



Joint Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme



**Annual Report for Period
1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011**

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 1st 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 second annual report of the Joint Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme and covers the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

2 The Dog Unit

The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Dog Unit comprises of an Inspector, 2 Sergeants, 27 Constables and around 45 dogs. There are currently around twenty seven 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. Eleven 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 or cash. A further seven dogs are currently trained to search for various types of explosives.

The table below shows the collaborated dog units performance in its first and second years.

Beds & Herts Dog Unit Performance	2009/10 (10 months figures)	2010/11 (10 months figures)	% change 09/10 to 10/11
No. of Incidents across both counties the dog units have been assigned to	9078	9810	+ 8%
Direct arrests	410	446	+9%
Person searches	3947	4192	+6%
Attendance at public order incidents	1001	1134	+13%
Drug searches	429	606	+41%
Dangerous Dog control incidents	182	211	+16%
Firearms support incidents	644	814	+26%
Priority Crime Offenders detained	291	328	+13%
Non-Priority Crime Offenders detained	119	187	+57%

As can be seen in the table the performance of the unit has increased without an increase in staff or change in the number of dogs.

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. Three from Bedfordshire and two 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 33 visits to various locations across both counties during the period and made over 124 individual inspections of animals.

Minor dog injuries were noted by visitors but all were under vet treatment and actively monitored by handlers.

All dogs were inspected during the period by the visitors.

4 Other Concerns

Panel meetings took place on 11 October 2010 and 4 April 2011. The issues arising from visits were discussed. Additional items were also discussed as follows:


The cleanliness of some vehicles was noted visitors. Resulted in Sergeants reminding officers to clean their vehicles daily where possible and at least deep clean once a week.

Some vehicles the visitors reported rust on cages, misaligned cage gates and even some cramped driving conditions for some of the taller dog handlers.

Rusty cages have been replaced and gates realigned. The Dog Unit is working closely with a company that are out-fitting the vehicles for police dog use. The company are involving the unit in the design, and testing of the vans and plan a national specification cage. Improvements have been made to air conditioning for the cage and leg room for taller drivers. New vehicles will be phased in accordingly.



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