

MIDDLE CREEK SEARCH AND RESCUE K9 TEAM

Expectations for proper care and handling of dogs during trainings, searches and public events

Handling a search dog is different from handling a pet dog. It is your responsibility as a handler to ensure that your dog is well rested, mentally focused, safe, and not a nuisance to others. Your dog will do his or her best work under these conditions. This handout contains guidelines for how to maintain your dog's comfort and security during trainings, searches and "meet and greet" public events.

Expectations for all events:

- Make sure that your dog is eligible to attend the event. Handler attendance at 3 trainings without their dog, and a successful MIDSAR K9 evaluation are necessary to be eligible to attend training. Possession of the AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certification or a recognized therapy dog certification (e.g. Delta) is necessary to attend a public event. Puppies and young dogs are given a grace period to attain one of these certifications, since they are age limited. They still must have a successful K9 evaluation by MIDSAR to attend. Passing the MIDSAR operational certification test (level 1 or level 2) is necessary in order to attend a search. See K9 standards, new handler checklist, or contact a K9 officer if you are unsure about your dog's status.
- Only attend the event if your dog is in good physical and mental health. Trainings, searches and public events can be stressful to dogs. To get the most out of these events, and to ensure that your dog is the best ambassador he or she can be, it is essential that you learn to recognize when your dog has had enough, and when they are too fatigued or sick to attend in the first place.
- Bring the following equipment/supplies with you: a hard-sided crate (e.g. Vari-kennel), collar, leash, water, treats, clean-up bags.
- Displays of aggression towards people or other animals will NOT be tolerated. It is your job as a handler to recognize your dog's limits, and to keep your dog under control.
- Handlers are required to inform the K9 officers if their dog bites a person or another dog, whether the bite occurs at a MIDSAR event or not.

Expectations at trainings/exercises:

You and your dog should arrive at training ready to work. Strive to make the conditions under which you train as close to the conditions under which you will participate in a search.

- Handler attendance at 3 trainings without the dog, and a successful MIDSAR K9 evaluation, are necessary prerequisites for bringing your dog to training.
- Handlers without an operational dog are permitted to bring ONE eligible dog to training.
- Handlers with an operational dog may bring one additional eligible dog to training (e.g. starting a pup as the operational dog nears retirement).
- Dogs should be crated unless they are involved in a training exercise (working a search problem, or working on obedience) or are being exercised to relieve themselves. We have found that dogs that are crated before and after working problems at training have the best focus and drive.
- Dogs should be on a leash unless working a search problem or working on off-leash obedience skills.
- Dogs should NOT be loose (in or out of a vehicle), or tied to vehicles, picnic tables, buildings, trees, etc.

Expectations at searches:

On a search scene, emotions run very high and dogs are attuned to this. This is where good training habits can help you and your dog to take the experience in stride. Search scenes can also be unpredictable, dangerous, chaotic, and filled with individuals who are not used to working with dogs. The stakes are very high, and family members are relying on us. We must carry ourselves with professionalism and this extends to how we handle our dogs while in the staging/recovery area.

- **ONLY CERTIFIED DOGS** (Level 1 or Level 2) **ARE ALLOWED ON A SEARCH SCENE.** All other dogs must remain at home.
- Dogs should be crated unless embarking on a task, returning from a task, or being exercised to relieve themselves. This is for the dog's own comfort and safety.
- Handlers are responsible for ensuring that their dog is safe, and for making arrangements for care of their dog in the event that they are tasked out without the dog. Bring food for your dog as you may be at a search scene for an entire operational period (8 or more hours).
- Dogs should **NOT** be loose (in or out of a vehicle), or tied to vehicles, picnic tables, buildings, trees, etc.

Expectations at public events:

"Meet and Greet" public events include team fundraisers, demonstrations, "Child is lost" programs, parades, festivals, etc. These events are where our dog team can act as great ambassadors for MIDSAR, but they are also events which can be unpredictable and stressful for your dog. We recognize that not every search dog or dog-in-training will enjoy participating in these events.

- A search dog in training must have a Canine Good Citizen or therapy dog certification (e.g. Delta) to attend a public event. Puppies and young dogs are given a grace period up to 18 months of age to attain these certifications, since they are age limited. They still must have a successful K9 evaluation by MIDSAR to attend. In addition, MIDSAR members' certified therapy dogs who are not training for SAR are permitted to attend a public event.
- Do **NOT** expect your dog to be able to tolerate being petted and "on show" for more than 30 to 60 minutes at a time. Give your dog frequent breaks by returning them to their crate after providing them with an opportunity to relieve themselves and a drink of water. If your dog starts to show signs of stress, return them to a crate for the duration of your time at the event or leave the event altogether.
- Treat the event as an opportunity to practice obedience (e.g. a long down-stay, obedient greeting of strangers, noise tolerance, working in the presence of distractions).
- Closely observe your dog at ALL times, including when you are engaged in a conversation with a member of the public. Children, other dogs, and vehicles can all be unpredictable and potentially stressful for your dog at this type of event.
- Dogs must be on a short (e.g. 6 foot) leash at all times during this type of event, unless involved in a demonstration.
- Handlers of dogs in training or retired dogs are expected to identify their dogs as such.
- Handlers may bring **ONE** dog to a public event, unless K9 officers grant permission to bring an additional dog.

Please note: MIDSAR officers reserve the right to tell a handler/dog team to leave any MIDSAR team event if these rules are violated.