



# LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF FORCE-TACTICS DIRECTIVE

Directive No. 7.1

September 2014

## DOG ENCOUNTERS

### PURPOSE

During the course of their duties, officers may come into contact with dogs. Dogs can vary in weight, ranging from the smallest companion dog of 1.5 lbs. to that of the huge working breeds that may weigh over 200 lbs.

This Directive was developed to provide information regarding canine behavior and present officers with tactical options for dealing with a hostile dog.

### PROCEDURES

An officer's main concern upon arriving at the scene of a call is safety. Look for these clues that indicate a dog is present at the location: "Beware of Dog" signs, animal toys, food or water dishes, bones, a dog house or pen, animal paths in the grass, and the sight or smell of animal waste. Officers must decide whether there is an urgent need to enter the location where a dog may be present or if there is sufficient time to contain the area until the animal is secured. For assistance, contact the Department of Animal Services and/or Metropolitan Division's K-9 Unit.

The sight of a uniform may agitate a dog. If officers must approach, be aware the dog may view this as an aggressive action or encroachment, and become hostile. Dogs tend to regard their owner's property as their territory and may defend it by growling, barking, or assuming aggressive body language.

#### How to Avoid Being Bitten

- Ask the owner to put the dog in a secure place.
- Maintain a safe distance from the animal and keep it under observation.
- Don't stand between the dog and its owner.
- Never pet a dog without first asking the owner's permission and without first getting its attention.
- Avoid eye contact. Staring directly at a dog may provoke aggression.
- Never turn your back on a dog (most attacks occur from behind).
- Don't make fast, jerky movements, or wave your arms around a dog. This will excite the dog and may prompt an attack.
- Don't disturb dogs that are sleeping, eating or caring for their young.
- A frightened dog will become agitated when cornered. Provide the animal an escape route.

Dogs communicate through body language. Observe the dog's demeanor for change. Facial expression, ear posture, tail carriage, hackle (hair on back) display, and body stance signal a dog's state of fear, excitement, aggression or submission. Signs of potential hostility in a dog include bared teeth, flattened ears, erect tail, stiff legs, and bristling back hair.

## HOSTILE DOGS

The increasing number of stray dogs, the limited resources of the Los Angeles City Department of Animal Services, and the fact that some dogs are being bred to achieve larger, more vicious breeds, increases the potential for violent dog encounters. The main fear regarding a dog attack is the possibility of being bitten, which can cause viral or bacterial infections.

**Note:** Officers should try to avoid using community members, especially children, to assist in containing or controlling the dog when they know it is vicious or poses a threat.

### Defensive Tactics Against Hostile Dogs

Officers confronted by a hostile dog should remain still, face the animal, and employ the following tactics should the dog advance.

**Voice Commands:** Look directly at the dog and in a loud and firm voice state, "No" or "Down." Be aware that dogs are unpredictable; even if it does initially retreat, it may still attack.

**Oleoresin Capsicum Spray:** Another option against a hostile dog is Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray. The OC canister delivers a stream that has an effective range of 3-12 feet. At close range (less than three feet) the OC may not become fully activated, decreasing its effectiveness. When sprayed in a dog's face, the OC spray temporarily causes closing of the eyes and shortness of breath. A one-second blast of OC is generally sufficient to fend off a small dog.

**Baton:** Should voice commands or OC spray prove to be inadequate, officers may utilize baton techniques as a means of defense against an attacking dog. A continuous forward-reverse spin movement can deter an approaching animal. This creates a safety zone that may enable an officer to retreat to a safe location. If necessary, the dog should be struck in the nose or throat, its most sensitive areas.

Another option is to extend the baton straight out. The dog may focus its aggression on the baton rather than the officer. Hold the baton in the support hand, leaving your strong hand free should the situation escalate to the point where lethal force is necessary.

**Fire Extinguishers:** Generally, a CO<sub>2</sub> fire extinguisher has been found to be an effective deterrent when sprayed directly at the dog's face and should be considered a useful tool.

**TASER:** The TASER is effective when used on dogs; however, striking a moving target with both probes is difficult. When using the TASER on a dog, aim directly at its body mass. Turn the weapon sideways to limit the spread of the TASER probes and fire. If the probes do not make contact with the animal, the TASER can be used as a "stun" weapon with the expended cartridge in place or without a cartridge.

**Beanbag Shotgun:** Generally, the Beanbag Shotgun should not be used on animals. In planned events where a dog's presence is known, containment teams should not rely on the use of the Beanbag Shotgun as part of a tactical plan to be deployed on the animal. In exigent circumstances, the Beanbag Shotgun may be utilized to control a vicious dog. The primary target is the body mass.

**Kicks:** The use of kicking techniques against a hostile dog is not recommended. The dog will likely bite the leg and pull the officer off balance or cause the officer to fall.

**Lethal Force:** The size and speed of an animal can increase the potential of a missed shot and the possibility of an officer or bystander being critically injured by a bullet intended for the dog. An officer is authorized to use lethal force when it's reasonable to protect him/herself or other person(s) from imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury. Consideration should be given to the background and the possibility of a ricochet. The primary target is the body mass. Officers may not use lethal force against a dog to protect property, including other animals.

## CONCLUSION

Unexpected confrontations with a dog require officers to be aware of their surroundings and be prepared to act quickly and appropriately to a dog's approach. There is no single tool that is the ideal solution. Generally, the use of voice commands will calm most dogs. In addition, the use of OC spray, a baton, or fire extinguisher can be effective on aggressive dogs. By remaining alert and using common sense, officers can avoid most hostile dog injuries.

Points to Remember

- All dogs can bite
- Look for clues that a dog is present at the location
- Try to avoid using community members, especially children, to assist in containing or controlling the dog when you know it is vicious or poses a threat
- Voice commands, OC, and baton are options to defend against a hostile dog
- Kicks are not recommended
- Generally, TASER and Beanbag shotgun should not be used
- Fire Extinguishers may be an effective deterrent
- Lethal force may not be used against a dog to protect property, including other animals

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force policy.

**AMENDMENTS**

This version replaces Use of Force-Tactics Directive No. 7, Dog Encounters, July 2009.



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Chief of Police

DISTRIBUTION "A"