A118 The Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal Detector Guidelines

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of how establishing best practices for detection teams will improve interdiction efforts as well as courtroom acceptance of dog alert evidence by improving the consistency and performance of deployed detector dogs.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a variety of benefits to local law enforcement and homeland security including improved interdiction and courtroom acceptance by improving the consistency and performance of deployed teams and optimizing their combination with emerging electronic detection devices.

The Scientific Working Group on Dog and Orthogonal detector Guidelines (SWGDOG) is a partnership of local, state, federal and international agencies including law enforcement and first responders. This project was undertaken as a response to concerns coming from a variety of sectors including law enforcement and homeland security regarding the need to improve the performance, reliability, and courtroom defensibility of detector dog teams and their optimized combination with electronic detection devices. This project was modeled after the successful precedent of a variety of other scientific working groups (SWG's), SWGDOG being the eleventh since 2005. Presently there are thirteen SWG's as of 2008 all challenged with developing internationally recognized consensus-based best practice guidelines developed by a membership of respected scientists, practitioners, and policy makers representing diverse backgrounds. SWGDOG general meetings have been held biannually for the past four years to produce the initial set of guidelines with NIJ funding the management of this project and the travel for international members. The DHS and FBI have funded the travel and meeting costs for the domestic SWGDOG members for the past four years.

The current success of SWGDOG is being manifest by a shift of some national canine organizations to adopt the approved best practice guidelines proposed. Though SWGDOG guidelines are not mandatory, this positive change is the ultimate goal of the working group. The continued approval and revision of SWGDOG documents has received an increased number of public responses and input which has shaped the documents making them publicly vetted.

The approval of each subcommittee best practice document takes 6 months to complete including a 2 month period of public comments. The nine SWGDOG subcommittees and target timetable for posting of the best practice guidelines are as follows: (1) Unification of terminology (Part A - April '06; Part B - October '06; Part C - March '07; Part D - August '07; Part E - March '08; Part F – September '08), (2) General guidelines (April '06) - Publication in FSC October '06) First Revision (September '08), (3) Selection of serviceable dogs and replacement systems (October '06), (4) Kenneling, keeping, and health care (October '06), (5) Selection and training of handlers and instructors (October '06), (6) Procedures on presenting evidence in court (October '06), (7) Research and technology (March '07), (8) Substance dogs: Agriculture; Arson; Drugs; Explosives; (August '07) Human remains (September '08), and (9) Scent dogs: Scent identification; Search and Rescue; Trailing dogs; Tracking dogs (Part A - March '07; Part B – August '07; Part C – March '08; Part D – September '08).

Establishing consensus based best practices for the use of detection teams is expected to provide a variety of benefits to local law enforcement and homeland security. Benefits include improved interdiction efforts as well as courtroom acceptance by improving the consistency and performance of deployed teams and optimizing their combination with electronic detection devices. While it is not technically part of the scope of SWGDOG, a future accreditation program based on SWGDOG guidelines will be an important mechanism to facilitate the adoption of these SWGDOG guidelines.

SWGDOG, Detector Dog, Consensus Guideline