

# General Rules and Regulations for Certification

## Police Therapy/Comfort Canines

This certification test will evaluate the Police Service Therapy/Comfort K9 and their handler. The test is designed to simulate real world encounters and situations the dog and handler may experience while working. The test reflects realistic expectations and requirements for the Therapy or Comfort Police K9 in performing their job.

This certification will consist of the following:

- 1) Appearance and grooming
- 2) Department Policy Review
- 3) Microchip & Collar/Leash inspection
- 4) Acceptance of all Strangers
- 5) Loose lead/leash walking control
- 6) Relaxed state during contact
- 7) Verbal Recall
- 8) Reaction to loud noises/Startling sounds
- 9) Contact with other dogs
- 10) Handler Basic Knowledge

### **General Rules and Guidelines**

#### 1. Terms:

- a. Association: The term "association" when used in the context of these regulations shall refer to the rules committee, the judges committee or the National USPCA Executive Committee.
- b. Control dog: This is a dog that is known already to be calm, submissive and neutral to other dogs. This dog should show only gentle interest and have no aggressive behavior toward dogs or people.
- c. Command: For the purposes of THIS test, during the recall, a command is considered one word even if given with the dog's name. For example, "HERE" is one command. "SPOT, HERE" is also one command if uttered together.

#### 2. Individual Entries:

- a. Each Handler must be a current member of the USPCA before taking this test and they must be a law enforcement officer of a city, town, county, state or federal agency. The handler must also be formally recognized as a handler for the Agency. Any member who has retired in good standing with a minimum of 10 consecutive years as a member of the USPCA may also certify their trained K-9 if they are working in a part time status for a law enforcement agency and are assigned k-9 duties. This would also apply to any full retired member who is a reserve, special deputy or any status where the member is still recognized as a law enforcement officer. The member must maintain continuous membership with the USPCA upon retirement. If their membership is not continuous, they will not be eligible to certify their canine.

- b. A special member as defined in the By-Laws may certify a dog in this test/trial if approved as a special member by their region.

- c. Certifications will not be permitted for the purpose of marketing or selling dogs.
- d. Order of testing will be determined by the Chief Judge, as is scheduling of participants at each location or venue.

### 3. Judging:

Requirements for Judging a Therapy/Comfort Dog for the USPCA will be different from our standard scored testing. There will be ONE judge for this test. **The Chief Judge must be a currently qualified Chief Judge for Patrol and/or Detection.** Novice judges may be allowed to participate but the Chief Judges' rating is final.

### 4. Test Requirements:

- a. All handlers will be tested in their standard department duty uniform with the exception of foot apparel. Baseball hats may be worn as long as they are professional in appearance. Plain clothes officers can be tested in civilian clothes if that is the accepted on-duty apparel. Numbered vests may be provided for ease of identification.

- b. During testing, handlers are allowed to carry rewards to include a toy or dog food as long as the items are out of sight during the actual testing process or carried in a toy/food type bag worn on their person.

- c. Equipment worn by the K9 will be approved duty gear to include their leash (6 ft), collar or their harness. Part of the testing process includes checking the duty gear of the dog. Therapy or Comfort dogs being tested by the USPCA will not be allowed to wear pinch or choke style equipment, nor will they be allowed to wear an e-collar.

- d. All K-9s being tested should remain on lead unless otherwise permitted during testing.

- e. No dog will be left unattended at any time in such a manner as to create a concern for any other dog, person or to itself.

- f. Protests: Follow guidelines as listed for other USPCA testing should a protest arise.

- g. The certification is for the team- handler and dog. If the dog has multiple handlers, each handler has to certify as a team with that dog. A separate test fee for each handler will be administered by that region if applicable.

- h. Loss of temper or any display of poor sportsmanship on the part of the handler will result in disqualification from the certification as determined by the judge. The Executive Board may undertake its own investigation and take any action it deems appropriate based on the totality of the circumstance.

### 5. Handlers Preparation:

- a. There will be no lengthy explanation of the exercise while the tests are conducted. It is the handler's responsibility to know what he or she has to do on each exercise. A handler who is familiar with these rules should be able to enter the test area without having to inquire as to how the particular judge wishes to have the exercise performed and without being confronted with some unexpected requirement.

### 6. Miscellaneous:

- a. Any K-9 relieving itself during testing will be considered a Fail.

- b. No consumption of alcoholic beverages is allowed on or in the testing area by judges, handlers or other participating officials to include helpers.

- c. This is a test designed for the friendly dog and not for one that has displayed any aggressive behavior toward people or other dogs.
- d. Handlers who have already tested will not converse with a team waiting testing in their group. The test, especially the handler testing questions, are confidential until that day's testing is completed.
- e. The testing venues will be contaminated by humans and at least one dog immediately prior to testing.
- f. All scoresheets will be given to or mailed to participants after the completion of the trial.
- g. No children (under age 16) or non-consenting adults will be used in this testing. Exceptions would include minors who are Police Cadets/Explorers or those officially sanctioned by the Police Department, Region or Chief Judge to be participating.
- h. Any K9 being tested that displays aggression toward the Chief Judge, other participants, stewards or other parties involved in the testing will be immediately disqualified and failed. \*Passed 5-7-23 in Evansville.

*Teams failing to successfully certify will not immediately be given a second chance. Multiple tests of the same team will not be conducted. The team has to undergo a period of retraining, documenting successful performance, before any attempt at re-certification. Only official Certificates of Certification (Provided by the National Office) will be issued to participants who successfully pass a USPCA Certification test.*

## **GOVERNING RULES FOR CERTIFICATION OF A THERAPY/COMFORT K-9**

The purpose of this test is to evaluate the ability of a canine to be a Therapy/Comfort dog for a law enforcement agency. The test is designed to evaluate the flexibility, adaptability and friendliness of a dog working as a LE Therapy/Comfort K9. All certifications are good through December 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year. (ie: If you certify on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, your certification will not expire until December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2024.)

### **1. TESTING**

#### **A. APPEARANCE AND GROOMING:**

The Chief Judge will view the dog from all angles to ensure that the dog is healthy for its breed, displays appropriate weight, fur covering, is clean, healthy, and willing to be in the testing area.

The Chief Judge shall lightly touch the dog, slowly increasing touching intensity. The judge will also lightly brush the dog with a grooming brush or comb to ensure the dog is free of excessive fur and fleas. The dog should accept this grooming with ease and not jump around or avoid contact. The handler should provide this brush or comb.

The Chief Judge should also touch the pads of the feet, tail, ears and cover the eyes with his or her hand for 5 seconds. The dog must be willing and accepting of the judge's touch and should not

attempt to avoid contact. Movement is permissible, but the judge should not have to move after the dog to touch the dog.

This shall be a pass/fail exercise based on the experience of the Chief Judge. The Chief Judge shall use the scoresheet as a guideline and has the option to fail a dog based solely on appearance.

#### **B. DEPARTMENT POLICY REVIEW:**

This Association believes it is important for Therapy/Comfort Dog Handlers to have and be familiar with their Department Policy. Each handler will provide the Chief Judge with a printed copy of their department/agency written policy to determine that the team is:

1. Officially recognized by the department in writing as having a Therapy/Comfort dog.
2. That there are rules outlining its accepted and prohibited usage.

This is not designed to be an endorsement of the policy scope, legality, or depth.

A handler who does not come prepared to show the Chief Judge a copy of their department Policy will be given a fail. This is a pass/fail exercise.

#### **C. MICROCHIP and COLLAR/LEASH/EQUIPMENT INSPECTION:**

All general equipment (leash, collar, toys, harnesses etc.) will be inspected. They must be in clean, good working order and look professional. Department Patches are acceptable. All equipment must be safe and humane. Each handler will provide the Chief Judge with proof of an identification microchip for their working dog AND a proof of rabies vaccination (may be in the form of a tag on the collar). A handler who does not come prepared to show the Chief Judge a copy of proof of microchip and rabies vaccination, will be given a fail. This is a pass/fail exercise.

#### **D. ACCEPTANCE OF ALL STRANGERS- GROUP TESTING:** Indoor or Outdoor

1. Greeting test: A simulated greeting test between the handler and a steward (unknown to the dog) will be conducted. The dog must remain friendly or neutral to the handler/stranger interaction. This greeting interaction will include the handler and stranger in close proximity to each other and shall last no less than 2 minutes.

2. Group test: The K-9 and handler will then be exposed to a group of no less than 5 people (talking & acting normally) in an enclosed room, no more than 400 square feet. The dog must remain friendly or polite during this phase. The group will remain stationary with the K-9 team for no less than 2 minutes. Once the 2 minutes is complete, the K-9 and handler will then walk around and amongst the group of people for no less than 2 additional minutes. (all walking around together) No one in the group will attempt to pet or touch the dog during this test.

a. The dog should display no shyness, should not jump on people, should not strain on his leash, or otherwise display behaviors indicating it is uncomfortable around humans or not wanting interaction.

b. At least one person in the stationary group should have a crutch or wheelchair.

This is a pass/fail exercise. **Any dog that fails this portion shall not be allowed to continue testing.**

#### **E. LOOSE LEAD/LEASH WALKING CONTROL:** Indoor or Outdoor

The dog may walk on the side of its handler and must be tolerant of the attached leash. (6 ft) The team will be directed by the Chief Judge to walk and to make at least five (5) left turns and five (5)

right turns as well as five (5) about turns. The K-9 and handler will then be asked to walk amongst the group of no less than 5 people. The dog is not judged on its strict obedience to heel. He will be judged on his willingness to walk with his handler. A loose leash is a MUST and a dog displaying a tendency to roam or otherwise needs the leash to constantly be redirected will fail this test. This is a pass/fail exercise.

#### **F. RELAXED STATE DURING CONTACT TO INCLUDE PETTING/TOUCHING**

Since the dog has successfully completed the group testing, it shall be tested on its acceptance of friendly petting from those in the group. The dog must allow petting from one or several of the group participants. The dog should remain relaxed, friendly and may move around on leash and under control to greet the participants and allow petting or touching. This can be conducted indoors or outdoors. This is a pass/fail exercise. If in the opinion of the Chief Judge the dog is uncomfortable, displays any form of aggression or is otherwise unwilling to interact with the petting, the Chief Judge may fail the team.

#### **G. VERBAL RECALL:**

The objective of this portion of the test is to ensure that the K-9 can be recalled by command in case of an emergency, so quickness of the dog to respond immediately and enthusiastically will be judged heavily by the judge.

Using a secure indoor area and a secure outdoor area: The K-9 will be allowed to roam freely, off leash, in each area. These areas should be no less than 400 square feet. Once the dog has separation (more than 10 feet) from the handler, the handler, upon direction from the Chief Judge, shall verbally call or summon the dog. (may use hand or voice or both, but no whistles or other devices)

a. The Chief Judge will evaluate the number of commands needed for the dog to return to the handler and for the handler to place the leash back on the dog. (the dog does not need to return to a finish position, like a sit or a down or a heel next to the handler) The team will also be judged on the willingness of the dog to immediately obey the recall command. Excessive commands can be considered as more than 5 commands. A command may include the dog's name and is considered one command. i.e. - "Spot.... Come!"

b. This recall will be done 5 times in each venue, inside and out, for a total of 10 recalls.  
c. The K-9 must return to the handler every time within a reasonable and safe time frame.  
A K-9 that does not recall 10 times will be a fail.

#### **H. REACTION TO LOUD NOISES/STARTLING SOUNDS**

This exercise is to evaluate the K-9's reactions to loud or unexpected noises. Sounds or noises used should be consistent for all participants and may be conducted indoors or outdoors.

While the K-9 is on a leash with the handler, a loud noise or distraction of a loud nature will occur. An example of this could be: starting a loud motorcycle, dropping a book on a hard floor, a crutch being dropped on a hard surface, a person yelling a name, slamming a door, etc. These noises should be in close proximity to the dog. (within 20 feet) This is not designed to be a gunfire tolerant test but is meant to test noises that may occur during work activities.

This test will be done twice, using two different distractions. The dog can flinch, show interest or show that he was startled, but should recover almost immediately and should not show any aggression, fear, try to run away, bark or otherwise panic.

This is a pass/fail exercise.

#### **I. CONTACT WITH OTHER DOGS:**

A control dog will be used for this exercise. This dog must be already proven as a dog friendly or neutral to other dogs. (no dog that displays any aggressive or antagonizing behavior toward other dogs will be used) The control dog and the K-9 being tested will approach each other from different directions. At all distances as they approach, the Chief Judge will evaluate the willingness of the K-9 to greet the control dog with friendliness or neutrality. The K-9 should display casual interest and show no aggressive or over the top excited behavior toward the control dog. This is a pass/fail exercise.

#### **J. HANDLER BASIC KNOWLEDGE:**

The USPCA appreciates that all police canine handlers should have general knowledge of their dog's health, issues that may come up with general obedience, policy, etc. The Chief Judge will prepare 10 general k-9 related questions in which to quiz the handler. All participants will be asked the same questions. This can be administered in writing or verbally and should be done privately between the Chief Judge and the Handler.

The USPCA will provide example questions for use by the Chief Judge upon request, but the questions are not limited to those provided.

This is pass/fail. Handler will answer at least 7 questions correctly to pass. The Judge should be reasonable with the knowledge presented by the handler.

#### **SCORING:**

The K-9 Team must pass all of the above exercises in order to achieve certification as a Police Therapy/Comfort K-9. The Chief Judges score sheet will be the final determination of pass/fail. Other participants my observe, act as advisors or apprentice but will not utilize the score sheet. Scoring is pass/fail only. Any dog relieving itself in the testing area is a fail.

#### **Chief Judges are responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the paperwork.**

E-mail or upload completed trial paperwork to include: (within 30 days of the trial)

- Original Master score sheet
- Judges and Scorekeepers list with events judged

**Upload Trial paperwork at: [www.uspcak9.com](http://www.uspcak9.com)**

E-mail to: [secretary@uspcak9.com](mailto:secretary@uspcak9.com)