

# K-9 COP

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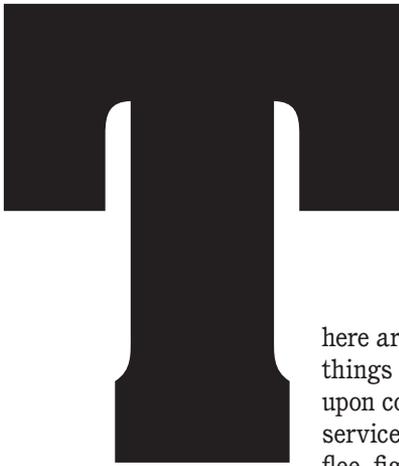
**Start Slowly  
for Success**





# Passive Apprehension Training

*By Rodney Spicer*



here are generally three things a suspect will be doing upon contact with the police service dog. He will either flee, fight or hide, and when

the suspect is hiding, he is generally passive and not moving. This may not be a normal situation for the K-9 due to foundation training with bite presentations or he may be in conflict due to sport training and the negative response to biting an agitator wearing bite equipment that is standing still and not moving.

We begin passive apprehension training first by walking the handler and agitator through the exercise prior to bringing up the dog. It is important to choreograph the training exercises with the handler and agitator. Everyone needs to understand the goal of the exercise, the training plan and what is going to take place at the beginning, middle or end of the exercise. This briefing makes for successful training while keeping everyone safe.

We start with the K-9 on a basic obedience leash or tie out connected to a collar or harness. The K-9 is in a down position with the handler standing either behind or on the side of him. The agitator is 15' to 20' out and away from the K-9 team milling around by walking back and forth. The dog should remain in the down position and quiet. As soon as the agitator goes passive by standing still, the handler will give the bark command and the agitator will simultaneously begin to agitate. Upon command to bark, the dog can get up from the down position and show aggression by barking and pulling toward the agitator. The handler can give verbal praise thus reinforcing the action of barking. As soon as the agitator turns and walks away, the handler will give the down command to the dog. I repeat this exercise three to five times per session while always giving the dog the apprehension command on the last rep of the session. This also reinforces to the K-9 to get up quickly toward the agitator and that on any given rep there may be contact. I may do this exercise one to two sessions per training day when focusing on the barking exercise. The K-9 is learning that barking on command will flush out the agitator into moving and force him to move. This

is just like the detection K-9 locating odor source and coming to a final response and flushing out the prey (reward toy).

Next, as the K-9 is in the down position and the agitator is milling around, I will have the agitator go passive and stand still. The handler will give the bark command and the agitator will remain still and quiet. If the K-9 stops barking, then the agitator will agitate as needed. If the K-9 is showing a strong bark for a brief period, I have the agitator turn and walk away after a short time. When the agitator turns to walk away, the handler will down the dog. The handler can give physical and/or verbal praise during the desired behaviors. I repeat this until the desired goal has been consistently met. If the dog does not bark or is not a strong barker, I will have two leads on the dog - one to a harness or flat collar and the second lead to a prong collar. When the K-9 is commanded to bark and moves forward, I will put tension on the prong thus stimulating a bark response. Each time the K-9 pulls on the lead, I will give leash stimulations until he is no longer pulling and is sitting back and barking to make the prey move forward. Once the K-9 is commanded to apprehend, I release tension from the prong collar and apply tension on the leash that is on the harness or flat collar to reinforce and maintain the grip.

We then continue with the same sequence, except now the dog will be given the apprehension command as the agitator is standing passive and not moving or giving a bite presentation, because a real bad guy does not give a bite presentation. Only when the K-9 apprehends the agitator will the agitator begin moving around. Movement is prey and the K-9 learns that making contact will make the prey move and fight. The goal of the K-9 is to pursue, apprehend, shake or counter and submit. The equipment we use is either a bite suit and muzzle or a muzzle with the agitator wearing no equipment. A bite sleeve is rarely used due to the agitator having to make formed associations and presentations to the dog, which may have a negative effect during a real world scenario. The goal is for the K-9 to form pictures from real world scenarios so that during a real encounter it will be just like training.



**“ There are generally three things a suspect will be doing upon contact with the police service dog. He will either flee, fight or hide, and when the suspect is hiding, he is generally passive and not moving. ”**



I have developed and utilized props during passive apprehension training scenarios. If the agitator can see the dog coming, he will generally move which may attract and stimulate the dog. A suspect may hunker down and accept the consequence by not moving, thinking the K-9 will not engage and he will not be located and taken into custody. The training agitator understands the consequence and will move just prior to contact to absorb the dog. This movement prior to contact is a natural response, but not a desired one for passive training.

For passive apprehension training scenarios, have all your equipment ready and available. We use a 30' - 100' long line, harness and muzzle, while the agitator will be in street clothes with no equipment or bite suit. As covered earlier, always choreograph the exercise with all involved - success of the training goal and safety is priority.

### **Scenario #1:**

The handler sets up at a predetermined area. The agitator is 20' to 25' out in front of the K-9 team laying face down with ankles crossed and fingers interlaced covering his head and ears for protection. The handler gives a warning announcement and the K-9 is muzzled. The agitator is laying in a straight line with feet first toward the K-9 team. Never lay down facing head first toward the K-9 or sideways with the agitator's side and ribs exposed. The agitator is completely passive and nonverbal, just as though he is hiding. The K-9 is given the apprehend command. As soon as the K-9 makes any type of contact, the agitator will begin to roll away from the dog as if he were on fire, keeping his head and ears covered to keep from getting muzzle punched. The K-9's formed association is that contact will flush out the prey (agitator) into movement and the dog will pursue the prey. This interaction is brief and the handler will physically remove the dog. The K-9 should be desensitized to wearing the muzzle. At [www.goldcoastK-9.com](http://www.goldcoastK-9.com) on the articles page, you can find the article, "Muzzle Training For Police Service Dogs," on how to introduce and utilize the muzzle. If the scenario has the agitator standing or sitting, it is still the same sequence where upon contact, the agitator then falls to the ground and begins to roll away from the dog while always covering his head and ears.





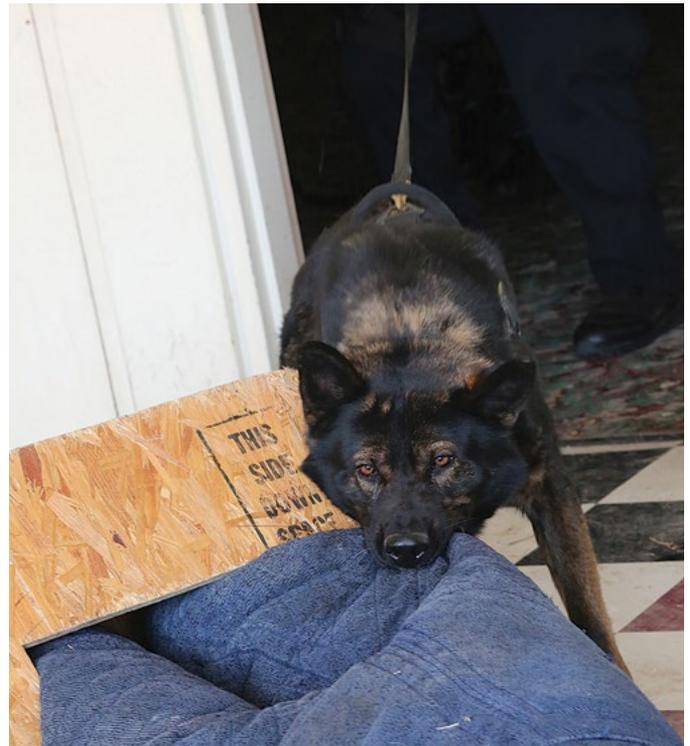


## Scenario #2:

The handler sets up at a predetermined area. The K-9 is wearing a harness and long line. The agitator is wearing a bite suit laying face down on a mechanics creeper with wheels. For this scenario, the agitator can be facing the dog with his arm in front of him so that is the only area the dog can make contact with. The agitator is looking away from the dog. The handler gives a warning announcement and commands the K-9 to apprehend. The handler slowly feeds the K-9 on the long line toward the agitator. The handler can stop the K-9 just prior to contact so that he will apprehend the only area accessible, which is the arm. Once the dog has apprehended the agitator, the handler will pull the long line and agitator to a safe location. Remember, the agitator is laying on a creeper with wheels making it easier to pull the agitator, while forming an association and clear picture with the exercise. The reason I have the agitator look away from the K-9 during passive apprehension training is because the agitator will generally raise his head and look around and the only thing moving is the agitator's head which may be perceived as prey. The handler controls the long line where and how far the dog can go. Out of necessity and safety, I have built wooden boxes for this training. For this same #2 scenario, the agitator is laying feet first toward the dog. The agitator will have his feet in a wooden box specifically for this exercise. The handler will again send the K-9 to apprehend while on a long line and slowly feed the dog into the agitator's leg and not allow the dog to go in the waist area due to the bite suit having little protection in that area. Once the K-9 apprehends the leg, the handler can then pull him and agitator to a predetermined area and away from any threats. Tension should always be on the long line during the apprehension to reinforce the grip.

## Scenario #3:

The handler sets up at a predetermined area for an off lead search and gives a warning announcement. The agitator will be wearing a bite suit and laying on his back with a wooden box over his upper body and another wooden box over his feet. The only area exposed will be the agitator's mid thigh to mid calf. The K-9 will locate and apprehend the passive agitator. The handler will recall or physically remove the dog. This scenario is completely passive. By the agitator being in the passive box, he cannot see the K-9 coming and does not move in anticipation of contact. Once the K-9 has apprehended, the agitator can give slight movement to no movement and the handler can give verbal or physical praise.



There are many techniques and methods used to train passive apprehensions. This is the method that works well for me and I hope there is something that you may find to be useful and beneficial to your program. ■



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