



## Joint Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme



**Annual Report for Period  
1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012**

## 1 Introduction

The death of a police dog whilst in training in Essex in 2003 resulted in an understandable loss of public confidence in police dog training methods. In response to this the ACPO Police Dog sub-Committee embarked upon a thorough review of police dog training and handling. One of the committee's recommendations was that Police Authorities should set up Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Schemes. By 2006 Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Authorities each had fully operational schemes in place.

In 2008 Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Authorities agreed to a collaboration of their two Force's Police Dog Units and on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 a single Joint Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Dog Unit was established, based at RAF Henlow.

Following this the two Police Authorities agreed to collaborate on Animal Welfare Visiting Arrangements and a joint visiting scheme was established.

This is the third annual report of the Joint Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme and covers the period from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

## 2 The Dog Unit

The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Dog Unit comprises of an Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 24 Constables and 41 dogs. There are General Patrol (GP) dogs which are deployed on searching, tracking, arrest work and crowd control. A number of these dogs are also trained to work with firearms officers. Other dogs are currently trained as pro-active or passive drug dogs using their acute sense of smell to search for, or screen for; drugs, firearms, explosives or cash.

The table below shows the collaborated dog unit's performance in its first, second and third years.

<b>Beds &amp; Herts Dog Unit Performance</b>	<b>2009/10 (10 months figures)</b>	<b>2010/11 (10 months figures)</b>	<b>2011/12 (10 months figures)</b>
No. of Incidents across both counties the dog units have been assigned to	9078	9810	7720
Direct arrests	410	446	344
Person searches	3947	4192	3759
Attendance at public order incidents	1001	1134	931
Drug searches	429	606	451
Dangerous Dog control incidents	182	211	148
Firearms support incidents	644	814	672
Priority Crime Offenders detained	291	328	219
Non-Priority Crime Offenders detained	119	187	125

As can be seen in the table, the performance of the Dog Unit had decreased in 2011/12 compared to previous years. This is attributed to 3 vacancies due to officers retiring/leaving the unit. Additionally, 3 handlers' dogs retired and so a 13 week course was run for 6 handlers and new dogs. This was equivalent to the unit losing 25% of its strength for 25% of the year.

The unit has a detailed Dog Welfare Policy in place and is compliant with the ACPO Dog Training Manual covering all aspects of Police dog training, deployment and care. The unit also complies with the 'Five Freedoms' on which the Animal Welfare Act 2006 is based.

### **3 Inspection Visits**

There are five lay visitors belonging to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Scheme, two from Bedfordshire and three from Hertfordshire. All lay visitors are volunteers with experience of working dogs.

Visits are unannounced and are usually carried out at training events. Visitors can also arrange to see specific dogs by appointment. The aim of the scheme is to inspect all dogs within a six month period.

Inspections are based on the 'Five Freedoms' noted above which are as follows;

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

Visitors made 143 dog inspections during the year, seeing 96% of the unit's dogs. Minor dog injuries were noted by visitors but all of these were under vet treatment and actively monitored by handlers.


Visitors also raised a concern regarding one particular dog's welfare. The dog had had a cyst removed from its head but the visitor saw the stiches had opened up. This was deemed to have been caused by a protruding bolt in the vehicle's cage. Subsequently, the cage was replaced and the dog recovered from the cut.

### **4 Other Comments**

Panel meetings took place on 20 October 2011 and 19 April 2012. The issues arising from visits were discussed. Additional items also discussed were as follows: reporting forms [altered to suit visitors requirements], long distances to training venues [visitors permitted to travel to venues in either county, and encouraged to claim travel expenses] and training events and dogs lists [to be provided more timely and frequently to visitors].



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