



Teaching a dog to bite for real without the presence of training equipment is the key to a street-worthy dog.

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( by Rodney Spicer )

## FOCUS ON THE SUSPECT ■ IN **BITE** training Train to Apprehend the Suspect, not Diversionary Objects

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You just deployed your PSD for an apprehension: as the PSD goes out of sight for a brief few seconds, you hear a struggle and the PSD returns with an article of clothing that the suspect either fed to the K-9 or that the K-9 took from him.

There are few scenarios that are as frustrating as watching your PSD return, wagging his tail while taking a victory lap with an article of clothing in his mouth. Not only has the PSD lost focus in the engagement but now the suspect has an opportunity to flee or conceal himself.

This may sound familiar to you because it can and has happened; however, this scenario is correctable.

The following is how I prepare for this particular exercise. My philosophy is this: All satisfaction for the K-9 comes through the suspect/agitator, not an object.

In my training, I never give the dog a sleeve or any other diversionary object to carry during any apprehension training, with the exception of this scenario. Also, to clarify, in this training I am not developing the dog's bite. The dog must be mature,

have strong character and the bite training must have already been developed with the dog ready to start K-9 school.

In the first phase of training, the handler ties the PSD to a stake-out pole on a four-foot to six-foot line while the PSD is wearing a harness. Next, the handler will have the PSD on a 10-foot to 30-foot long line connected to either a choke chain or prong collar. During this training phase, the agitator should come out wearing a bite sleeve on each arm. The handler gives the bark command as the agitator approaches the PSD. The agitator then presents an arm to the PSD simultaneously with the handler's command to apprehend while the PSD is biting the arm sleeve for a brief few seconds, the agitator should let go of the bite sleeve and slip it to the PSD. As the PSD pulls the sleeve away from the agitator, the agitator presents the other sleeve simultaneously as the handler commands the dog to let go – accompanied with the leash correction to let go of the bite sleeve and bite the other bite sleeve presented by the agitator.

Also during this time, I prefer to have the handler in a

# K-9 bitework

straight line with the tie-out line so that when giving a leash correction, the PSD is being corrected toward the agitator. This helps the PSD release his grip of the bite sleeve more quickly and reengage the agitator whether a bite sleeve is present or not.

While the K-9 is biting the presented bite sleeve (the second sleeve), the agitator will then work his other arm back into the first bite sleeve that should be on the ground at this time. Next, the agitator will repeat the previous scenario, releasing the bite sleeve as the PSD pulls it from the agitator's arm. Again the handler will be giving the release command to the PSD simultaneously with a leash correction as the agitator is presenting the next bite sleeve for the PSD to bite. Once the PSD has bitten the last bite sleeve and the agitator releases the sleeve, the agitator will then back away from the PSD and begin to agitate the PSD either verbally or by physical movements. The agitator will agitate according to what the PSD is doing. If the PSD is focused and barking at the agitator, then the agitator will be calm



with slight movements. If the PSD is focused on the bite sleeve, then the agitation should increase to draw the PSD to the threat. The goal for the dog is to make the threat go away by showing aggression, not by focusing on the bite sleeve that is dead and lying on the ground. With the PSD showing aggression toward the agitator, I have the agitator run out of sight thus stimulating the PSD's prey drive. Once the agitator has fled I give the lay

down command to the PSD. The reason I give the command to lay down is so the PSD will be less likely to bother the bite sleeves while in obedience. As a handler, I am anticipating what the dog may do so I am ready to prevent a training error from occurring. The training should be clear to the PSD and consistent from the handler.

In a training session I may give the PSD four to five bites on the bite sleeve and then put the PSD away so he may rest and recover. Once the PSD has recovered, I will repeat the above exercise. In a training session I may go through two to three cycles on the tie-out pole. Depending on the PSD's foundation training and background, this exercise may take as little as two to three training sessions on the tie-out pole. Once the PSD is biting the bite sleeve and releasing his grip as the agitator releases the bite sleeve to bite the other bite sleeve without requiring any corrections while remaining focused and barking at the agitator, I will take the PSD off of the tie-out pole. Now that the PSD

understands the exercise, I move on to the next phase.

In this phase, I have the agitator wearing a bite suit and holding a bite sleeve. I may have the handler begin giving a K-9 announcement and during the announcement the agitator will come out from a hiding place and either flee or have a verbal confrontation with the handler. The handler will then give the bite command as he is releasing the PSD. As the

PSD is approaching the agitator, the agitator will present the bite sleeve to the PSD. Once the PSD bites the bite sleeve, the agitator will release the bite sleeve and begin to walk or run away from the PSD. The PSD will immediately release the grip of the bite sleeve and bite the agitator who is now wearing a bite suit. If the PSD is slow to release the bite sleeve, you can always take a step back and go back to the tie-out pole with the



Trainer Rodney Spicer recommends focus on the suspect in training to apprehend the suspect, not diversionary objects.



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agitator wearing the bite suit and presenting the bite sleeve.

When this exercise is clear to the PSD with consistent results, I move to the final phase. In this final phase, the agitator wears a bite suit and no longer uses bite sleeves. I use what is available in the environment I am training in, whether it be clothing, curtains or a pillow. I will have the agitator hiding, inaccessible, behind a door while wearing no bite equipment. The PSD will be sent on a building search. Once the PSD alerts to the hiding place where the agitator is hiding, the handler places the PSD on a lead and call the agitator to come out from hiding. The agitator comes out from hiding holding a T-shirt and swing it toward the PSD. The PSD will bite the shirt and the agitator will give a few tugs on the shirt then let go, releasing it to the PSD. The PSD should immediately release the shirt and begin to bark at the agitator. I may have the agitator become verbal and retreat back to hiding, only if the PSD is focused on the agitator and not the object. If the PSD becomes slow to release the object, go back to the tie out pole to reinforce the release.

In my training, this is the only exercise where I use a bite

sleeve. I either use a bite suit, muzzle or no equipment for inaccessible scenarios where there will be no contact between the PSD and agitator. In training, the PSD is either verbally recalled or physically removed from the agitator by the handler, but never given a training aid by the agitator to proudly run around with. In a real-world scenario, you would never want your PSD to revert back to his foundation training and take a victory lap with an article of clothing or other diversionary object the PSD was either given by the suspect or that the PSD took from the suspect.

Contact Rodney Spicer at [goldk9@adelphia.net](mailto:goldk9@adelphia.net) if you would like to view a video link of Focus on Suspect Bite Training. ■

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