

Police Trailing Dog Certification Scenarios

This variety of Police K-9 differs from a Police Tracking Dog, as Trailing deals with "Air Scenting." A Police Trailing Dog's abilities far exceed that of a typical Patrol Dog that "Street-Tracks" or "Trails." A K-9 performing this function might be considered a "Human Scent Detector Dog," comparable in skill to other detector dogs. These are the certification standards which Utah POST has researched and determined to be a reasonable foundation for this special variety of Police K-9.

The Utah POST Trailing Dog certification is a Reality-Based examination. Due to the various training philosophies surrounding Trailing Dogs, some of which seem to conflict, only the certification scenarios are presented here. POST does not mandate the philosophy nor the protocols by which a Police Trailing Dog is trained. The only issue that is meaningful is that the Dog is able to resolve the scenarios successfully. This is not to be a test of luck, meaning that it is not intended that the Dog be allowed to move throughout the search area, at some point accidentally crossing into the scent cone of the target. Rather, this is to be a display of skill in which the candidate registers a scent of the target and skillfully follows it to the person's location. Each of the three scenarios must be successfully resolved in order to certify as a Police Trailing Dog.

0. General Information.

K-9 Trailing Behavior is sniffing the air for windborne human odor. This behavior may be exhibited with a high nose (true trailing behavior), a moderately-high nose (street-tracking behavior), or an occasional deep nose (true tracking behavior). The intent of the Dog is to detect human odor, not ground disturbances.

The skills favorable for successful deployment of a Police Trailing Dog are recognized in two categories: (1) Air Scenting, and (2) Discrimination. The Dog and Handler can be successfully trained to an appropriate skill level by a qualified Trailing Dog Instructor. The competency can then be evaluated and declared by a qualified Trailing Dog Judge.

K-9 Alert Behavior is alerting the Handler to the presence of the target body odor. An Alert is behavior which the Handler recognizes but which may not be easily perceived by another person.

K-9 Pinpointing Behavior is isolating the strongest source of human odor, once odor is detected.

1. Scenarios.

1. Urban Trailing Scenario.

The Dog shall be deployed at the starting point of a trail which a person has laid through an urban environment, without any special regard to terrain or other conditions. The length of the trail shall be at least 1/2 mile, have three changes of direction, and aged a minimum of one hour. The Dog shall locate the person within a reasonable amount of time.



2. Suburban Trailing Scenario.

The Dog shall be deployed at a starting point of a trail which a person has laid through a suburban environment, without any special regard to terrain or other conditions. The length of the trail shall be at least 3/4 mile, have four changes of direction, and aged a minimum of two hours. The Dog shall locate the person within a reasonable amount of time.



3. Rural Trailing Scenario.

The Dog shall be deployed at a starting point of a trail which a person has laid through a rural environment, without any special regard to terrain or other conditions. The length of the trail shall be at least one mile, have five changes of direction, and aged a minimum of three hours. The Dog shall locate the person within a reasonable amount of time. If it should appear to the Judge that the Dog has gotten to a point that it has little chance of recovering from its disoriented state, or has lost the trail completely and is not likely to recover, or goes off-task by shutting down or via some form of distraction, the Judge shall halt the respective scenario.



1. Procedures.

The Police Trailing Dog evaluation shall be concluded within a reasonable period of time after it is begun. This is to establish that the Dog's mental stamina and physical endurance are sufficient to withstand the rigors of active service.

The use and/or type of collar, use and/or type of harness, or use and/or type of leash on which a Dog is trained and evaluated shall be determined by jurisdictional need. The Handler shall not use the leash to guide the Dog.

The Judge shall not intervene on any reasonable issue or procedure enacted by the Handler or Dog while being evaluated. The Judge shall intervene only if s/he observes a procedure or behavior exhibited by the Handler or Dog that seems overtly risky, unprofessional, or inappropriate. An example of such a behavior might be the Handler calling out in a loud voice "Hunt'em up Boy, Hunt'em up!" such that a dangerous subject being pursued might calculate the Handler's location via the loudness of his/her voice.