

Wildlife Detector Dog Performance Objectives

Wildlife Detector Dog [PWDD]

These Performance Objectives are established in a Reality-based format, in order to optimize training efficiency and also to provide the most realistic training environment possible, within the current time/logistical constraints.

The skills outlined in the Performance Objectives are considered valuable for the seasoned/veteran Wildlife Detector Dog. A synopsis of these skills is as follows.

1. K-9 Searching.

1. Sniffing a location/object to determine the presence/absence of the odor of contraband.
2. Pinpointing the strongest source of an odor of contraband, once odor is detected.



3. Bypassing distracting odors which may be interesting to the Dog.

2. K-9 Indication.

1. Alerting the Handler to the presence of the odor of contraband. An Alert is the "natural behavior" the Dog exhibits when it first perceives a target odor, behavior which the Handler recognizes due to frequent observation, but which may not be easily perceived by an unskilled person.
2. Indicating the source of the odor to the Handler. An Indication is behavior which is easily perceived by the Handler or an unskilled person. This behavior may be a "trained" behavior or it may be a "final response" the Dog exhibited on its own.



3. K-9 Obedience.

1. A Game Dog should have sufficient obedience skills to perform its function. Obedience skills are relative to the individual Handler, Agency, and application(s) the dog may have. For example, it is anticipated that a Game Dog that is also a Patrol Dog will have more obedience skills. Likewise, a particular Handler or Agency is likely to have preferences on what commands the dog should be trained to.



The Dog and Handler can be successfully trained to an appropriate skill level by a qualified Detector Dog Instructor. The competency can then be evaluated and declared by a qualified Detector Dog Judge.

The odors on which a Dog is trained and evaluated shall be determined by jurisdictional need.

The quantities of the odors in the competency evaluation shall be comparable to quantities experienced in deployment. The only exception is the exercise involving buried Wildlife (or its substitute), in which a minimum of 1000 grams are to be used. The substances shall be packaged in various materials or containers.

A Dog shall be evaluated only on odors with which it has been trained, and sufficient documentation exists to validate sufficient exposures to the individual substances.

The Wildlife Detector Dog evaluation shall be concluded within a reasonable time frame after it is begun. Most evaluations can be completed in 48 hours, barring some logistical problems, such as weather, injury, or other uncontrollable situation. The intent is to establish that the Dog's mental and physical endurance are sufficient to withstand the rigors of active service.

Definitions and Examples of Wildlife Detector Dog Behavior

1. **Searching:** Searching is the behavior the Dog exhibits when it is hunting for an odor it has been trained to detect and it does so primarily by use of its nose. When searching with optimal efficiency, the Dog shall be calm, methodical, intense, focused, and sniffing rather than searching primarily with its eyes. Although all Dogs that are searching efficiently use their noses, some Dogs exhibit unique behavior while searching. These unique behaviors may include whining and barking, hopping or bouncing, rapid sideways or serpentine movements, etc. These behaviors, though non-typical, usually have little influence on the quality of the Dog's searching. Most often, these unique behaviors are motivated by other Drives or Character Traits which may be present in the Dog. When a Dog is Searching, the actual sniffing behavior is observed either with the Dog's nose close to the item being sniffed or with its nose pointed toward the location the Dog is attempting to focus on, as if testing the object/direction for the presence of the target odor.



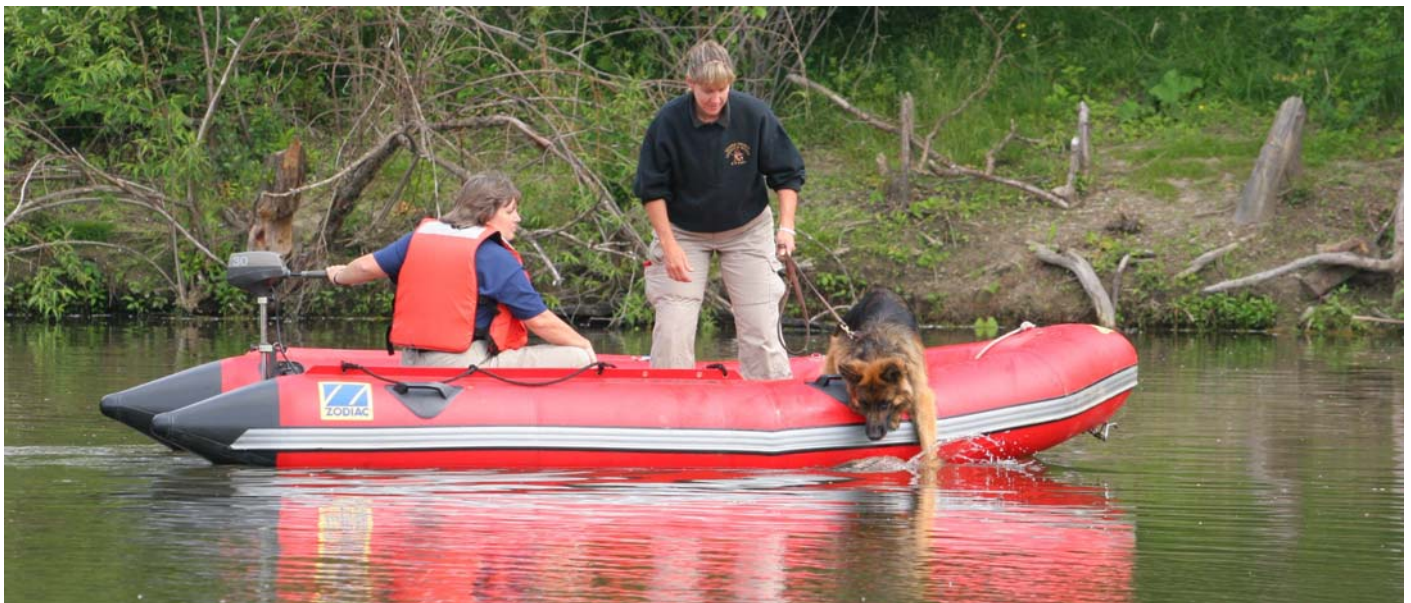
2. **Ranging:** Ranging is a unique Searching behavior that is usually exhibited only when a Dog is deployed in a large open search area, such as a field or forest. It is similar to the behavior seen by wild dogs as they move about large open areas searching for a target odor. Ranging behavior is equally efficient as Searching behavior, it is only on a larger scale. When a Dog is Ranging, the actual sniffing behavior is observed with the Dog's head 6"-18" off the ground, as if testing wind currents. Although Ranging behavior may be seen in a Game Dog that is called upon to search any large open area, it is most often observed among other types of Detector Dogs. See the following photos for examples of Ranging behavior.



A Wildlife Detector sniffs a 50 acre wooded area for poached game. Notice the "Wild-Tracking" behavior evidenced by the high nose, showing a balance of Tracking Drive and Air Scenting Drive.



A Cadaver Detector Dog Ranges through a large rubble pile search area in an attempt to locate decomposed human victims. This rubble pile was almost 2 acres in size.



A Police Search & Rescue Dog indicates on the presence of odor of a drowning victim in a lake after Ranging back and forth across the wind current. This equates to ranging behavior, although the dog didn't maneuver itself through the search area.

3. **Distraction:** A Wildlife Detector Dog should not be thwarted by a "Distraction" while deployed on a canine sniff. For Game Dog purposes, a Distraction is a naturally-occurring odor/object which may be present in a location the Dog is called upon to sniff. Examples of Distractions are a tennis ball inside a school locker or the odor of a dead animal.



Distraction of human clothing and food in a search area.



Distraction of a dead bird in a search area.

It is normal and acceptable that a properly-trained Wildlife Detector Dog may notice a Distraction. The Dog may even pause momentarily at the Distraction, but a properly-trained Wildlife detector Dog will not exhibit Alert nor Indication behavior on a Distraction.

4. **Diversion:** A Wildlife Detector Dog should not be thwarted by a "Diversion" while deployed on a canine sniff. For Game Dog purposes, a Diversion is an odor/object placed in a location with the intent to divert the Dog away from a Wildlife stash or defeat the Dog's sniff test (an example is coffee grounds packed around a quantity of Wildlife inside a hidden cavity of a vehicle).

It is normal and acceptable that a properly-trained Wildlife Detector Dog may notice a Diversion. The Dog may even pause momentarily at the Diversion, but a properly-trained Wildlife detector Dog will not exhibit Alert nor Indication behavior on a Diversion.



Diversion of Dog repellent placed inside a cooler to thwart a Game Detector Dog.

5. **Alerting:** Alerting is a behavior exhibited by a Game Dog when it transitions from general scanning behavior (when it has not yet detected any target odor) to Pinpointing behavior (when it has detected target odor). A person who is familiar with the Dog, such as the Handler or the Instructor, may easily recognize the Alert behavior and perceive that the Dog has encountered the target odor. There are similarities between Pinpointing behavior and Alert behavior, however, each has unique qualities to it. Alert behavior may consist of a pronounced or sudden head movement (which is recognized as an attempt to isolate odor), or some other articulable behavior which the Handler or Trainer has observed to be consistent when the Dog Alerts.



When a Dog performs an Alert, the Handler - and sometimes a highly skilled K-9 expert - is able to perceive the following:

1. change of behavior from Searching/Ranging to Pinpointing;
2. focus narrows to a particular location or zone where the odor was detected;
3. intensity increases as the Dog closes in on its target;
4. deep nasal breathing begins, rather than short sniffs;
5. pronounced "closing in" on the source of the odor, meaning the Dog is attempting to isolate a particular spot;
6. odor-fixated behavior which is noticeably different from general sniffing,
7. resists leaving the area where odor was detected;
8. resists distractions, such as officer(s) moving in closer to assess the Dog's behavior or other sounds;
9. when the task is reinforced by a verbal search command, may result in an Indication.
10. if the Dog is showing interest only - on a non-drug odor - and the task command is given, the Dog is likely to continue the search, rather than Indicate.

The United States Military Working Dog Program utilizes a special term for the "Alert" described herein, it is the "Just Noticeable Difference" or JND.

2.2.1.1 JND is the animal's ability to detect slight changes or differences pertaining to a specific sense. All sensing systems are included in this definition. Examples of JND include the smelling of a weak odor as opposed to a stronger odor, the hearing of low volume noises as opposed to louder volumes, the feeling of light pressure as opposed to progressively heavier pressure, and so on. (<http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/pubfiles/af/31/afman31-219/afman31-219.pdf>)

7. **Pinpointing:** If a Game Dog is deployed on a search for the presence of a target odor, it shall do so as described herein. If it perceives a target odor, it shall immediately pinpoint the source of the odor. Pinpointing differs from Searching in that it is evaluated as independent behavior manifested by the Dog, whereas Searching is a Handler-controlled behavior.



8. **Indicating:** Indicating is the trained behavior exhibited by a Game Dog after it has "Alerted" to a Game odor and "Pinpointed" its strongest source. Indicating is subdivided into behaviors identified as "Aggressive" or "Passive." An Aggressive Indication is observed when a Dog barks, bites, or scratches when it Indicates. A Passive Indication is observed when a Dog sits, stands, downs, or freezes when it Indicates. Either Aggressive or Passive Indication is suitable for a Game Dog.



Aggressive Indication on a stash of contraband in the engine area.

Aggressive Indication at the source of contraband odor.

Aggressive Indication on the seam of a vehicle ... contraband inside.

It is critical to note that the trained behavior is likely to be exhibited only when the Dog is physically able to do so. For example, if a Game Dog Alerts to odor and crawls underneath a vehicle as it Pinpoints, it may not be able to scratch due to the confined space ... and may just freeze in position. This is, nonetheless, an Indication to the Handler that the Dog has located the strongest source of odor.



A Game Dog that can only pinpoint the source of a target odor by jumping up to it, may repeatedly jump up to the exact location and attempt to place its nose on the source. When this behavior is consistently observed on high finds, it is also acceptable as an indication.



A Game Dog that normally Aggressive Indicates may "Freeze" in position and stare (aka "Point" as Hunting Dogs do) at the source of the odor because it cannot scratch easily. When this behavior is consistently observed on high finds, it is also acceptable as an indication.

Similarly, if Wildlife is stashed in a room at a point high above the Dog's reach, it may

Alert, Pinpoint, and then begin jumping up in the air in an attempt to get to the Wildlife stash in the ceiling ... this is also an Indication to the Handler that the Dog has located the strongest source of odor. Again, if a Dog is sniffing the interior of a vehicle wherein a large quantity of Wildlife is stashed, it may have extreme difficulty locating the exact source (smoky room effect) and may Alert/Pinpoint for an extended period of time, and not Indicate. This behavior, when it is exhibited consistently and reliably, is also acceptable.

Finally, two more points are important to understand. First, Indicating is a trained behavior to tell the Handler (and others, such as an Attorney, a Judge, or a Jury) that the strongest source of odor is at a certain spot. Second, Indicating does not always occur and is dependent on the environment. Indicating is optimal but not critical to the interdiction of Wildlife in a criminal investigation.

- 9. **Sit:** If the Handler halts while Heeling, the Dog shall, without command or signal, sit immediately in the Heel position. A proper sit at Heel is observed when the K-9's shoulder is in line with the Handler's knee, as shown in the accompanying photograph. The Handler shall not move in order to favor the Dog's position, but rather, the Dog shall position itself according to the Handler. If the Handler gives a sit command when the K-9 is not in the Heel position, the K-9 should immediately sit in whatever position it is in at that moment.



- 10. **Down:** If the Handler commands or signals the Dog to Down, it shall comply immediately. If this occurs during Heeling, the Dog shall lie parallel to the Handler. If this occurs during a detection task, the Dog shall lie as commanded.



- 11. **Point:** Point is another term for a Game Dog that freezes in a position when it Indicates. Pointing is related to Indication behavior. Some hunting breeds have been selectively bred to Point when a target is located and this may be utilized by some Handlers as the Indication behavior for that Dog. Other Dogs may even be trained to freeze in position when they Indicate, at the Handler's choice. The terms Point and Freeze are used interchangeably.



- 12. **Behavior in Public:** If the Handler walks through a group of people, the Dog should remain at Heel - neutral and safe - to the people. Touching or sniffing is faulty. The Handler shall ensure

sufficient space between the Dog and others. This neutral and safe demeanor shall be maintained, even if the Handler speaks or a person speaks to the Handler.

- 13. **Pain Tolerance:** Pain Tolerance or "Hardness" is a critical issue for the Game Dog in modern society. For examination purposes, pain tolerance is evaluated by observing the Game Dog during uncomfortable situations.



Wildlife Detector Dog Certification Scenarios

Successful performance in the following scenarios are considered important for the seasoned/veteran Wildlife Detector Dog.

0. **Logistics.** All scenarios are performed via Single-Blind evaluation. Each scenario must be passed on its own merits. Any behavior exhibited by the Handler or K-9 that would likely produce negative repercussions, either administratively or civilly, is cause for failure of the scenario.
1. **Big Game Gutpile Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one gutpile removed from a Big Game animal in a forest environment of at least 10,000 square yards. This represents the environment which may be encountered in a poaching investigation. Numerous other possible hiding locations shall also be present which will have neither Wildlife odor nor a diversion inside. The empty sites shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



2. **Big Game Carcass Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one Big Game carcass that has been buried or submerged in a field/forest environment of at least 10,000 square yards in an attempt to thwart discovery. This represents the environment which may be encountered in a poaching investigation. Numerous other possible hiding locations shall also be present which will not have Wildlife odor present, except that one site shall have a diversion present. The empty sites shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



3. **Checkpoint Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one stash of Wildlife which has been hidden on the exterior or the interior of one of six vehicles (cars or trucks). This represents the environment which may be encountered during Wildlife Checkpoints or other vehicular deployments. The five additional vehicles will have neither Wildlife odor nor a diversion inside. These vehicles shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



4. **Campsite Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one stash of Wildlife which has been hidden in a campsite environment. This represents the environment which may be encountered during a poaching investigation. Multiple tents or similar situations shall have no Wildlife odor, but one site shall have a diversion inside. The multiple sites without Wildlife odor shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



5. **Residence Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one stash of Wildlife which has been hidden inside a residence. This represents the environment which may be encountered in a poaching investigation. Multiple rooms will have neither Wildlife odor nor a diversion inside. These rooms without Wildlife odor shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



6. **Stream/Riverbank Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one stash of fish which has been hidden within a 50-yard distance and parallel to a stream/river. This represents the environment which may be encountered when a Wildlife Officer encounters an angler(s) who are fishing. Within the search area there shall be multiple objects/locations that have no fish odor, but one site shall have a diversion inside. The multiple objects/locations without fish odor shall constitute a blank search in this scenario.



7. **Firearms Shell Casing Sniff Test.** The Handler shall deploy the Dog in a scenario which has been prepared to examine the Dog's ability to locate one empty shell casing which has been placed in an 800 square yard field/forest search area. This represents the environment which may be encountered when a Wildlife Officer conducts a search for discharged firearms ammunition.

