**Glossary of Terms often used in Police Canine Training, Deployments, Depositions, and Court Room Situations.**

**Air Scenting** -Target vapor that has become airborne either through the natural deterioration process or being displaced by wind and air currents, making it available for canine detection.

**Alert** – A conditioned, trained, or instinctual response to a trained target material or human presence.

**Area Search** – Refers to the use of a canine to systematically search a specific area for a target or human scent, utilizing air currents to enhance the dog's ability to detect and locate the source.

**Behavior** - Refers to how a dog reacts to things happening inside or around them, shaped by their instincts and how they've been domesticated over time.

**Bite Ratio** – Refers to the percentage of incidents where a police canine bites during apprehensions, compared to the total number of apprehensions handled by the department. It's used to measure how often bites occur in relation to overall apprehensions.

**Bite** Threshold – Refers to the level of stress or stimulation a dog can handle before it reacts by biting, whether appropriately or inappropriately.

**Bridge** - A bridge is a term used to describe a signal or marker that connects the dog's current action to a desired behavior or task. It is often used when the dog already understands part of the behavior and needs guidance to complete it.

**Bored** – Lack of mental or physical conditioning to complete a desired task. Or are they bored because of exposure without receiving any stimulus or reward?

**Calming Signals** – Dogs use an array of approximately 30 calming signals to communicate with one another and with humans. These subtle gestures or behaviors help them defuse tension, express comfort, and maintain peaceful interactions. While some dogs rely on just a few basic signals, others exhibit a more extensive and nuanced "vocabulary," showcasing their individual personality and social experience.

**Certification** – A process and document that attests to successfully completing an examination or relevant skills of a canine team set forth by a governing body.

**Change of Behavior** (COB) - A characteristic pattern of behaviors recognized by the canine handler that occurs when the canine detects a target scent. This differs from other olfactory interests that otherwise are exhibited by the canine in response to the daily environment. The initial behavior change typically leads to following the scent to its source/target. The pattern of behavior may be unique to each canine.

**Civil Agitation** – A technique used to develop biting canines focuses on the human decoy instead of bite training equipment.

**Clarity**- The ideal mental state of a dog that enables it to respond quickly and accurately to a stimulus or signal.

**Classical Conditioning** - A training method where a dog learns to associate a neutral stimulus, such as a scent or a touch, with a specific response or behavior, even though the stimulus didn't initially cause that reaction.

**Competent** - Having suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, experience, etc., for some purpose; properly qualified.

**Compulsion Training** - Training that uses physical punishment, such as leash corrections, ear pinches, escape techniques, or an electric collar to mark undesired behavior.

**Conflict** – In dog training, conflict refers to a dog's internal confusion or hesitation when processing and responding to a signal or stimulus. This can happen when the dog receives mixed signals, feels unsure about what is being asked, or when competing motivations (e.g., fear versus desire) create uncertainty in their behavior.

**Consistent Reward Schedule** – A fixed reward schedule used during the initial stages of training to teach a new behavior. This approach gives a reward every time the desired behavior is performed.

**Context-Specific** **Success** – The concept that a dog's ability to successfully perform a task is heavily influenced by or dependent on the specific environment, conditions, or context in which the task is being performed. This highlights the importance of training in varied settings to ensure adaptability and consistent success across different scenarios.

**Contaminating Material** – Contaminating material refers to any non-target substance that is present alongside the target material, either chemically or physically, and may interfere with a dog's ability to detect or differentiate the target scent during training or operational work.

**Continuous Reinforcement** – ***see consistent reward schedule***.

**Correction** – A **correction i**s an action or signal interrupting or modifying unwanted behavior and guiding the dog toward the desired behavior. Corrections can range from verbal cues (e.g., saying "no") to physical cues (e.g., a gentle leash tug) and are intended to provide clear feedback without causing fear or harm to the dog. The goal is to redirect the dog and reinforce proper behavior humanely and effectively.

**Counter-Conditioning** - A behavior modification technique used to change a canine's natural or unnatural response or perception to stimuli (anything that triggers a reaction or behavior from the dog).

**Courage -** refers to the dog's **boldness in confronting threats, resilience in overcoming fear and distractions, and determination to complete assigned tasks.**

**Cross-trained Canine** – A canine that is trained in multiple working disciplines.

**Cue** – A desired or undesired signal delivered to the canine by a human that interrupts the canine's ability or willingness to complete a task independently. ***Also, see learned helplessness.***

**Decoy** – A human used to develop the confidence and grips of a canine.

**Defensive Drive** - A canines desire to protect itself and or its handler when **ACTIVELY** faced with a perceived or real threat.

**Desensitize** – In police dog training, desensitization involves gradually exposing dogs to potentially distracting or stressful stimuli (anything that triggers a reaction or behavior from the dog) until they can remain calm and focused on their tasks.

**Distractors-** A distractor is an item or scent introduced during police dog training to test and improve the dog's ability to stay focused on their target odor. Common distractors include humans, toys, food, animal odor, etc.

**Detector or Detection Canine** - A canine trained alert to the presence of certain vapors or material for which it has been trained utilizing olfactory senses.

**Double-blind/Double-blind testing** - In evaluating a canine team, neither the assessor nor the handler has previous knowledge of where the canine will find success.

**Drives -** are inherent behavioral traits that exist naturally in dogs, not behaviors created through training. Training harnesses and shapes these existing drives but cannot manufacture them.

**Drive Clarity**– A behavioral trait where the dog maintains focused, purposeful engagement with a task without becoming overstimulated or losing control. The dog can essentially stay mentally balanced while having strong motivation. This differs from raw drive strength and is highly valued in working dogs since it enables reliable performance under stress.

**Drive Capping** – A technique to suppress and channel a canine's energy to work with clarity at the canine's maximum genetic potential.

**Neutrality** – ***See also Desensitize***

**Dual Purpose Dog** – A dog trained in multiple disciplines.

**Environmental Training or Testing** - Evaluates and develops a dog's ability to maintain focus on tasks while adapting to complex or distracting surroundings. It helps ensure the dog's reliability in real-world conditions.

**Evidence/Article Search** – A canine trained to locate and indicate items saturated with a combination of object and human Vapor.

**Extinction** - Extinction is when a behavior decreases because it stops being reinforced. The behavior gradually disappears because it no longer produces desired results.

**Final Position**– A behavior that a canine has been trained to exhibit in the presence of a target scent source. This behavior may be passive (sit, stare, down, point, etc.) or active (bite, bark, scratch, jump, etc.). Also known as a trained final response.

**Firearm Detection Dog** - A dog that is specifically trained to locate and respond to the presence of firearms and ammunition by a group of associated odors or complex odor pictures.

**Fixed Reward Schedule** - A schedule of Reinforcement in which the trainer repeatedly reinforces a desired behavior after a specific number of correct responses.

**Four Quadrants of Operant Conditioning-** Positive and Negative Reinforcement, Positive and Negative Punishment. Simply defined, positive actions give or add something, negative actions withhold or take something away. Punishers decrease the likelihood of a behavior, and Reinforcers increase the likelihood of a behavior. **Positive and Negative DO NOT mean good or bad when referring to Operant Conditioning.**

**Generalization** – Generalization means your dog can apply a learned behavior in various situations.A well-generalized behavior means you can rely on your dog to perform it when needed, even in challenging situations.

**Green Dog**—A canine with no mission-specific training who has been encouraged and conditioned to understand how to produce a desired reward. These dogs have shown the Drive, temperament, and physical attributes that suggest they could excel as police dogs (e.g., in patrol, detection, or other specialized roles).

**Grip(s)** – The way a canine grabs an object with its mouth that is heavily influenced by genetic predisposition and developed through training and exposure.

**Habituate** - To become accustomed to a specific situation through repeated exposures. **Also, see Desensitize**

**Hard Out** – Term used to describe the technique of lifting by the neck or choking the canine until the canine lets go of something in its mouth.

**High Drive Dog** – High Drive is a trait that makes a canine extremely motivated to complete a given task or overcome complex obstacles for an objective while maintaining clarity.

**Homemade Explosives (HME)** - A combination of commercially available ingredients combined to create an explosive substance.

**Human Scent** – A complex odor picture produced by multiple factors that identify a specific person. ie., Metabolism, diet, emotion, heredity, bacteria, grooming products, etc.

**Improvised Explosive Device (IED)** - A device fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic, or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass, or distract.

**Instinct** – The hereditary tendency to react in specific ways in specific circumstances somewhat influenced by genetic predisposition. These are behaviors that are not taught and are stereotypical in action and similar in all members of a species.

**Judge or Evaluator -** An individual with relevant training and experience who assesses the canine, handler, or team performance while showing no bias or partiality.

**Leaking** – This expression describes the first signs of stress in a dog.

**Learned Helplessness** - When a canine understands that at some point in time, regardless of the individual ability of the canine, a handler or trainer will step in and assist the canine with the problem at hand. Canines that display this behavior will often stop and stare at the handler/trainer, show signs of leaking, or try to escape the work area.

**Luring** – A method of guiding the dog through a behavior with some type of lure. Food is a common lure, and when placed in the hand, it can be used to manipulate the canine as needed. Other common lures include but are not limited to toys, sticks, boxes, hand signals, or body movements.

**Maintenance Training** – It is not simply preserving existing skills; it also involves continuous refinement and advancement.

**Motivation** – ***see Drive***

**Negative Reinforcement** - A procedure in which a behavior results in the withdrawal of a stimulus and, as a result, future frequency of that behavior increases—an operant conditioning technique.

**Non-Productive Response (False Alert** ) – A response produced by the canine when further or previous knowledge shows that NO target stimuli (specific scent or odor) were present. It is commonly misdiagnosed when only minimal factors are considered. ***See also Generalization***

**Odor** – A vapor produced as a result of the deterioration of a material or substance that has the same chemical makeup as the source material itself. ***See also Vapor***

**Operant Conditioning** – A training technique that involves teaching consequences for actions by exposing the canine to punishers and reinforcers. For undesirable behaviors, a positive or negative punisher would result. For desirable behavior, a positive or negative reinforcer would result.

**Olfaction** – A dog's sense of smell, called olfaction, is incredibly powerful. Millions of special sensors in their nose send signals to their brain, allowing them to detect even the faintest scents. This remarkable ability is why dogs are used for everything from tracking to detecting drugs and explosives.

**Passive Response-**  A passive response means the dog indicates the presence of a target odor (like drugs or explosives) in a calm, non-disruptive way. (i.e., sit, stand, or lie quietly after the detector dog has detected a trained odor).

**Scent or Odor Plume** – The area a vapor occupies in a given environment. Plumes are like invisible trails of scent or odor particles carried by the air, spreading out from a source.

**Positive Control**- A status in which the handler or trainer has full control of a canine to ensure the canine achieves success or to mitigate collateral damage.

**Positive Reinforcement** – An operant conditioning technique used to give or deliver a desirable cue or item to increase the likelihood of a behavior in the future.

**Prey Drive** – This is the instinctive inclination of a dog to find, pursue, and capture prey.

**Proofing** - This is the process of training a dog to consistently perform a reliably learned behavior, even in the face of distractions, changing environments, and increasing difficulty levels. It's about ensuring the dog will perform the desired action every time, regardless of what's happening around it.

**Punishment** - A consequence of an undesired behavior in which something is added to or removed from the situation to make the behavior less likely to occur in the future.

**Skin Rafts** – These are dead skin cells that leave the host carrying identifying Vapor in the air or just falling to the ground. These vapor-enshrouded rafts come to rest on the ground and continue to release scent vapors due to the bacterial activity that happens after it leaves the host.

**Rate of Reinforcement** - The number of reinforcers given for desired responses in a specific period of time.

**Reinforcer** - Anything a canine will work for to obtain.

**Release Command**- A word or cue that signals the end of a sustained behavior or position.

**Residual Odor** - Residual odor refers to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that remain in an area after removing the original source. Detection dogs can locate and alert to these residual odors as they would to the original source since the odor signature remains identifiable regardless of the quantity present.

**Scent** – A distinct smell.

**Scent cone** – A plume of Vapor or scent that consistently exists in a predictable location that expands and moves further away from the host or origin.

**Shaping** - The process of teaching a dog a complex behavior by breaking it down into simple steps. The simple behaviors are trained in a gradual progression, with each new step moving the dog closer to the goal-directed behavior.

**Socialization** - Is the process of preparing a dog to enjoy interactions and be comfortable with other animals, people, places and activities. **See also Environmental Training or Testing.**

**Stimulus** – Stimulus refers to the specific target odor or scent a dog is trained to detect and alert to, such as narcotics, explosives, or human remains. It is what triggers the dog's trained response behavior.

**Stress** – An internal or external response to physical or psychological conflict.

**Stress Signals** - Behavior and body language indicative of escalating tension and anxiety, such as barking and whining or pacing and panting. Stress signals may begin with mild avoidance and progress to more extreme anxiety and panic.

**Stimulus Control** - The dog's ability to reliably perform a trained response only when the target odor (stimulus) is present and not respond to other scents or distractions. It ensures the dog maintains accuracy and specificity in detection work. **See also Leaking**

**Taggant** – Nitro and Methyl compounds that vaporize rapidly and enhance the detection of plastic explosives by instrumental analysis.

**Target Odor** - Odors that are introduced to a canine to illicit a specific response.

**Temperament** – The term "temperament" in animals refers to the **consistent individual differences in behavior** that are present throughout an animal's life. It's essentially their personality, influencing how they react to various situations and stimuli.

**Threshold** – In behavioral terms, a threshold refers to the **level of stimulation required to elicit a response or behavior**. It's the point at which an animal (or even a human) starts to react to a stimulus.

**Track or Trail** - A track is the physical evidence of passage, while a trail is the scent evidence. Dogs primarily follow trails, even if they initially use tracks to get started.

**Tracking** - A canine's propensity or learning ability to methodically follow odor on the ground (human/ground disturbance) **using only olfactory senses**.

**Trainability** – A canine's ability to learn through conditioning, exposure, and training.

**K9 Trainer/K9 Instructor** - Any canine professional who instructs any part of the canine or canine team using established methods and validated training guidelines. Usually validated by a certification or pre-requisite of experience.

**Training/Maintenance Log/Record** - This record serves as a comprehensive history of a canine's (and often the handler's) training, and overall experiences. It's a crucial tool for monitoring progress, identifying areas for improvement, and maintaining consistency in training.

**Variable Reward Schedule**- A variance in the amount of time or frequency a canine is given a reinforcer. The introduction to the concept of "maybe".

**Vapor Pressure** - The natural release of odor from a target substance

**Vegetative Odor** – Released particles from vegetation.

**Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)** – VOCs are essentially the "scent particles" that dogs detect. They are the tiny chemical compounds that detach from humans, explosives, narcotics, cadavers, and other materials, becoming airborne and detectable by a dog's incredibly sensitive nose. These VOCs are unique to each substance.