



IN THE LINE OF DUTY

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SPECIAL ISSUE

FACT SHEET

What Dogs Try To Tell Cops

Program Length 23:50

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In the Line of Duty Training videos have received POST approval for continuing education credit for training in the following states:

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OVERVIEW

An incident in Cookeville, Tennessee in which a police officer fatally shot a family's pet dog during a stop created a public outcry. Although it was a felony stop, critics allege the officer was too quick to put down the dog. It was all captured on video. The dog appeared friendly rather than aggressive. Complicating the issue is the fact that the owners of the dog had done nothing wrong and that the felony stop was based on erroneous information. The result was inevitable litigation even though the shooting was ruled justified. There have been numerous incidents in which officers have shot and killed dogs. There is no argument that killing attacking, or even threatening, animals is justified. This video is designed to help officers evaluate situations involving animals more intelligently and to take alternative action when appropriate.

The Approach:

- Anticipate the presence of a dog on any property. One out of three Americans owns a dog.
- Look for signs that a dog is present.
- Contact owner to confine dog.
- (Some officers carry doggie treats with them to mollify dogs)
- Assume a dog is on the premises. Let it know you are approaching.
- Look at a dog's body language.
- Don't approach dogs that seem afraid.
- Do not back ANY dog into corner.
- Never exit car when unfriendly dog or dogs are present.
- Barking does NOT always mean a dog is aggressive.
- Dogs are highly territorial and inherently protective. They react to movement.
- Touching the owner, even the gesture of handing him something, can provoke
- hostility from the animal.
- Use lethal force when nothing else works.

Do's and Don't When Dog Is Provoked

- Keep movement to a minimum
- Show profile
- Don't extend hand
- Don't stare
- Don't smile or show teeth
- Back away slowly

If a dog greets you with hostility, don't be afraid to retreat and consider your next course of action.

If there is no time to retreat, use your baton as a "bite" stick, or "feed" it

something like your jacket. Striking the dog will make it more aggressive.

Tools:

There are a number of tools officers usually have at their disposal that can be used to fend off an attack by a dog.

- Pepper Spray-Mace (Note: Pepper spray or mace do not work on pit bulls. It usually makes them more aggressive.)
- Night Stick
- Baton
- Fire Extinguishers
- Lethal force should be the final option in the force continuum.

Force Continuum

- Calming behavior
- Commands
- Isolation
- Chemical, electronic, sonic physical repellents

Pit Bulls and Larger Dogs:

Pit Bulls are the most notorious of all dogs. They have often been associated with attacks. They are often used as guard dogs by drug dealers and many have been trained to fight.

By nature, they are people-friendly and will not challenge, unless not socialized properly. Their best qualities are those that make them so suitable for protection. They are fiercely loyal, tenacious, intelligent, but if they growl, watch out. Pit bulls often wag their tails before just before and after an attack. When the tail is held high and wagging in short movements, it may be a sign of dominance rather than friendliness.

Rottweilers are not very sociable and do not like to take orders from strangers or even from their owners. Take it seriously when they growl.

Dobermans often do not bark or show aggression before they attack.

These larger breeds can be docile or dangerous. They have a fierce protective streak which can be exploited by those who train them to attack.

Protecting Yourself:

The follow maneuvers can be employed during an attack.

Turn to the side: That gives an animal a less threatening profile and makes you a smaller target.

Protect face and throat: Dogs will usually attack the face and throat because that is where the sound comes from. An attacking dog wants to silence its prey. So:

Do not yell or scream.

Brace yourself: You want to avoid being knocked down were the animal has easier access to your throat.

Fetal position: If you are knocked down, assume the fetal position to lessen

the exposure of as much body surface as possible.

Protect throat and ears: Use your hands.

Do not expose fingers: It is best to ball your hands so the animal cannot bite at your fingers

Review:

Read the dog's body language: Their intentions are usually clearly signaled.

Avoid Eye Contact: Staring at a dog is interpreted as a threat.

Stand Still: Dogs are more likely to attack a moving target.

Use Verbal Commands: Dogs that have been trained will often respond to commands such as "sit!" or "stay!"

Allow Dog to Retreat: Never corner a dog. Allow it to pull back. They are very territorial and frequently will pull back when they feel their territory is not threatened.

Be Prepared: When entering a situation in which a confrontation with a dog(s) is likely, have such equipment as nooses available to restrain the animals.

Train: Work with K9 officers or animal welfare organizations to learn more about dog behavior.

Resist Lethal Force: Resist the temptation to use lethal force unless there is no alternative. Remember, dogs are someone's property. Destroy that property and you are setting up you and your department for a lawsuit.

If and when you decide on lethal force:

If you can't shoot before an attack, try and make the dog bite your weak side arm

Do all you can to stay on your feet

Shoot the dog in chest or shoulder until it releases you

Questions For Discussion

1. What is your feeling about the Tennessee dog shooting? Do you feel the officer was justified in killing the animal? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Do you feel you might have reacted in the same way?
3. Is it time for you to personally reevaluate your approach to confrontations with animals? Discuss it.
4. Have you been trained to deal with aggressive dogs? If not, do you feel training in this area would worthwhile?
5. Have you ever been attacked by a dog?
6. How do you deal with aggressive dogs?
7. How well do you think you can read dogs?
8. Would you call an animal control officer if you were called to a scene where there were barking dogs?
9. Do you worry more about confrontations with some breeds more than others? If so, why?
10. Do you fear dogs? If so, would that affect your approach to dealing with an aggressive animal?

Organizations listed below have expressed a willingness to help law enforcement agencies learn about dogs and dog behavior. Contact the organization for the regional office nearest you.

National Animal Control Association

Mailing address: P.O. Box 480851, Kansas City, MO, 64148 Hours:

Phone: 913-768-1319 Fax: 913-768-1378 email:

naca@interserv.com

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

424 E. 92nd St

New York, NY 10128-6804

information@aspca.org

The Humane Society of the United States

2100 L Street, NW

Washington DC 20037

202-452-1100

RLockwood@hsus.org

The following questions are for classroom testing.

Multiple Choice

1. Which of the following is a sign that a dog might become aggressive?
 1. His tail is stuck between his legs
 2. He is barking
 3. His ears are back and his hackles are up
 4. He is pawing at the ground

2. Backing a dog into a corner is likely to:
 1. Promote an attack
 2. Cause the dog to relax
 3. Show dominance over the animal
 4. None of the above

3. One of the best ways to avoid attack is to:
 1. Stare at a dog
 2. Pet the dog
 3. Check for the presence of a dog before entering property
 4. Shake hands with the owner in the dog's presence

4. The most prudent form of action when confronting a hostile dog is:
 1. Turn and run
 2. Show the dog you are not afraid by approaching him
 3. Keep movement to a minimum
 4. Tell it to "move back, move back."

5. When attacked, an officer should:
 1. Offer his baton or nightstick as a "bite" stick
 2. Offer only with his weak side arm
 3. Shoot as a last resort
 4. All of the above

True or False

1. _____ A wagging tail is always a signal that a dog is friendly
2. _____ An attacking dog will usually seek its victims' throat
3. _____ Pit Bulls are inherently aggressive
4. _____ When attacked, it is best to ball your fingers
5. _____ Backing away slowly is an effective way to prevent an attack
6. _____ Handing a subject something, or touching a subject in front of his dog shows the dog you are not a threat
7. _____ Dogs are most likely to attack if they feel their territory is violated
8. _____ Telling a threatening dog to "sit" or "stay" may prevent an attack
9. _____ Staring at a dog is read as a challenge by the animal
10. _____ If you know a dog is on the premises, let it know you are approaching.

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