

Joint Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme



Annual Report for Period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013

1 Summary

- Volunteers from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire made 158 inspections of the tri-force police dogs.
- 98% of the unit's police dogs were seen in year 2012/13.
- No concerns were reported regarding the welfare of the police dogs.

2 Introduction

The death of a police dog whilst in training in Essex in 1997 resulted in an understandable loss of public confidence in police dog training methods. In response to this the Association of Chief Police Officers (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 1st April 2009 a single Joint Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Dog Unit was established.

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

Collaboration between the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Dog Unit and Cambridgeshire's Police Dog Unit was completed in spring 2013. In advance of this, a joint Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Independent Dog Welfare Visiting scheme was established in December 2012.

This annual report covers the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. And therefore includes both schemes i.e. the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Lay Visiting Scheme (April to November 2012) and the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme (December 2012 to current).

3 The Dog Unit

The Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire Dog Unit comprises of an Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 35 Constables and 48 dogs. Luton Airport Dog Unit has become a separate, independent unit. It comprises of 1 Inspector, 1 Sergeant, 2 handlers and 4 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 proactive drug dogs using their acute sense of smell to search for, or screen for; drugs, firearms, explosives or cash.

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.

4 Inspection Visits

The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Independent Dog Welfare Visiting Scheme has five dog visitors. Two visitors are from Bedfordshire, one is from Cambridgeshire and two are from Hertfordshire.

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 each dog at least once in 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 158 dog inspections during the year, seeing 98% of the unit's dogs. Visitors made several positive comments relating to the condition and general well-being of the dogs. They also made several positive comments relating to the handlers vehicles such as; spotlessly clean, plenty of water available for the dog, cage free from sharp edges and air-flow.

Minor dog ailments were noted by visitors but all of these were under vet treatment and actively monitored by the handlers.


Visitors raised no concerns regarding dog welfare. Slight issues were raised regarding rusty vehicle cage bars and whether these would be harmful to the dogs if licked. However, this was deemed as harmless to the dogs. Another issue raised was that some of the handlers' vehicles were muddy but these were down to them working night shifts prior to being inspected.

5 Other Comments

Meetings of the panel, comprising the visitors, scheme administrator, Dog Unit Inspector and Dogs Trust representative, took place on 17 October 2012 and 8 May 2013. 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 wherever in the three counties, and encouraged to claim travel expenses] and
- training events and dogs lists [to be provided more timely and frequently to the visitors].

Author: Brian Pereira
Scheme Administrator

 (01992) 555629

Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Leahoe House
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8DE

Tel: 01992 556600

Email: commissioner@herts.pnn.police.uk

For more information on our Volunteer Schemes, please visit our website:

http://hertscommissioner.org/get_involved/community_volunteers.aspx