

## GUARD AND BARK TRAINING FOR POLICE SERVICE DOGS

There are many ways to train the Guard and Bark and many associations with the Guard and Bark. In schutzhund the dog guards in a blind. In KNPV the dog guards after finding a Decoy hiding in the woods. In most sports there is a pattern, or sequence of events that is associated with the guard and bark that never changes. The only association or pattern that a Police Service Dog may have is the command. The guard and bark is an obedience exercise and this exercise takes place under cars, In the bushes and wherever a suspect is trying to hide. The job of the PSD is to locate and alert the handler by barking.

This is how I train the guard and bark with a PSD. The handler will bring the PSD out with a long line (30' leash) attached to a prong collar. The reason I have the psd wearing a prong collar is so that it will be uncomfortable for the PSD to lean on it and pull to the decoy. I will also have an electric collar on the psd but will not be using it at this point.

I will have the decoy make an attraction while moving around. The handler will be at a point that has been measured so that the long line will prevent the PSD from bothering the decoy. I prefer the psd to be no closer than 6 feet and it is ok for the psd to be behind, on the side or in front of the decoy. This is what the PSD will encounter with a guard and bark while in a real working situation. The handler will be holding on to the collar of the psd and encourage him to alert on the decoy by barking.

At this point the handler will release the psd simultaneous with the command to guard and bark. This will also associate the command with the exercise. Now that the handler has sent the PSD on a guard and bark, the handler should let the PSD go to the end of the long line. If the psd goes beyond the pre-determined length of the long line, he will self correct himself with the prong collar.

The handler will then give again the command to guard and bark simultaneous with a correction with the long line. Since the prong collar is uncomfortable to lean into the psd will be more likely to stay back and bark, and less likely to pull towards the decoy. If the PSD does not bark at first the handler should give another long line correction simultaneous with the guard and bark command.

The PSD will be less likely to bark if the long line is tight, this will only reinforce pulling. The long line should always have slack and every time the psd puts tension in the long line the handler should give the psd a long line correction simultaneous with the guard and bark command. Once the PSD has barked, the handler should then give the apprehension command. The reason I give the apprehend command after a bark is to reinforce the barking and so that the psd understands that if he does something he will get something. I want the psd to be focused on the decoy and knowing that he will get to apprehend, another reason I give the apprehend command at this point in training is because I do not want the psd looking back at the handler or leaving the decoy. As stated before, the psd should be focused on the decoy. Later in the training, as the psd advances, I will then stop giving the apprehension command.

**I will repeat this exercise until it is clear to the PSD that the command to guard and bark has a specific meaning and action. The picture to the handler should be that the psd has slack in the long line, The long line can be on the ground, and that the psd is barking and focused on the decoy without further commands from the handler.**

**Now that the handler has a clear picture of what he is looking for, and the psd is consistent with the command and understand the actions of the command is when I introduce the electric collar.**

**The electric collar is an excellent dog training TOOL. In the past electric collars were used more often than not for discipline and stopping unwanted behaviors at a high intensity level instead of reinforcing what the handler has taught the psd. I believe that you cannot teach with an electric collar, but you can reinforce what you have taught. This is what makes the electric collar an excellent TOOL.**

**Before we introduce the electric collar in the guard and bark, I first want to find the psd's sensitivity level. I do not want the stimulation so high that the psd cannot think and I do not want it so low that the psd is unaware of the stimulation, thus my command have no meaning. I begin by having the handler do some obedience and when the psd is out of position, the handler will give a leash correction, I will simultaneous give stimulation from the electric collar on a low setting. I will continue to raise the intensity until I see a response from the PSD. Also the PSD will associate this is coming from the handler because the PSD has been conditioned to wearing the electric collar for the long line training with no stimulation's. And will associate the electric collar as though it were a prong collar correction coming from the handler. The stimulation from the electric collar will be simultaneous with the command and leash correction from the handler. I do not introduce the electric collar in the beginning of the protection training because I do not want the PSD to have a negative association while on the apprehension. The psd may anticipate being called back from an apprehension and release the grip on his own.**

**Now that I have found the proper stimulation level for that particular PSD, I now introduce the electric collar in the guard and bark.**

**The handler will give the guard and bark command simultaneous with releasing the psd. At this point, the psd understands the guard and bark so now I will have the decoy add a little more noise and movement trying to encourage the psd to bother him. As the psd approaches the decoy, the handler will reinforce the guard and bark command simultaneous with a long line correction and I will also give an electric collar stimulation at the same time, The electric collar is a negative reinforcement. When I give the PSD stimulation, I will not have the transmitter on the continuous mode. I will use the momentary setting and I will tap the transmitter button until the psd is doing the guard and bark properly. The handler will also give a long line correction each time the psd takes the slack out of the long line. This also gives the handler a better understanding of when to apply an electric collar stimulation when the training advances.**

**I will repeat this several more times by using the long line and the electric collar in different scenarios and environments. Remember the long line should always have slack and the handler should give a slight reinforcement correction every time the psd forges closer to the decoy. I like to watch the psd's rear feet and when they move**

forward, I give a long line correction and bring the PSD back to where he was. I like the PSD no closer than six feet from the decoy. The handler should always have a picture in their mind of what is an acceptable distance between the PSD and the decoy.

Now that the PSD is used to the electric collar and understands how to comply with a stimulation, I then have the handler send the psd with out a long line, on a guard and bark. The handler will now reinforce the guard and bark with the electric collar just as though he would if he had a long line on. The PSD does not get a stimulation every time he is sent to guard and bark, but only when he is out of the handler's perfect picture of a guard and bark. An important point to remember is that if a stimulation is necessary, the stimulation must be preventative, not after the fact. The psd may do 30 perfect guard and barks with no electric collar stimulation's, but on the 31<sup>st</sup> I will give a stimulation to reinforce the guard and bark and reassure the correct position.

All of the guard and barks that we have been doing to this point have been so that the handler is in a position to see the PSD. All of these exercises have also been in a controlled setting, and the psd has been given the command to apprehend after several barks thus keeping his focus on the decoy. Before going into building and area searches I now change the method of when the psd may be given the apprehend command. I now have the handler either down the psd or call him back to the heel position while he is in the guard and bark. The handler can down the psd and then call to the heel position, then give the apprehend command. I will have the handler stop giving the apprehend command after the psd is doing a confident and secure guard an bark.

I will also get away from any apprehensions while the psd is in the guard an bark. There are no "Reward" apprehensions for doing a guard an bark I feel this only creates anticipation. The way I create a scenario for the psd to apprehend after a guard an bark is to have the handler recall the PSD to their heel position and direct the decoy to drop the weapon or show his/her hands. The decoy will not follow the handlers direction for training purposes, and then the psd is sent to apprehend. My purpose for this is so that the psd never anticipates an apprehension on his own. I always want the PSD waiting for the next command.

Now that the handler and the PSD have a clear picture of the guard and bark, we now start building and area searches out of view from the handler. But first I want to briefly talk about the role of the decoy in the guard and bark exercise. The decoy plays a tremendous role in all apprehension work. It is important that the decoy reads and works with the PSD, not against him. I do not like decoy corrections with a stick or whip. I feel that they should be used as an attraction and teaching the PSD to counter the threat while on the apprehension. I do not want the psd to submit or not counter the aggression of the decoy. I feel that decoy corrections only create hesitation with soft or sensitive psd's or the "I'm going to get you before you get me" attitude with very tough psd's that like to fight and anticipate one. Also PSD 's don't have the luxury of working skilled decoys all the time. This is also why it is important that the handler be the one training the obedience during protection and not the decoy.

Now we go on to searches out of sight of the handler. I then give the electric collar transmitter to the decoy and since we have been working together through out the class, the decoy understands what our goal is. I want the psd come no closer than six feet from the decoy. If the PSD comes in to close, I have the decoy give a stimulation to reinforce the guard and bark. I do not want the decoy giving commands to the psd. I prefer the PSD learn the association of locating the decoy and barking. Some of the more difficult guard and bark exercises is in the dark, heavy brush or hard to go into areas. I feel this is more difficult because the PSD is often trying to get a visual confirmation. In the dark, the psd is trying to pin point the source and often time's bumps into the decoy. In a cluster of obstacles, the psd is trying to get in closer to the decoy by going into the obstacles. I feel the psd should alert on the scent or odor, not the visual or physical contact. The way I train this is the same as when I go to the electric collar. The handler and decoy have a specific spot that is acceptable for the PSD to be when he locates the decoy. If the handler can see the psd, then he should have the transmitter. If the search is away and out of sight of the handler, then the decoy should have the transmitter so that if the psd is out of position, or to close to the decoy, he can get a stimulation thus reinforcing the proper distance between the decoy and psd. By Training this way, the PSD's are much more slower and methodical while on a search, and when they pick up the scent are much quicker to alert the handler by barking at a safe distance. The handler should also be looking for a change in the psd's behavior while on a search. A note in regards to training with the electric collar. The electric collar is used for reinforcement of what the handler has taught. In your training, you should always go back to the basic foundation training and physical reinforcement, so that the psd understands everything comes from you, the handler. This also helps to give your commands a specific meaning and action.

### **TRAINING TIPS**

Not all dogs are Police Service Dogs, Nerve problems never go away you may cover them up but under stress they always appear. Courage is the one thing you can never train, It's there or it's not.

Never give a command that you cannot reinforce.

Corrections should be simultaneous with a command.

Be clear in what you are training for, Have a mental picture of what you want and if the psd is out of that picture you must be prepared to take action immediately.

Discuss a plan with the decoy, What are we going to do if? Have a plan.

Have an acceptable distance between the decoy and the psd. Whether the PSD is in front, behind or on the side of the decoy.

Know your commands, be consistent and clear.

**The handler trains the obedience, not the decoy.**

**Repetition equals consistency.**

**I have had much success with this training and I hope there are some points that may help you as well.**

**Good luck**

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