



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Olympia, Washington

NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF A POLICY STATEMENT

Title of Policy Statement: Emergency Care for K-9 Officers | Policy Number: VBOG 22-01

Issuing Entity: Veterinary Board of Governors

Subject Matter: Emergency care provided to K-9 officers in emergency situations.

Effective Date: July 1, 2022

Contact Person: Lorelei Walker
PO Box 47852
Olympia, WA 98504-7852
360-236-4947
Lorelei.Walker@doh.wa.gov

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*Department of Health
Health Systems Quality Assurance
Veterinary Board of Governors*

Policy Statement

Revised – 10/18/11

<i>Title:</i>	Emergency Care for K-9 Officers	<i>Number:</i> VBOG 22-01
<i>References:</i>	Chapter 18.92 , 18.71 , and 18.73 RCW; RCW 16.52.011 and 18.130.050 ; and Chapter 246-976 WAC.	
<i>Contact:</i>	Loralei Walker, Program Manager	
<i>Phone:</i>	360-236-4947	
<i>Email:</i>	Loralei.Walker@doh.wa.gov	
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<i>Approved By:</i>	Kim Morgan, LVT, Chair, Veterinary Board of Governors	

Under the circumstances explained in this policy, the Veterinary Board of Governors (board) does not consider limited lifesaving care provided to K-9 officers at the scene of an emergency by law enforcement officers, law enforcement agency employees (hereinafter referred to as “law enforcement”), and by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel to be unlicensed veterinary practice.

K-9 officers are animals, usually dogs, with specific training to assist law enforcement officers. K-9 officers may be seriously injured in the line of duty, and in need of immediate, life-preserving care while on the way to a licensed veterinarian for treatment.

When a K-9 officer, is injured in the line of duty, law enforcement agency officers and their employees may provide limited lifesaving emergency medical care and transport to a K-9 officer. In an emergency EMS personnel certified under chapters [18.71](#) or [18.73 RCW](#) may provide limited life-saving emergency care to injured K-9 officers at the direction of law enforcement.

RCW [18.130.050](#)(14) allows the board to set standards of practice for veterinary medicine. The board believes limited lifesaving care that would be provided in an emergency may be safely provided by law enforcement and EMS personnel trained to provide such care to humans.

For the purposes of this policy “limited lifesaving care” means care sufficient to stabilize the animal while being transported to veterinary care. This includes, but is not limited to, first aid, providing fluids, oxygen, splints, or other care within the scope of practice of the EMS provider.

The Veterinary Practice Act ¹exempts owners of animals practicing on their own animals, and employees of owners of animals who are acting in the course of their employment from licensing requirements. RCW [16.52.011](#) defines an owner of an animal as a person who has a right, claim, title, legal share, or right of possession to an animal or a person having lawful control, custody, or possession of an animal. For the

purposes of this policy, the employing entity and its employees are considered the “owner” of a K-9 officer, because they have lawful control, custody, or possession of an animal.

Therefore, law enforcement and EMS personnel may provide care to a K-9 officer under the exemption for an owner in RCW [18.92.060\(2\)](#) or for an employee assisting their employer in RCW [18.92.060\(7\)](#). Further, at the scene of an emergency, EMS personnel who may not be employed by the same entity may provide limited lifesaving care to an animal, if directed to do so by law enforcement on the scene.

¹ RCW [18.92.060\(2\)](#) and RCW [18.92.060\(7\)](#)