

# FOCUSING YOUR PATROL DOG ON

# human apprehension

A step-by-step method for teaching and reinforcing human orientation.

BY JERRY BRADSHAW

**C**ONTROLLED AGGRESSION in the form of criminal apprehension is the one thing we cannot practice as it might happen on the street. For obvious reasons, no one is willing to give a police dog a real bite, on purpose, to proof apprehension behavior. Yet lives can depend on the dog being willing to engage a human suspect who will not be dressed in bite equipment. For the street police dog, therefore, it's imperative that we orient the dog's aggression toward the person. As we teach the dog the proper way to bite and to target, and to do those things under control, we must never forget that the ultimate goal is to teach the dog to fight the suspect with courage, intensity, and decisiveness in the absence of training equipment. That requires the dog to focus his aggression on the person, and not on the equipment. This article will discuss training methods

■ A skilled decoy reinforces human orientation in a canine that is used to biting a sleeve. Once the canine is human-focused, the decoy can kick toward the canine and deliver a grip on the bite suit pants, then go to ground and roll away.

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for orienting your dog to the human rather than the bite equipment.

### Testing for Human Orientation

Too many street police dogs are equipment-oriented. A recent video called the “World’s Worst Police Dog,” circulating on YouTube, showed a police dog running alongside a fleeing suspect instead of engaging him. It should have been titled, “Bad Police Dog Training Finally on Video.” A dog will do only what it was selected for and trained to do. That the dog didn’t engage is not the fault of the dog, but rather the fault of his training.

When I teach seminars at police departments where I do not know the dogs, I do a series of tests to see whether the dogs are human-oriented. The first test has a stranger hiding behind a car. The handler takes cover with the dog. From cover, the handler calls the person out from behind the car and allows the dog to see him. The dog must show aggression on command to the passive subject. Many of the dogs do not show aggression unless they see equipment, movement, or a direct threat. That is a problem both of human orientation and of the dog not being properly conditioned to alert in his foundation work. Remember, most of the police dogs used in the United States are former European sport dogs, which generally have been conditioned to seeing the sleeve or suit prior to doing bite work. If you still believe that dogs in Europe are bred for police work, you are living in a fantasy world. Later in this article, we will discuss more about how canine temperament directly affects the issue of human orientation.

A second test is to put a decoy in a bite suit and have that decoy hold a sleeve. The dog is sent and the sleeve is thrown off to the side. If the dog follows the sleeve, the decoy attacks the handler energetically. Many a handler has taken a mock beating from the decoy while his or her dog thrashes the sleeve on the ground, despite the handler calling for the dog to release and come to his aid.

An even more difficult test is to set up the same scenario



but then have the decoy deliver a sleeve grip to the dog, slip the sleeve, and then stand there passively or walk away quietly. The dog may run around with the sleeve and completely ignore the decoy. That behavior is unacceptable in a police dog. Therefore, we must teach the dog to look to the human for the fight and not be satisfied with taking only a sleeve reward or a slipped bite suit as the end of the game.

In Europe, police and security officers frequently encounter false grips. A friend of mine, who uses his security dog at soccer matches for crowd control, tells stories about gangs of rowdy fans confronting him and his dog. People will wrap their forearms with leather jackets and newspapers and let the dog grip, then shed the jacket. If the dog doesn’t come off the jacket, the handler is vulnerable to being attacked by the people in front of him. However, handlers train their dogs to immediately release the object and refocus their aggression on the human element.

### Civil Aggression

Many trainers look for natural civil aggression when they test a dog initially. They also want to see the dog focus aggression on the decoy while a sleeve is on the ground, or see the dog spit the sleeve after a grip and come back to focus on the decoy. Although I agree that those behaviors are nice to see, not every dog will show them. A lot of our dual-purpose canine prospects are naturally more prey-oriented to ensure that they do detection work successfully. Good dogs can be rejected for being *too* prey-oriented, because trainers do not realize that human-oriented behavior can be trained easily, even in a highly prey-possessive dog. Furthermore, if the dog’s temperament is very defensive, you may see natural human orientation, but the dog may lack the confidence of a more balanced dog in whom prey behaviors are more pronounced.

Dogs that have more civil aggression will more naturally drop a slipped sleeve and look back to the decoy for another encounter, as they are, by temperament and hardwiring, not content with the prey object. Prey-dominant dogs, however, often will interpret the slipped sleeve reward as a signal that the confrontation is ended. In the developmental stages of training, that’s not a problem. We need to build confidence in the young dog, and slipping a sleeve after a grip is one



■ A prey-dominant dog may want to focus on the bite sleeve, even after the sleeve has been slipped and is lying inertly on the ground. In this sequence, (left to right) the decoy focuses the dog away from the sleeve and back to himself, first by interposing his body between dog and sleeve; then (below, left to right), when the dog focuses on the human, rewarding him with a bite on the stick.

the dog to be proofed to all kinds of bite equipment. The dog should be finished with all of his prey and defense development, and be clear and confident in his channeling work. Once those are complete, we can intersperse human-orientation work into the dog’s regular training scenarios. The dog may need to be taught to “out” if he is too prey-possessive to be redirected to the human through agitation. If you find that to be the case, go ahead and train the “out/

guard” first before doing the human-orientation work described next. I mention “out/guard” because many agencies teach only an “out” and a “return,” and human orientation requires the dog to be thinking about re-engaging the subject after letting go of the dead prey, as opposed to coming back to the handler upon letting go. I like to teach both “out” exercises to a dog, using separate commands. Believe it or not, that is easy to do if your training program is well engineered.

### Training Progression for Human Orientation

**STEP ONE: SLEEVE-TO-SLEEVE HUMAN ORIENTATION.** Sleeve-to-sleeve is the basic human-orientation exercise. The setup

way to allow the dog to learn to channel drives successfully and to build confidence. In dog training, where we often successively approximate as we move toward our final training outcomes, doing that may seem to be going in the opposite direction from the one we need to go in. However, once confidence is instilled, we can train the dog to be more human-focused without sacrificing the things that prey training brings to the table in creating a trained patrol dog — such as full, firm, and hard grips; fast and powerful entries; and so on. Later, we will discuss the pluses and minuses we encounter when doing such training.

It is important to realize that although human-orientation behavior can be natural in a more civilly aggressive dog, it also is a behavior that can be trained fairly easily. During early bite development, we encourage the dog to go into prey and carry modes and work against that natural proclivity to some degree. However, regardless of whether the dog is prey-dominant or defense-dominant, human orientation can be conditioned in the dog with proper training.

Before we do major work in human orientation, we want



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■ **Left:** As you train for call-offs, extractions, building searches and other skills, add human-orientation exercises to the scenarios to keep the dog freshly aggressive toward the human. Sessions need not always end with a bite and an "out."

aggression, and who can make any necessary adjustments.

### STEP TWO: SLEEVE AND HIDDEN SLEEVE.

The next step begins with civil agitation and the decoy delivering a civil bite on a hidden sleeve. The dog is worked on the hidden sleeve and then the decoy goes to ground. After the dog is lifted off the grip, the decoy withdraws and gives the dog a grip on a sleeve, immediately challenging the dog once the sleeve is slipped. As the dog refocuses on the decoy and spits out the slipped sleeve, the decoy gives another hidden-sleeve grip. The dog is

worked on the hidden sleeve over the grounded, visible sleeve. The decoy can give a re-bite on the hidden sleeve after the dog releases. That gets the dog involved with the decoy and helps the dog to ignore the dead sleeve on the ground. Bites on the slipped sleeve are thus rendered less satisfying than the fights on the hidden sleeve.

**STEP THREE: SLEEVE, HIDDEN SLEEVE, AND BITE SUIT.** Now the decoy is dressed in bite pants from the bite suit, a hidden sleeve, and a visible sleeve. The dog is alerted and the decoy gives him a grip on the sleeve, immediately slipping it, and agitating the dog back to him. The decoy can kick at the dog with the bite pants and deliver the grip using the pants, working the dog to bite the legs; then the decoy should go to ground. The dog is lifted off of the grip and the decoy rolls away. The dog is immediately re-agitated and given a grip on the hidden sleeve. The decoy goes to ground and the dog is lifted off or the dog is called out.

The same scenario can be played out using a bite jacket. The jacket can be left open and the decoy can wear a hidden sleeve underneath it. A sleeve is first offered to the dog to grip, then slipped when the dog bites. The decoy draws the dog to a subsequent grip on the suit, the dog is worked, and then the jacket is slipped. Immediately upon slipping the jacket, the decoy re-engages the dog and the dog is given a hidden sleeve grip. The fight goes to the ground and the dog dominates the decoy on the ground. The dog can be lifted off or called out, and the decoy then gives re-bites over the grounded sleeve and jacket a few times. You should begin to see the dog leaving the slipped objects more and more quickly to engage in a fight with the decoy.

**STEP FOUR: GENERALIZATION.** Once the correct behavior is

for all human-orientation exercises in the beginning shall be on the back tie. The dog is first worked on the back tie in defense mode to establish an orientation to the helper out of civil aggression. The dog is alerted on the passive decoy. Once the dog alerts aggressively, the decoy can agitate the dog civilly. The sleeve can be in a trash can nearby, and the decoy can, at the last second, pull out the sleeve and deliver a grip. The dog is worked and the sleeve is slipped; the decoy then withdraws a few paces and immediately agitates hard, using a whip or a clatter stick, to draw the dog back to the human. The decoy rewards the dog for coming back to the human by giving the dog another grip on a second sleeve.

While the dog is being worked the second time, the handler must kick the sleeve on the ground to where the decoy can retrieve it — or use a third person to gather up the sleeves and hand them to the decoy as he works the session. The decoy slips the second sleeve, and immediately picks up the other sleeve, agitating the dog, and drawing him back to focus on the decoy. The dog's correct behavior is again rewarded with another bite. The session ends with the decoy going to ground and the dog being lifted off the bite (a tactical liftoff) to induce further frustration toward the decoy; or the dog can be called out, if he knows that exercise.

The work should then progress, beginning with civil agitation, with the sleeves on the ground. If the dog looks to the sleeves, they must be put far enough out of reach so that the dog focuses civilly on the decoy. Then the decoy picks up the sleeve and delivers the grip, proceeding as previously discussed to trade sleeve for sleeve. This work requires a skilled decoy who can read the dog, who understands

## HUMAN-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR CAN BE TRAINED EASILY, EVEN IN A HIGHLY PREY-POSSESSIVE DOG.

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■ **Left:** In a human-orientation exercises, a decoy in civil clothing agitates the dog, then runs away and hides. The dog, on lead, is allowed to pursue the decoy; in that way, the dog's prey drive is used to focus him on the human.

Some grips should be long and satisfying, with no human-orientation work, some should be long and satisfying with a human-orientation exercise thrown in. Also, civil aggression can be used (without a bite) in human-orientation exercises by slipping the suit and agitating the dog in civil clothes, then running away — going behind a door, for example — and slowing the dog by having him chase on leash. Muzzle work also can be woven into the process. However, the handler must always be on guard to prevent the frustrated dog from gaining satisfaction by gripping a dead prey object on the floor or ground. If that

established on the back tie, the behavior must be generalized to fieldwork, inside buildings, in the woods, and during building searches. This work is dangerous because when the dog comes off dead equipment, the decoy risks getting bitten — which, of course, is what we are looking for. Therefore, the handler must hold the leash during these exchanges, unless the exchange ends with a bite-suit grip.

The training we have discussed should continue throughout the dog's life. As you work on skills such as re-directs, call-offs, extractions, and building searches, put human-orientation exercises into the scenarios to keep the dog freshly aggressive toward the human. Don't end every session with a bite and an "out." With a little pre-planning, human orientation can be fit into any training session in which a bite occurs.

### Challenges and Advantages

It's important to be aware of the problems and advantages human-orientation exercises can cause in your training program. The main challenge is a problem with the grip. The dog may anticipate releasing the grip too early. If you see the grip becoming chewy or unstable, go back to the back-tie work, and put back-pressure on the grip, working the calm, hard grip as we do in prey-development work. The decoy should anticipate that the grip may become unstable, and because the handler will be holding the line during most of this work, the decoy can work the dog's grip after every transfer, making the line tight and encouraging the dog to counter and stay solid and calm.

Transfers should be satisfying, varying the time on the grip prior to transferring the aggression back to the human.

happens, you will set back your training significantly.

One side benefit of human-orientation training is that it will make it easier to train the dog to redirect. The dog will eagerly anticipate another satisfying bite and be more willing to come off the dead decoy to another aggressive decoy, progressing systematically to redirects onto passive decoys.

After the basic foundation work is complete, obedience

training always should progress to include heeling over bite equipment and doing "down/stays" in the presence of sleeves and toys to teach the dog to keep his focus on the handler and not on dead prey.

Human-orientation training should be an ongoing part of the overall training program for your police service dog. Decoys must learn the tech-

niques to encourage human-focused behavior, to properly read dogs, and to react appropriately. Getting your decoys well trained is imperative for seeing better success in the patrol arena in general, and is especially important for training and maintaining good human orientation. ■

*This article has been adapted from the chapter titled "Fundamental Man Orientation Exercises" in the author's training manual, Controlled Aggression, available at [www.tarheelcanine.com](http://www.tarheelcanine.com). Human orientation is a complicated training concept, and this article is only an introduction. This training should be conducted only with an experienced trainer who is familiar with the concepts and techniques discussed in this article.*

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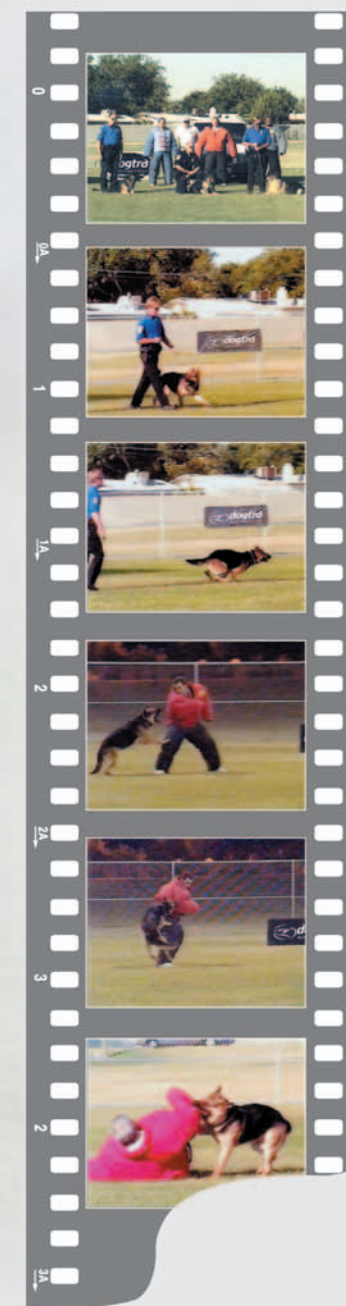


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