog knows the out, it can be incorporated. First, we teach the decoys how to properly pressure a dog on the grip by instructing them in a technique called a “drive” where the decoy turns his hips into the dog, points his elbow high where he wants to go, and either skips quickly without crossing the feet or runs in the direction of his elbow point. The stick is taken over the head and this drive can be applied with two variables in mind. Intensity and duration. Intensity involves the speed of the drive, stick pressure or stick hits being applied, verbal pressure in the drive, and the duration is simply how long this goes on for. Each dog is unique in their training progression.

The drill is organized as follows. A dog is brought to the training area, you can start on a short 10’ leash on a flat collar. Start behind cover, like an engine block, with the decoy at a distance away, facing the dog, either sitting, standing or prone, depending on how well the alert training has been going. The handler commands the dog to alert as the dog barks at the decoy, the decoy responds by slowly advancing on the dog defensively, and after a good series of barks, the decoy turns and jogs away from the dog (prey). The dog is sent to apprehend. The decoy provides a target for the dog to grip the sleeve (hidden or otherwise) or a target in the triceps of the bite suit, and catches the dog as the dog powers through. Taking the sleeve side leg forward as the dog hits and pushes through the sleeve presentation to keep balance and the dog is set down to be allowed to adjust into the grip (countering). When the dog adjusts in, the dog is carried on the hip in prey for a bit, with the helper walking in the direction away from the dog. Then the decoy turns his hips into the dog and applies the appropriate pressure with the “drive,” reverting back to prey at the conclusion of the drive. The dog is allowed to be carried on the hip or the decoy puts the sleeve across his chest and walks backwards, encouraging the dog to push into the grip and bring the fight forward. We want the dog to bring the fight to the decoy rather than sit down and pull in the grip. Many dogs need to be taught to fight forward.

Some dogs when faced with environmental pressure (like slick floors or door thresholds) will sit down and pull, causing



“You don’t have to scream at the dog, they have big ears!”

their momentum to bring them off the sleeve. They are already pulling away from the confrontation. The dog that pushes to win the grip, will push through these difficulties to win. You can see a great change in confidence when a dog is taught to push into the decoy to fight. The decoy is to be dominated and possessed. The dogs are allowed to wrap the decoys up with their feet and confidently climb up them.

If the out is going to be worked, the decoy will then set the dog down on all 4 feet, sleeve across his front. The dog should already be wearing a training collar and short leash, maybe 2’ long for either a 3rd party (trainer) or the decoy himself to apply the correction into the grip. Once the dog outs and sits in a guard, the decoy can reward the release with another grip and start the drive channeling process over again leading to another out.

There are a million ways to make this drill more realistic. The decoy can be prone, prone under a vehicle and partially concealed, or the decoy can go to the ground during the fight after the drive and allow the dog to dominate him. The out can be done with the decoy prone, sleeve arm out to the side while he



is on his belly, while the handler holds the dog short on the line and the trainer does the correction if needed. This drill from the decoy perspective, allows us to work on the following: alert, pursuit and strike, countering into the grip, pushing the fight to the decoy, taking pressure from the decoy, calming down in prey after the pressure (drive channeling), ground fighting (if the decoy goes to ground), outs and rewards for those outs.

The dogs really respond to the drive channeling, pushing, and the out training resulting from allowing longer fights in training. The drive channeling work can only be accomplished while the dog is engaged in the grip. If the fights are too short, the dog never properly learns to channel his drives, making it easier for the dog to become over-possessive or the dog being stuck in a defensive mood, both of which lead to difficult outing. Grips improved, calmness returned to previously frantic biting and outs quickly improved in speed.

We also like to concentrate on doing some redirects and

call-offs. The redirected bites further impress in the dog's mind that giving up a grip leads to getting another grip on another decoy (further if we add in human orientation drills where the dog is taught to drop dead equipment and reengage the man) this further completes the process of the dog learning to release to get something else, strengthening the release command. In fact, when we add in human orientation drills, many dogs start to release too quickly, so we have to back off the out-related drills and go back to grips on leash with back tension and pushing to set the grip. That is the power of the synergistic effect of these skill drills (release for another grip, redirects, call-offs, and human orientation). Dogs at the beginning of the training that refuse to release start willingly releasing without conflict. Some dogs will require more time to impress the idea on them, depending on how long they have been fighting the out, and some younger dogs, may need a more gradual application of these drills. ■