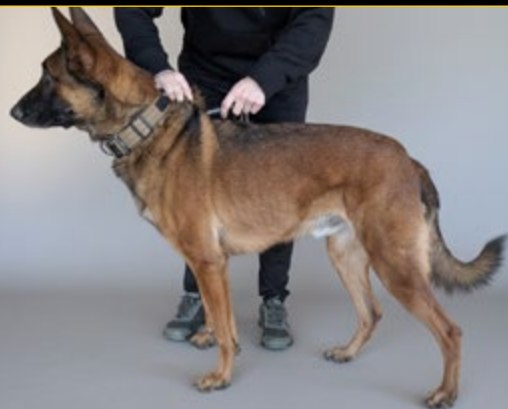


Why It Matters to Commanders and the Mission

- **Maximizes Mission Readiness and Survivability.** Cooperative Care reduces the medical and behavioral issues that impact deployability, while enabling handlers to provide more effective point-of-injury care, directly increasing MWD survivability.
- **Preserves the Force and Reduces Operational Risk.** By replacing forceful restraint, Cooperative Care directly reduces non-combat injuries to both handlers and MWDs, preserving critical assets and minimizing operational downtime.
- **Builds More Resilient and Adaptive Teams.** The trust-based bond forged through Cooperative Care creates a more resilient handler-MWD team, translating to superior performance and more intuitive communication in high-stress operational environments.
- **Optimizes the MWD as a Warfighting Asset.** Cooperative Care fosters confident problem-solvers over simple compliers, maximizing the return on investment and extending the operational lifespan of these critical assets.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For questions or assistance regarding K9H2F, please contact:

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Day in the Life: Military Working Dog Handler



U.S. ARMY CANINE HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS

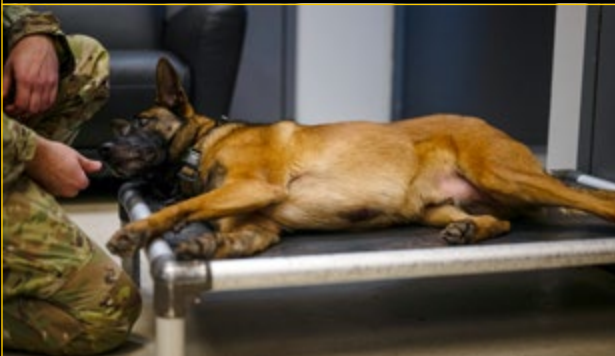
Building Trust, Enhancing Readiness: Cooperative Care for Military Working Dogs



COOPERATIVE CARE

U.S. Army Canine Holistic Health and Fitness (K9H2F) ensures peak performance, longevity and quality of life for our Military Working Dogs (MWD) through a comprehensive, integrated health program that emphasizes Cooperative Care, a modern approach to MWD handling where we teach, rather than force.

Cooperative Care is a trust-based partnership where the MWD voluntarily participates in its own husbandry and medical care. By giving the MWD choice and a voice, we transform stressful procedures into predictable, positive and safe interactions.



Foundational Principles

Trust: Cooperative Care begins by building a relationship of trust and consent.

Choice: The MWD must be able to say “no.” Refusal to perform a skill is not defiance – It is communication of stress and comfort level. Understanding and respecting that “no” is the fastest way to build trust.

Positive Reinforcement: Providing a motivating reward (e.g., high-value food, play, praise), increases the frequency of a desired behavior and builds a positive association with handling procedures.

Key Benefits



Reduces Stress

Calm, cooperative and enriched dogs have fewer negative welfare indicators.



Increases Resilience

The power of choice enables the MWD to curate its environment.



Builds Confidence

Cooperative care and positive reinforcement training builds predictable interactions and encourages independent initiative.



Improves Problem-Solving

Shaping, luring and capturing improve long-term learning and skill retention.



Improves Health Outcomes

Cooperative MWDs make accurate health assessments possible and lead to more thorough care.



Enhances Bond

Non-coercive training builds trust within the handler-MWD team.



Handler's Role in Cooperative Care

- **Be Patient:** This process takes time. Progress is measured in small successes.
- **Be an Observer:** Your primary job is to read your dog's body language and know when to stop.
- **Be a Scientist:** If a step fails, it's not the dog's fault – Break the problem down into smaller, more achievable steps.
- **Be the Source of All Good Things:** Your presence should predict safety, fun and high-value rewards.



Putting Cooperative Care Into Practice

With foundational skills, MWDs can learn to cooperate during complex procedures.



Safety First: Use appropriate safety tools like basket muzzles and control the environment to set the team up for success.



Place: MWD willingly moves to and stations itself on a specified surface, facilitating veterinary exam, routine husbandry and transport.



Muzzling: MWD willingly puts its own face into a comfortable basket muzzle, seeing it as a predictor of high-value rewards – A critical and mission-essential safety skill.



Side: MWD willingly lays on their side, eliminating the need for stressful restraint during routine or emergency exams.

Resources

- AR 190-12/DA PAM 190-12, Military Working Dog Program
- AD 2025-16, Canine Holistic Health and Fitness
- FRAGO1 to HQDA EXORD 097-25, Military Working Dog Partner and Wellness Program (PAW)
- Department of the Air Force (DAF) Instruction 31-126 (AR 700-81), DoD Military Working Dog Program