



Part 6 - Certification of Police dogs

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Summary

This part of the 'Police dogs' chapter provides the policy and practice for the certification of Police dog teams.

Deploy only certified Police dog teams

Only certified Police dog teams must be used for operational deployment.

The certification of Police dog teams ensures that safety, control and efficiency standards are appropriate and maintained.

Standard	What it means
Safety	A Police dog is safe to deploy.
Control	A Police dog handler has effective control over a Police dog and the dog is responsive to control from the handler.
Efficiency	A Police dog team is competent for deployment in the tasks they have been trained to perform.

Withdrawing teams when standards are not met

When the safety of a dog or the handler's control over a Police dog does not meet required standards the team must be withdrawn from operational service until the requirements are met.

When a dog team does not meet required standards for efficiency, the team may be withdrawn from operational service until the requirements are met.

A detector dog's efficiency is determined by its ability to identify target substances or odours. When a detector dog is unable to do this the team must be withdrawn from operational service until the requirements are met.

Certification of Police dog teams

Requirements

All Police dog teams must be certified as 'operational' to perform operational duties.

After initial certification, each dog team must be certified at least every 13 months for the certification to remain valid.

In the 12 months preceding certification, each team should have attended continuation training for at least eight days.

Who manages the certification process

The National Coordinator: Police Dogs manages the certification process including the setting of working trials and certification and assessment standards.

The Practice Leader: Dog Training manages the initial certification of dog teams graduating from Dog Training Centre courses and training programmes.

Who appoints assessors

The National Coordinator: Police Dogs appoints members of the NZ Police Dog Section or any other appropriate organisation to assess and certify Police dog teams.

Restrictions on assessors

Assessors should not assess annual certification for:

- their own dog teams
- dog teams from the assessor's own district
- dog teams that the assessor has trained on an initial qualifying course.

An exemption may apply in situations where unique circumstances (i.e. pandemic) limit the ability for external assessor's access to District Police Dog teams. In this circumstance, the National Coordinator: Police Dogs may delegate suitably qualified person(s) to assess and certify Police dog teams.

There is no such restriction on assessors assessing teams for:

- continuation or any other training
- safety, control or efficiency
- dog bite incidents.

Types of certification

These are the three types of certification.

Type	What the certification involves
Initial certification	Police dog teams are certified as operational on their successful completion and graduation from a qualifying course at the Dog Training Centre.
Replacement certification	Operational Police dog handlers who have been reassigned an operational replacement Police dog may be certified as operational when they have achieved the qualification requirements of an operational Police dog team. The certification assessment must comply with the requirements of annual certification.
Annual certification	The annual certification of dog teams may occur at any place or time, including during an advanced course that the team are attending at the Dog Training Centre. The certification assessment is described in the NZ Police Dog Section Training Manual. It should be practically based and as far as possible reflect a dog's normal working environment. The criteria that must be considered during each team's assessment are based on safety, control and efficiency. The assessor will check and confirm that 8 mandated training days have been entered into the dog data base prior to the annual certification of the handler.

Continuation training and assessment

Requirements

Police dog teams must receive regular continuation training and assessment after operational certification.

The training, assessment and re-certification results must be recorded.

Minimum training days required before annual certification

All Police dog teams should have received at least eight supervised training days before they are assessed in an annual certification. This should be confirmed by the assessor prior to annual certification.

Regular training days are required to ensure continuous maintenance and improvement of dog team capability, safety and control.

Any dog section trainer or instructor (or person relieving or acting in that role) may deliver continuation training and/or hold safety and control assessments. Assessments may also take place during refresher or continuation training at the Dog Training Centre.

Quarterly assessments

There are two quarterly assessments.

Assessment type	Purpose
Quarterly control assessments	<p>During the eight training days supervisors must ensure at least three formal control assessments are conducted for Patrol dog teams.</p> <p>These assessments should be spaced every three months where practicable. The fourth assessment occurs as part of the annual certification assessment.</p>
Quarterly efficiency assessments	<p>During the eight training days, supervisors must ensure at least three formal assessments in which detector dogs can recognise all target substance groups or odours.</p> <p>These assessments should be spaced every three months where practicable. The fourth assessment occurs as part of the annual certification assessment.</p>

Training record

All continuation training delivered by a supervisor or trainer and assessment and re-certification results must be recorded in the Police Dog Data Base under 'Mandated Training'. Once this is entered into the data base the handler will receive an email confirming the training given and accept or decline. If handler declines then the National Coordinator: Police Dogs will be notified and mediate the issues raised.

Who may record information in the Police Dog Data Base

Dog Section trainers, instructors, supervisors and other approved Police employees may record training into the data base. Non police persons (Customs) delivering training to Police dog handlers are to email or note training given and supply this record of training document to the handlers supervisors for entering into the data base.

Training diary

Dog handlers must maintain a separate training diary (electronic or written) that details the training they do with their Police dog.

Certification or assessment failure

Requirement

Any Police dog, dog handler or team that fails an operational certification or assessment conducted as part of annual district training must comply with performance management measures.

Performance management process

If, during assessment, the team is assessed as not competent for reasons of safety, control or efficiency, the handler must enter a performance management process in accordance with the '[Performance management](#)' chapter.

In addition, these measures must be taken.

If the team has failed the...	then...
safety and control criteria	the team must be withdrawn from operational service immediately.
efficiency criteria	the team will be restricted to duties specified by the National Coordinator: Police Dogs (unless it is a detector dog team - see below).

Efficiency of detector dog teams

An explosives detector dog that fails certification assessment because it is unable to recognise a target explosive odour must be withdrawn from operational service immediately.

Any other detector dog that fails certification assessment because it is unable to recognise a target substance, item or odour, must also be withdrawn from operational service immediately.

The National Coordinator: Police Dogs will consult with the assessor and the handler's supervisor to determine the appropriate training and reassessment for the dog. The handler's supervisor will advise the handler accordingly.

Failure to meet continuation training requirements

When a Police dog has not maintained the continuation training requirements (because of absence or other reason) but the 13-month certification time has been reached, the team may be assessed for re-certification.

If the team fails in any area of the certification process, including efficiency the team must be made non-operational. The team must then undergo a period of training before the certification assessment process is re-implemented.

When the 13-month certification period expires

If the team is not re-certified within the 13-month re-certification period then the team must be made non-operational from the date the 13-month period ends.

The handler's supervisor must advise the National Coordinator: Police Dogs who will determine when the team will be recertified and discuss with the supervisor the training required prior to certification.

Where a dog handler's leave will occur at the due certification time, certification should be conducted before the handler goes on leave.

For efficiency, the certification may be conducted early to align the certification with other teams in the district, or simply for efficiency.

Failure to achieve required standard

If the team fails the final assessment at the completion of the performance management process, the National Coordinator: Police Dogs will consider whether or not the team needs to be permanently removed from service.

If the failure is with the...	then...
dog	a decision to replace the dog will be made by the district dog section supervisor in consultation with the National Coordinator: Police Dogs.
handler	the district will manage the performance in line with the performance management process.

Maintaining certification standards

Requirement

Police dog handlers, dog section supervisors and trainers must ensure operational dog teams maintain certification standards.

Handlers' responsibility to report failures

Police dog handlers must report failures in their dog's safety, control or efficiency as shown in this table.

If the failure is in...	then report to the...	as soon as...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - safety and control, and/or - identifying target substance or odour 	dog section supervisor, trainer, instructor or practice leader	possible, but no later than the next rostered shift.
efficiency	dog section supervisor, trainer or instructor	practicable.

Note: Dog Section supervisors who operate an operational Police dog and who do not have a supervisor in the dog section must inform the National Coordinator: Police Dogs of any failures.

When safety and control is in doubt

If a dog's safety or control is in doubt, the Dog Section supervisor must arrange an assessment of the dog team as soon as possible and before the team returns to or continues operational duty.

If the team fails the control and/or safety assessment, it must be withdrawn from operational deployment immediately and the process relating to certification assessment re-implemented.

Roles and responsibilities in respect of certification

Summary of roles and responsibilities

The key roles and responsibilities in certifying Police dog teams are summarised in this table.

Role	Responsibilities
National Coordinator: Police Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approves the certification process. - Appoints assessors to certify dog teams. - Applies discretion to the immediate management of dog teams who fail certification assessment on grounds other than safety or control.
District dog section supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedules certification for handlers in consultation with the National Coordinator: Police Dogs and the appointed assessor. - Ensures dog teams that fail safety or control assessments are withdrawn from operational service immediately. - Advises district commander on circumstances that may lead to the permanent withdrawal of a dog team from service.
Approved instructors, trainers and assessors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the criteria for certification assessment of dog teams. - Ensure opportunities for at least eight supervised training days for all operational dog handlers each year.
Dog handlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure their supervisor is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aware of their due certification dates - informed of any failure in safety, control or efficiency as soon as possible.

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