



## **Law Enforcement Use of Lethal Force against Dogs**

### **Association of Professional Dog Trainers**

#### **Position Statement**

The following statement reflects the opinion of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

The APDT recognizes that in the course of their duties, law enforcement officers may come into contact with dogs who exhibit aggressive behavior or what may appear to the officer(s) on the scene to be aggressive behavior. These situations are often fraught with tensions that go far beyond those raised by the presence of the dogs – officers are frequently dealing with aggressive humans as well. We also recognize that in such situations, human safety is of the highest priority to the officers – their own as well as the safety of members of the public.

The APDT believes that it is unreasonable to expect law enforcement officers to have a thorough understanding of dog behavior and/or ability to read dog body language and make split-second decisions while under stress and duress, that will necessarily result in the best possible outcomes for the dog or dogs in question. It takes years of hands-on experience for dog training professionals to accurately read and appropriately respond to dog body language in high stress environments.

However, the APDT does encourage law enforcement agencies to provide their officers with training in the areas of dog behavior and defensive dog handling in order that those officers are as well-equipped as possible to handle such situations with reasonable force. For example, in some cases, the simple closing of a door or gate to keep a dog safely contained may be able to ensure the safety of the officers and the public, and can make the difference between life and death for that animal.

The APDT also encourages its appropriately-experienced members to make their services available to law enforcement and other public service agencies to provide such training, and urges all APDT members to educate their clients about the importance of taking proper and responsible restraint measures such as fenced yards or leashes while at home, and seatbelts or crates when traveling in vehicles, to keep their dogs as safe as possible at all times.

APDT Board of Trustees

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