

WHEN POLICE AND DOGS MEET:

SERIES OF VIDEOS DESIGNED TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

In 2013, The National Canine Research Council funded and developed, in partnership with Safe Humane Chicago and the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), a five-video series that prepares law enforcement officers for interactions with dogs in the line of duty, *Police and Dog Encounters: Tactical Strategies and Effective Tools to Keep Our Communities Safe and Humane*. The series can be viewed at no charge from the DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services' website:

First and foremost, *Police and Dog Encounters* is about staying safe. It gives officers hands-on skills and information to protect themselves, the residents nearby, and the dogs they encounter in the line of duty. The videos present a clear sequence of tangible, tactical strategies to achieve these shared, critical goals. The series "goes to the heart of looking at the totality of the situation and understanding all the options that we have," explains Commander James Russell of the Chicago Police Department, one of the police officials interviewed for the series.

The series is based on one of National Canine Research Council's most influential and sought-after publications, "The Problem of Dog-Related Incidents and Encounters," a manual for first responders that the DOJ published in 2011. Tens of thousands of copies have been distributed by the DOJ and National Canine Research Council, in print and electronic versions. The manual's significant contribution to the safety of both first responders and animals caused National Canine Research Council to recognize the need for a video series on this important subject. With the cooperation of partners Safe Humane Chicago and the DOJ, this series became a reality in 2013.

There are an estimated 78 million dogs in the United States: one dog for every four people. Police can expect to encounter dogs in the course of their contact with the public they serve and protect, from a traffic stop, where the dog is along for the ride, to encountering a dog in a yard or at the doorway of a home, when serving a warrant or interviewing suspects and witnesses. And while there is no evidence that officer shootings of dogs are increasing, dogs are increasingly viewed as family members, so that shootings provoke strong responses in the communities, resulting in increased liability and bad press for law enforcement agencies.

But not every police or sheriff's department can afford the resources needed to effectively educate their officers for successful encounters with dogs. *Police and Dog Encounters* can help bridge that gap. Through proper training, law enforcement officers can be prepared for safe, non-confrontational outcomes. In addition, with training in effective responses to genuinely volatile situations, officers can avoid the worst case scenarios—being injured by a dog or shooting one.

NATIONAL CANINE
RESEARCH COUNCIL

A RESEARCH & POLICY THINK TANK

NATIONALCANINERESearchCOUNCIL.COM

Dog training expert and author Brian Kilcommons of Great Pets, with the assistance of active duty officers from the Chicago Police Department, teaches simple techniques, and helps officers see the effect of their body language on a dog's behavior. Kilcommons explains, "We're not turning police officers into dog trainers. . . We're talking about them going into a situation, knowing if a dog is there. If it is there, how to communicate with that dog, reduce the potential of an aggressive situation happening."

Officers also learn how to recognize the signs that indicate a dog may be present, how to avoid unnecessary encounters with dogs, and how to distinguish between warning signals and signs of friendliness when they must enter a dog's space.

Each of the five videos is approximately ten minutes long. "We produced this series to help law enforcement better navigate an already tense situation," said National Canine Research Council's Stacey Coleman, who served as Executive Producer for the series. "In less than one hour's viewing, an officer can acquire valuable tools that will serve him or her well in the line of duty."

The companion booklet, "The Problem of Dog-Related Incidents and Encounters," remains available, as well, and at no charge. It can be downloaded from the websites of National Canine Research Council or the DOJ.

Updated January 15, 2016