



CANINE (K9) RETIREMENT AND ADOPTION POLICY

*Approved by Council
27 November 2024*

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1. POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the retirement and adoption of live Canine (K9) assets (Dogs) of the Overstrand Municipality's K9 Unit.

K9 life expectancy and retirement age cannot be accurately predicted. Law Enforcement dog's lifespan expectancy, or longevity, is defined as the expected number of working years in the K9 Unit, and several factors affect how long the Law Enforcement dogs work, live, and when they retire, which include but are not limited to the dog breed, health status and job dangers.

For adoption of or working with a retired Law Enforcement dog important considerations apply.

2. DISCUSSION

The use of K9's has proven to be an asset to the Law Enforcement community. The K9 teams are also available to assist other Governmental Organizations depending on approval and adequate staffing.

Canis Lupus Familiaris - Canine - K9

It is the Latin description for the species "canine" or dog and is "canine" the abbreviated form thereof. The term K9 or K-9 is a homophone of canine and is used to abbreviate canine.

While any dog can be referred to as a K9, it is more commonly used to refer to Police or Law Enforcement dogs. When "K9" appears on a Police or Law Enforcement vehicle it means that the vehicle carries a working service dog.

2.1 Breeds used as Law Enforcement Dogs

The most popular breeds are German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, Dutch Shepherds, and occasionally mixtures of these breeds. Less popular, but still used at times, are Rottweilers and Bouvier de Flandres. Other breeds are used for detection work if this is their sole purpose.

Labrador Retrievers and Sheep dogs are often used for narcotics and explosives detection, and evidence discovery, as well as for Search and Rescue purposes. Bloodhounds are used for trailing, and many mixed breeds can be used for detection and scent work as well. Males and females both make excellent Law Enforcement service dogs.

2.2 Law Enforcement dogs neutered and/or spayed

Females are usually spayed because of their in-heat cycles but also for certain medical reasons. Males may be neutered for medical or behavioural reasons.

2.3 Kennel Husbandry and Kennelling

Law Enforcement dogs are typically housed in kennels provided by the Law Enforcement Department. This is particularly useful for a department with multiple dogs and handlers, as it allows the dogs to be housed in a secure and appropriate environment.

On application by a K9 Handler permission may be granted by the Overstrand Municipal Manager and Regional Inspector K9 Unit, and after inspection of her/his premisses to keep the dog at home. Normally after working a full shift, dogs will be housed in their kennels where they are fed and watered and get much-needed sleep and rest they will require for their next shift.

2.4 Law Enforcement Dog cost

Depending on the bloodline, training and age of a dog the cost per dog may vary, but because most Law Enforcement dogs are sourced from various registered training kennels and institutions, the cost per dog may amount to approximately R100 000.00.

Alternatively, dogs may be donated to the Overstrand Municipality's K9 Unit to be trained in house. The costs associated with training in Patrol Work, Detection, and Tracking, may be anything from R100,000.00 per dog, depending on the duration of training.

K9 replacement plan and funding will be approved in accordance with the Living Resources Fixed Assets Register.

3. PURPOSE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT DOGS

Law Enforcement dogs, also known as the K9 Unit, are specifically trained to assist police and law-enforcement personnel. Dogs have exceptional working abilities and a strong desire to cooperate with their handlers. Some Law Enforcement dogs are trained solely to perform one task. (Single Purpose trained) while others are trained to be multitaskers (multipurpose trained). These dogs are mainly used for purposes of apprehension, detection, search and rescue which may include the search for drugs and explosives; locate missing persons, find crime scene evidence, and apprehend persons targeted by Law Enforcement.

3.1 K9 Training

Patrol Dog Training which includes obedience, agility, tracking, searching for evidence, open area and building searches, narcotics and/or explosives detection are the most common areas of training, although service dogs can also be trained to help find dead bodies, lost children, and missing persons. In addition, scent discrimination training is used to help match a potential suspect to a weapon or implement used during the commission of a crime.

The passive alert is utilized during explosives and other scent training, which means that the dog will indicate to its handler that it has detected an explosive component by either sitting or lying down as close to the object as possible.

4. LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG LIFESPAN EXPECTANCY

A dog's age when it can commence as a working dog is between 12 and 15 months (roughly 1.3 years). This is usually when dogs reach sufficient maturity to be able to concentrate on training.

The working lifespan of a Law Enforcement dog varies depending on various factors, such as breed, health, and the type of work it performs although the average working lifespan of a police dog is approximately 8 to 10 years.

4.1 K9 Dogs Lifespan

4.1.1 K9 dogs typically live between 10 and 12 years with an expected work life span of 8-10 years.

4.1.2 Being a Law Enforcement dog is a very demanding and dangerous job which may affect a dog's body and even its own life. Law Enforcement dogs risk their lives every day and may die early on duty.

4.2 Law Enforcement Dog Lifespan by Breed

The following are some of the most popular Law Enforcement dog breeds, along with their lifespans and possible retirement ages.

4.2.1 **German Shepherd.** The lifespan of a German Shepherd is 10 to 12 years. Highly trainable and fearless, German Shepards can be used for multiple roles, including patrol, drug sniffing, search and rescue, and more. Expected work life 8-10 years.

- 4.2.2 **Belgian Malinois.** Belgian Malinois have a lifespan of 10 to 12 years. Malinois are smaller than German Shepherds but quick to react. This makes them perfect for an unexpected chase and take-down. Expected work life span 8-10 years.
- 4.2.3 **Bloodhound** The Bloodhound is among one of the most popular Law Enforcement dog breeds for tracking and man trailing. With a 9 to 11 years work lifespan, this breed is an exceptional tracker, and its specialty is tracking missing people.
- 4.2.4 **Labrador Retriever.** With a lifespan of 10 to 12 work years, the Labrador Retriever is recognized worldwide as a bomb and narcotics detection dog. They are perfect for sniffing out drugs in crowded airports and harbours.
- 4.2.5 **Rottweiler.** Rottweiler's work lifespan is 8 to 12 years. This K9 can take down almost any criminal. They are attentive and always focused.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING A LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG'S WORKING LIFESPAN AND WHEN IT SHOULD RETIRE

Canines dedicate their lives to assisting Law Enforcement with fighting crime, and just like K9 Handlers, Law Enforcement dogs face many safety risks on the job every day.

From environmental **maintenance, health**, and whether the dog faces **hazardous situations** such as searching for explosives, all of these factors play a role when considering a dog's working lifespan.

The following are some of the most common factors that determine when a dog should cease to work and its retirement age:

5.1 Job Dangers

Law Enforcement dogs risk their lives daily to protect and assist Law Enforcement officers. K9 handlers are often the first to enter dangerous situations and every shift holds a different danger for the dogs. In many instances they are the first to be injured by criminals and other hazards such as explosives, gunshots, and drugs overdose.

5.2 Training

A Law Enforcement dog's performance and ability to carry out its duties safely without endangering its life depends on its training. A poorly trained K9 may make errors that may cost lives, including its own. For example, a dog that is

unable to return to its handler on command 100% of the time may rush into a life-threatening situation. If the dog fails to apprehend when commanded, an armed suspect may have an opportunity to open fire on it or its Handler.

5.3 **Proper versus Poor Handling**

The health, well-being, and lifespan of a Law Enforcement dog is directly affected by its training, its handlers' commands, veterinary health care and maintenance.

Properly trained dogs are like a switch: you turn them on and off.

Law Enforcement dogs depend on their handlers to give firm directions to do their job as safely as possible. An unprepared or shoddy K9 handler may put everyone at risk, especially his/her dog. Failure to properly handle a K9 may lead to unintentional bites; dogs being left behind in hot patrol cars or leaving them vulnerable to being fatally injured by criminals.

5.4 **Maintenance**

There are several costs associated with having a dog on duty and maintaining the K9 Unit and kennels. A Law Enforcement department that lacks funding for training, equipment, payroll, and medical and veterinary needs for the life of their dogs will affect their working lifespan.

Insufficient funds to properly train and care for the dogs may shorten the dog's lifespan as this affects every aspect of its performance in the line of duty.

5.5 **Health**

Law Enforcement dogs may present various health challenges during their time as K9s. Law Enforcement dogs with health conditions that hinder their abilities to perform their duties will retire sooner, thus reducing their operational lifespans.

6. **EXTENDING A LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG'S LIFESPAN**

In order for the K9 Unit to ensure the health and well-being of all dogs at the Unit it must ensure that there are good kennel practices, veterinary and general health care programs in place.

Some K9 dogs may be fit for duty longer than average, but the job demands make them age faster.

Genetics partially determine a Law Enforcement dog's lifespan, but the risks associated with being a Law Enforcement dog play a more significant role. However, you can make a difference by providing the best care possible.

6.1 The following are some of the things that may be done by a dog handler to increase the lifespan of his/her dog

6.1.1 **Healthy diet.** Provide high protein dog food for working dogs. Monitor calorie intake. Provide exercise and monitor their weight. Dogs that eat and maintain a healthy, recommended weight live approximately 2 (two) years longer than overweight and badly maintained dogs. They also present fewer joint diseases as they age.

6.1.2 **Provide plenty of exercise and mental stimulation.** A bored dog may become depressed, anxious, and even ill. You can extend your dog's life by keeping it busy and by providing exercise.

6.1.3 **Dental care.** Provide hooves or large bones to assist with cleaning teeth and having them checked regularly by a veterinarian. Poor dental hygiene may lead to plaque, gingivitis, and eventually periodontal disease. Bacterial infection of the mouth is linked to heart disease and organ damage. It may also affect its scenting ability.

6.1.4 **Stress.** Avoid stress because it makes them more prone to age and illness.

6.1.5 **Love.** Cherish and show affection when with the dog.

6.2 Using Supplements

6.2.1 **Omega 3 & 6 fatty acids:** This helps to reduce inflammation and prevents painful joints when young. Fatty acids may decrease joint pain as they grow old.

6.2.2 **Antioxidants:** Destroys free radicals that cause dogs to age.

6.2.3 **Probiotics:** This is good for keeping your dog's vital functions in tip-top shape. It kills harmful bacteria and replaces them with good bacteria.

6.2.4 **Glucosamine:** Helps to reduce the inflammation in a dog's joints.

6.3 Other Good Practices

- 6.3.1 External parasite control program. Flea and tick control will help extend a dog's lifespan.
- 6.3.2 Vaccination program annually for all dogs. Rabies, DHPPI & Leptospirosis.
- 6.3.3 Internal parasite control program. Deworm dogs every two to three months or as necessary. Administer heartworm preventative medication/supplements.
- 6.3.4 Consider supplements that may help prevent cancer.

6.4 Size & Law Enforcement Dog Lifespan

The larger the dog, the shorter its working lifespan will be. Larger dog breeds age faster than smaller dogs.

7. LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG RETIREMENT

Law Enforcement dogs may be retired at any stage depending on age, suitability and maintaining standard or veterinary health concerns. Sending an impaired or injured dog into the field is cruel and may be fatal for everyone involved. Retiring a K9 dog is always based in the dog's best interests.

Generally, Law Enforcement departments prefer to retire dogs between ages 8 - 10 years although certain dogs may be able to work for longer, while others may need to retire earlier due to health issues or declining performance. Furthermore, some breeds tend to have longer lifespans than others, which may delay retirement in some cases.

7.1 A Service K9 may be retired from service when:

- 7.1.1 It is no longer required for official purposes.
- 7.1.2 Its temperament is or is no longer incompatible with Service guidelines for the type of work that it was trained for.
- 7.1.3 It fails to pass training or certification based on the approved standards.
- 7.1.4 It is unable to perform and meet the requirements for the certification due to age, illness or injury.
- 7.1.5 Depending on its health status has reached approximately 8 -10 years of age.

- 7.1.6 Law Enforcement is unable to properly care for it as result of budgetary or personnel constraints or any other reason.
- 7.2 The Regional Inspector, K9 Unit, K9 Handler and where applicable the Veterinarian, will give inputs in the decision-making process concerning retiring a K9. Statements and veterinary reports and where applicable certification documentation must be provided in the retirement report. The final decision and approval as to whether a dog should be retired and after considering all reports will be that of the Overstrand, Municipal Manager.
- 7.3 The K9 Handler must be given the first opportunity to adopt the K9. If the handler cannot adopt his own dog other members of the K9 Unit will be afforded the opportunity to adopt it and, following this, other Law Enforcement officials, personnel of the Overstrand Municipality or the general public. In that order.
- 7.4 Once adopted by its handler, the dog will live at home with its handler to live out its life as a family pet. However, life may not always be easy for a retired Law Enforcement dog because it is common for K9s to exhibit negative behaviours such as Anxiety, Depression, Aggression, Separation Anxiety, Post – traumatic stress disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- 7.5 As concerns a new owner of the K9 he/she must abide by the Overstrand Municipality By-Law relating to the Keeping of Dogs and Cats. Premises will be inspected by the K9 Unit Manager for suitability to house and accommodate the dog.

8. CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE ADOPTING A LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG

- 8.1 Most retired Law Enforcement dogs are in their senior years, which means they require more attention and care.
- 8.2 It requires commitment of time and money.
- 8.3 They face common health issues such as joint problems.
- 8.4 Retired K9's are highly trained, which means that housebreaking them should be easier than other dogs.
- 8.5 Some K9's are retired due to injuries or medical problems. Ongoing care expenses will be for the account of the new owner.

9. TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

On approval of retirement by the Municipal Manager and completion of a K9 Retirement Agreement, a Sale of an Animal and Waiver of Liability Agreement must be entered into with the Purchaser and will the purchase price be R1000.00.

10. LAW ENFORCEMENT DOG LIFESPAN AND RETIREMENT CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Law Enforcement dogs, also known as K9's, play a critical role in law enforcement by serving as valuable assets in their line of duty. Their lifespan and retirement are essential aspects to consider, as they work and live an extraordinary life compared to the average pet dog.

The typical working lifespan of a K9 is around 8 to 10 years, after which they are retired and continue to live a comfortable life with their handlers or a new owner. It is important to note that K9's health and well-being should be a priority throughout their careers and post-retirement.

Proper care, including regular veterinary check-ups and a nutritious diet, can help extend their lifespan and ensure they live comfortably. The contributions of Law Enforcement dogs to society are immeasurable, and it is only fitting that they are provided with the best care possible in return.

POLICY SECTION:	PROTECTION SERVICES
CURRENT UPDATE:	
PREVIOUS UPDATE:	
APPROVAL BY COUNCIL:	27 November 2024

11. ANNEXURE A: K9 RETIREMENT AGREEMENT

KANTOOR VAN DIE DIREKTEUR:
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: Protection Services

NAVRAE | ENQUIRIES: Regional Inspector: PA Marais
LEERVERWYSING | FILE REFERENCE:

DATE | DATUM:



K9 RETIREMENT AGREEMENT

Sale of an Animal and Waiver of Liability Agreement

In consideration of the sum of R1000.00, and the transfer of ownership of K9, _____ [Dog], from the Overstrand Municipality, Hermanus to _____ [Purchaser], _____ [Address], the Purchaser hereby releases and forever discharges the Overstrand Municipality and employees from any and all claims for injury, disability, loss, or property destruction that may occur to anyone, as a result of contact with or actions by the Dog.

The Purchaser accepts full responsibility and agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the Overstrand Municipality and employees for any alleged injury or damage to any person or property that may occur or be caused by the Dog after the transfer of ownership, which is effective as of the date listed below, including reasonable costs of defending such claims. The Purchaser frees the Overstrand Municipality of all liabilities regarding the veterinary care and cases or incidents where the dog might bite or injured another person.

The undersigned is fully aware of the nature of the training the Dog received and the nature of the work that the Dog performed during the period of ownership by Overstrand Municipality, Law Enforcement, K9 Unit, and understands the need to provide the Dog with suitable shelter and reasonable surroundings in keeping with its training and work experience.

The Purchaser also hereby accepts the following conditions of sale:

1. The Purchaser will not sell or give away the Dog, without the written approval of the Overstrand Municipality.
2. The Purchaser will use the Dog only as a pet but may train the Dog and enter competitions.
3. The Purchaser will not use the Dog as a detection, rescue, or service animal in any capacity, without the written approval of the Overstrand Municipality.
4. The Purchaser of the dog must abide by the Overstrand Municipality, By-Law relating to the keeping of dogs and cats as published in the Province of Western Cape, Provincial Gazette 6540, 27 June 2008.



5. Premises will be inspected by the K9 Unit Manager for suitability to house and accommodate the dog.
6. It is recommended that the new owner obtain an Insurance Policy, to cover veterinary and liability costs.

The Parties have executed this Agreement on this ____ day of _____, 20 ____.

Signature: Purchaser

Signature: Overstrand Municipality

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